

9/6/2022

Senator Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510
Attn: John_Whitney@bennet.senate.gov



Dear Senator Bennet,

The San Miguel Watershed Coalition would like to enthusiastically express support for the homegrown Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act you and Senator Hickenlooper introduced in the U.S. Senate last month. The San Miguel Watershed is the largest tributary of the Dolores and the greater watershed would greatly benefit from the designations proposed in the legislation.

The San Miguel Watershed is a diverse community within the greater Dolores Watershed that relies on the river and surrounding landscape for agriculture, recreation, industry, and tourism. Many of our ranching stakeholders work lands in both the Dolores and San Miguel Watersheds. The native warmwater fish population of the San Miguel also depends on the lower Dolores for habitat connectivity. The areas that are included in the bill are important for fishing, whitewater rafting and motorized recreation, as well as some small-scale industry and grazing. The region also brings in visitors from other parts of the state, which help many small businesses located in Montrose and San Miguel County, where the San Miguel Watershed resides. Also, the area is one of the most magnificent and ecologically significant areas in southwest Colorado. These lands support a variety of fish, wildlife, and birds that our communities enjoy and take pride in.

The stakeholder collaboration that led to the NCA proposal is exactly the type of cooperation needed across Colorado's watersheds and landscapes to meet future water and land use needs. We commend you for respecting this process in drafting the bill and introducing it in the Senate.

Given the strong community desire for protections for the Dolores River landscape and the bi-partisan nature of the proposal, we support the bill moving quickly through the congressional process.

Thank you for your strong support for the lands in Southwest Colorado, and we appreciate the time and effort it took to get this bill to protect the Dolores River introduced. Please let us know if we can help further this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrian Bergere".

Adrian Bergere
Executive Director

San Miguel Watershed Coalition