



May 2, 2023

The Honorable Karen McCormick
Chair House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources
Colorado House of Representatives
State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable Marc Catlin
Vice Chair, House Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources
Colorado House of Representatives
State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Opposition on SB23-295 Colorado River Drought Task Force – to ensure Coloradoan’s unite around the protection of Colorado River resources and support Colorado’s UCRC Commissioner

Dear Representatives McCormick and Catlin, and members of the Committee:

The City of Greeley has spent decades planning for its water future and diversifying water supplies and infrastructure to ensure a sustainable and resilient water future. In this new era of systemic drought, we have a responsibility to work together across Colorado and the West to understand the complex issues related to the shortage and overconsumption on the Colorado River. Greeley has been deeply engaged in the complex matters of the Colorado River for more than 70 years, as it is a critical portion of the water supply utilized in municipal, agricultural, and environmental sectors across Northern Colorado.

While we appreciate the amended makeup of the proposed task force and truly respect the legislature’s desire to contribute solutions to challenging and complex Colorado River issues. In the West, the proposed SB23-295 is not a bill that builds upon Colorado’s history of successful negotiations on the Colorado River issues and the 2007 Interim Operating Guidelines.

Below are a couple of the key points and areas of concern that drive our opposition to SB23-295.

- The State’s Dept. of Natural Resources and the Colorado Water Conservation Board in partnership with the Attorney General’s Office have developed extensive expertise and a very strong negotiation position in all matters related to managing shortages, interactions with Bureau of Reclamation, and protecting Colorado’s entitlement against ongoing consumption growth and inefficient use in the Lower Basin. That strong position stands to be eroded or confused by SB23-295

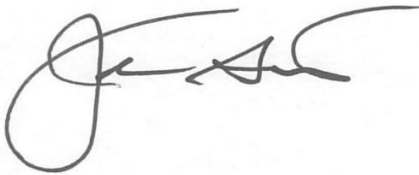
- Contrary to positions stated by NGOs, Colorado has been an active and action driven participant in Upper Colorado River Commission and the negotiations over managing systemic shortage. The State of Colorado and its legislature should be cautious about being too eager to contribute water to Lower Basin greed and water gluttony.
- Coloradoans have consistently lived within our water means. When drought impacts our water availability, we consistently curtail through our system of prior appropriations and under the enforcement by Colorado State Engineer. The Lower Basin has not done the same in drought.
- Dept. of Natural Resources, Office of the State Engineer, administers Colorado's water resources, including compliance with the Compacts intersecting with administering Colorado's water. SB23-295 would influence administration under a proposed Demand Management program and would thereby circumvent the State Engineer's authority to administer Colorado's scarce water resources.

You may be aware that Greeley is also the hub of the Northern Colorado agricultural economy that is the 8th largest in the nation, and very reliant on water supplies from the South Platte River, Poudre River, Big Thompson River and the Colorado-Big Thompson. The Water Supplies that support our community, our economy and neighboring communities across Northeast Colorado are too important to be politicized.

Therefore, Greeley Water is firmly opposed to the proposed SB23-295 and remains concerned about the potential to confuse stakeholder on which experts are negotiating on behalf of all Coloradoans.

If you have any questions regarding our support, please contact me at 970-350-9772.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Gates', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Gates
Mayor
City of Greeley

Cc: Raymond Lee III, City Manager
Sean Chambers, Water & Sewer Utilities Director
Harold Evans, PE, Water & Sewer Board Chairman