

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 19, 2022

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso:

We respectfully request that the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources schedule a legislative hearing to consider S. 4542, the Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act (“The Act”). The Act was introduced on July 14, 2022 and referred to your committee. An identical bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on July 29, 2022 and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

The Act was crafted with over a decade of work by Coloradans in the Dolores River region through the Lower Dolores Working Group (“Working Group”). This collaborative Working Group includes representatives from agricultural water users, county commissioners, ranchers, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, boating advocates, motorized recreationists, conservation interests, and private landowners.

The Act enshrines the Working Group’s compromise to remove a segment of the Dolores River from consideration as a Wild and Scenic River, while continuing to recognize the River's special value. The Act designates a National Conservation Area on BLM lands and a Special Management Area on adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands. Each of these designations includes provisions to protect natural, scenic, and historical values, including native fish, while also honoring water rights and protecting agricultural and municipal water supplies as well as recreational river uses.

The bill has strong bipartisan support from the three affected counties, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and every participant in the Working Group. We encourage the Committee to consider this carefully vetted and broadly supported legislation to protect Colorado’s natural heritage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet

United States Senator



John Hickenlooper

United States Senator