



October 4, 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC
Fax: 202 225 2761

Dear Chairman:

I am writing on behalf of Colorado Ski Country USA (CSCUSA), the industry association and global voice of skiing and snowboarding in Colorado, in support of HR 3189, the Water Rights Protection Act. CSCUSA represents twenty ski areas in Colorado that operate on National Forest System lands under a special use permit from the US Forest Service. These public land resorts hosted over 6.3 million skier visits in Colorado in the 2012/13 ski season alone, and skiing and snowboarding constitute a \$3.0 billion annual economic impact to our state.

CSCUSA supports HR 3189 because it would prohibit the US Forest Service from requiring our resorts to transfer valuable water rights to the Forest Service as a condition of receiving a permit, or to apply for water rights in the name of the United States, without compensation.

While the Forest Service insists that such actions would be intended only to maintain the long-run viability of the resorts as ski and snowboard areas, requiring resorts to transfer the water rights they need to operate so as to prevent their sale to a third party is a solution in search of a problem. Moreover, required transfers of water rights that are critical to ski area operations would politicize their use, with each change in administration changing priorities for water use.

Furthermore, requiring transfer of valuable water rights to the NFS as a condition of receiving a permit raises serious Fifth Amendment concerns. Our member resorts' water rights were acquired and developed at great expense pursuant to Colorado law, and in some cases pre-date the Forest Service itself. If the NFS wants to secure its own water rights, it should buy them on Colorado's well-regulated water market like everyone else.

Thank you for scheduling a hearing on HR 3189 and for your leadership on this issue. It means a great deal to CSCUSA and our member ski resorts operating across Colorado on NFS lands.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melanie Mills".

Melanie Mills
President and CEO