



Colorado Farm & Food Alliance

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Dear Colorado River Drought Task Force Members:

As agricultural producers and organizations, our livelihoods are directly tied to the ability to access clean water supplies, so we thank you for serving in this important role. Colorado needs to be better prepared to address drought conditions brought on by climate change and we encourage the Task Force to identify solutions to ensure Colorado strengthens resilience to the threats of drought.

Given how quickly conditions can change, including from the increasing influences of climate change, we need tools that are both proactive and that can be applied quickly and nimbly. We also need tools allowing for greater flexibility to manage our water supplies to address threats of drought.

Solutions must be voluntary, with no one required to give up water, with incentives to conserve without being at risk of abandoning water rights. In the agricultural sector, this could include aiding in the transition to more drought tolerant crops, efficiency upgrades to irrigation systems, and improving soil health.

The agricultural community cannot be expected to solve the issues plaguing the Colorado River system alone, and voices on the Western Slope, though scattered in many small communities, should not be overlooked as the Task Force is gathering input. We must have participation by all water users, including municipal and industrial users, and from communities on both sides of the Continental Divide.

Also, to achieve success at increasing the speed and scale of conservation efforts, all water users need access to the historical amounts of federal funds now being made available to address drought on the Colorado River. We ask that the Task Force identify and remove any barriers for unlocking these dollars including for rural, agricultural and headwaters communities. These more sparsely populated places are each critical to solving Colorado's water challenges and they must also be at the table and central to the solution.

Climate chaos is resulting in conditions of greater uncertainty across Colorado ranches, orchards, and farms. As temperatures have risen so has the level of unpredictability around weather including the amount of snowpack, the timing of snowmelt and runoff, and when and how much water is available.

Agricultural operators have always dealt with unpredictable weather and other uncertainties. But now at the brink of a hotter and drier future, one of greater weather extremes that jeopardize our water supply, this Task Force has an opportunity to identify solutions to help mitigate these uncertainties.

And Colorado can do so in a way that helps make our water supplies, and agriculture, more climate and drought resilient, and do it in a manner that also results in healthier streams and rivers, with greater long-term assurances for the needs of all water users.

Thank you again for serving on the Colorado River Drought Task Force. We know this is not an easy task with a lot at stake and immense interest. We want to work with you to identify and implement solutions to benefit our operations, our region, and the state for generations to come.

For prosperous, resilient farms and healthy watersheds,



Pete Kolbenschlager, Director
Colorado Farm & Food Alliance

Kristin Just, President
Valley Organic Growers Association

Jim Brett
Slow Food Western Slope

Gwen Garcelon
Roaring Fork Food Alliance

Jeff Wagner
Groundwork Educational Farm

David Miller, Western Culture Farmstead and Creamery
Mark Waltermire, Thistle Whistle Farm
Kristin Just, Twisted Root Organic Farm, LLC
Cynthia Houseweart, Princess Beef
Stephanie Matlock, Cobblestone Farm
Caren von Gontard, Rancho del Gallo
Tony Prendergast, XK Bar Ranch - Sunshine Beef
Eugenie McGuire, Desert Weyr, Llc
Charlotte Minor, Seldom Seen Apricot Farm

Kim Kelly, K Lazy M Bar, Llc
Jay Kenney, Seek No Further
Doug Beall, Rancho Largo
Emma Kottenstette, Farm Runners
Matt Springer, Grey Owl Garden
Jon Orlando, Rock n Roots Farm
Karen Henderson, El Sagrado Farm
Elizabeth Agee, Rancho del Gallo

Cc: Gov. Jared Polis
Speaker Julie McCluskie
Senate Leader Steve Fenberg
Senate Minority Leader Paul Lundeen
House Minority Leader Mike Lynch