



Board of County Commissioners

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February 2, 2022

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

Eagle County is known for its unparalleled recreational opportunities, and unique quality of life. Our water resources are the key element to all of that. However, a variable climate and a growing population of residents and visitors, both in the County and throughout the state, are creating demands and threatening our ability to protect and preserve this most precious resource.

The Eagle Board of County Commissioners supports legislation that will allow for river flows to be maintained and/or enhanced benefiting river-based recreation. The proposed Recreational In-Channel Values (RIVR) designation is an innovative approach allowing for the lease or loan of water from another water rights holder to benefit recreation. This approach is in alignment with Colorado Water Law and prohibits injury to another water user. The ability for local governments such as Eagle County to engage in water transactions to benefit recreation may be a solution to the recent low flow events that caused portions of the Eagle and Upper Colorado Rivers to be closed to recreation in the summer of 2021.

According to the organization Business for Water Stewardship, river recreation generates \$18.8 billion in economic output throughout the state each year, 131,000 jobs, and \$6.3 billion in salaries and wages. These figures highlight the economic impact generated by the 6.7 million individuals recreating on our waterways each year, with nearly a third of those individuals coming to Eagle County and the Colorado River Basin.

The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization developed a climate projections report in the summer of 2021 for Eagle County. It suggests a much hotter climate for the County where average summer days in mid-century could be as hot as the single hottest day of the 20th century. Given this information, we must find creative solutions allowing our community to thrive and be a place where visitors from across the world enjoy. This new RIVR designation is one tool in the tool box to help us accomplish this goal, and we therefore urge your support for this legislation.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Jeanne McQueeney

Chair

Kathy Chandler-Henry

Commissioner

Matt Scherr

Commissioner