



September 6, 2022

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

Dear Senator Bennet,

On behalf of Trout Unlimited, I am writing to support the *Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act* (S. 4542) that you and Senator Hickenlooper introduced in the United States Senate on July 15, 2022.

Trout Unlimited is the nation's largest coldwater conservation organization with more than 350,000 members, supporters, volunteers and advocates. Our mission is to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so that our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon.

Following the construction of the federal Dolores Project in the 1980s, a strong coldwater fishery was created below McPhee Dam. The river was popular with anglers and important for local outfitters. However, the past 20 years of climate change and extreme water shortages have drastically reduced the quality of coldwater habitat and both trout and native fish populations have declined. Much of the fishery is increasingly unable to sustainably support trout fishing anymore.

If your legislation passes, additional resources for land and water management agencies have the potential to improve the health of the lower Dolores and ensure more diverse interests are able to provide input on management decisions. Trout Unlimited is a member of the Dolores River Native Fish Monitoring and Recommendation Team, which your legislation would formalize. We have seen firsthand the value of this group in terms of collaboration, sharing of resources, and ability to manage the downstream environment more effectively.

Furthermore, as the Dolores River becomes a more popular recreation destination, it is important to plan ahead for increasing use, for both land and water-based activities. This legislation provides the framework and resources to do that.

We urge you and Senator Hickenlooper to do as much as possible to support the Dolores River and move this bill to committee.

Sincerely,

(Signed)
Stephen J. Kandell,
Director, Trout Unlimited

(Signed)
Brad Waltman
President, Dolores River Anglers,
Trout Unlimited