



**THE SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Developing and Conserving the Waters of the  
SAN JUAN AND DOLORES RIVERS AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES  
IN SOUTHWESTERN COLORADO

**West Building – 841 East Second Avenue  
DURANGO, COLORADO 81301  
(970) 247-1302**

October 10, 2013

The Honorable Scott Tipton  
United States House of Representatives  
218 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Tipton:

On behalf of the Southwestern Water Conservation District ("District"), we thank you for sponsoring the *Water Rights Protection Act*, H.R. 3189. This vital bipartisan bill would prohibit the conditioning of any permit, lease, or other use agreement on the transfer, relinquishment, or other impairment of any water right to the United States by the Secretaries of the Interior or Agriculture.

The Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD) was established by the Colorado legislature to conserve and protect the waters of the San Juan and Dolores Rivers and their tributaries. Therefore, we see it as our statutory obligation to safeguard privately held water rights in the region and uphold the primacy of state water law, as H.R. 3189 would do.

The U.S. Forest Service has recently attempted to require the transfer of privately held water rights to the federal government as a condition of acquiring a National Forest System lands permit. The District considers such requirements tantamount to a federal taking, and applauds H.R. 3189's prohibition of such conditions.

The District encourages the House of Representatives to pass this legislation without delay.

We thank you for introducing the *Water Rights Protection Act* and for your leadership on this issue of great consequence.

Sincerely,

Bruce Whitehead  
Executive Director