



Board of County Commissioners

970-328-8605

970-328-8629(f)

eagleadmin@eaglecounty.us

www.eaglecounty.us

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

May 2, 2018

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We write to respectfully request your urgent assistance on completing the Upper Colorado River Special Recreational Management Area (SRMA) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) project, a partnership among Eagle County as interim landowner, The Conservation Fund, and the Department of Interior (DOI)/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on three river-front parcels within the BLM's SRMA. These three strategically located parcels provide public access and recreational put-in/take-out sites along a popular stretch of the Upper Colorado River. Pursuant to IM-2017-086, BLM Colorado submitted the project for review in late January, and we request your review as soon as possible to ensure BLM can provide this critical recreational access project in time for the summer recreation season along this popular stretch of the Upper Colorado River near Interstate-70.

Eagle County has been partnering with BLM for five years on advancing this high priority BLM project. We have expended over \$2 million of county funds to protect these BLM priority lands on an interim basis while BLM secured funds from Congress. We have invested another \$873,000 on BLM-approved public access infrastructure (boat ramps, bathroom facilities, parking lot improvements) on the parcels, and the BLM will receive the benefit of these substantial safety and accessibility improvements. And, while the fair market value has appreciated during the five years Eagle County has held the parcels, we have not increased the sale prices negotiated at the outset of this project in cooperation with The Conservation Fund and BLM.

DOI's timeline for closing these final two phases (State Bridge and Two Bridges) has taken longer than we expected, and has caused a 2018 budget crisis for Eagle County's open space program. BLM purchased the first parcel (Dotsero Landing) in February 2017, using FY2015 LWCF, and we expected BLM to purchase the final two phases in the First Quarter of 2018, using FY2017 LWCF, which was appropriated by Congress in May 2017. Based on this anticipated timeline, Eagle County exhausted completely its open space budget in December



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2017 on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Eagle County is eagerly awaiting the FY2017 LWCF funds – our 2018 open space budget and beyond depends on it.

This LWCF project increases recreational access to keep up with the public's demand on one of our nation's most iconic rivers, benefitting not only outdoor enthusiasts, but also families, school groups, and handicapped and veteran's groups. This project helps boost Eagle County's local economy and support Colorado's \$13 billion outdoor recreation industry. It is time to finish this important and cooperative project, and we look forward to celebrating together when it is complete.

Sincerely,

Kathy Chandler-Henry

Chair

Jeanne McQueeney

Commissioner

Jill H. Ryan

Commissioner

cc:

The Honorable Michael Bennet

The Honorable Cory Gardner

The Honorable Scott Tipton

Ms. Kate McGregor, Department of Interior, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Lands and Minerals Management

Mr. Brian Steed, Bureau of Land Management, Deputy Director for Programs and Policy