

623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101
(719) 589-2230
Heather@slvwcd.org



May 15, 2017

Heather R. Dutton – Manager

Congressman Scott Tipton
218 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Tipton:

I am writing to express support from the Board of Directors of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District for the Water Rights Protection Act. The District operates an augmentation program within five counties in the San Luis Valley. Through our operations, we physically replace out-of-priority depletions to the Rio Grande and Closed Basin caused by pumping of domestic, low capacity commercial, and municipal wells. This program ensures existing water rights are protected while allowing for economic and domestic growth in the San Luis Valley. Additionally, the District is a leader in the local and state water communities, working with partners to address timely issues such as groundwater sustainability, endangered species protection, and compliance with the Rio Grande Compact.

As an entity with water rights and a ditch system that originate on federal lands, the District closely monitors issues concerning interactions between federal agencies and entities with private water rights. The District is fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with the US Forest Service personnel who oversee the operations of our infrastructure. However, we are aware of situations in which the need for a federal permit or environmental approval has been used to extract a portion of a decreed water right for bypass flows or to meet other environmental demands. These actions decrease the amount of water legally available to be diverted and put to beneficial use and are not consistent with Colorado water laws.

The Water Rights Protection Act serves an important purpose of clarifying the law. It will also provide water rights owners security in knowing that during permit acquisition or updates, the scope and extent of water rights will not be at issue. The District greatly appreciates your work to pass the Water Rights Protection Act. We encourage other members of Congress to support this legislation to ensure the protection of vested water rights and the ability of Colorado water users to fully use their water rights for the purposes decreed by the Colorado courts.

Sincerely,



Dee Greeman, President
Board of Directors of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District

cc: Brenda Felmlee, SLV Regional Field Representative for Representative Tipton

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