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November 7, 2018

CWCB Directors  
Attn: Director Mitchell  
Colorado Water Conservation Board  
1313 Sherman St., Room 718  
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Support of River District and Southwestern Water Conservation District Position –  
Drought Contingency Planning and Demand Management

Director Mitchell and CWCB Board Members:

The Hinsdale Board of County Commissioners would like to express our full support for the September 17, 2018 letter to the Colorado Water Conservation Board sent by the Colorado River District and the Southwestern Water Conservation District. It is our understanding that the Conservation Board may consider adopting a policy or position at their November meeting, and we want to have our comments included as a part of the record for that agenda item. Portions of Hinsdale County and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River are within the boundaries of the River District, and the southern part of our county and the Piedra River are within the boundaries of the Southwestern District. The County Commissioners appoint board members to both districts, and are kept well informed on water issues by our board appointments and by district staff. Agriculture and water are critical to the livelihood of many of our residents, and it is important that we protect the water uses that contribute to the economy and lifestyle of our communities.

We are aware of the drought planning efforts by all seven states in the Colorado River System, and have been briefed on the Drought Contingency Plans for the Upper Basin. We recognize that recent drought conditions have accelerated the discussions between the states, and that it may be important to have a plan in place in the event these drought conditions continue in the future. The BOCC has also reviewed the letter and draft resolution submitted to the Colorado Water Conservation Board by the two water conservation districts, and we feel it is very important that those concerns be addressed prior to finalizing the contingency plan for Colorado and prior to seeking any federal legislation regarding Lake Powell storage. The conditions requested in the districts' letters will help provide a level of certainty for west slope communities on how the demand management portion of the plan could be implemented. Any voluntary reductions of water rights should be compensated, and the burden should be shared by all Colorado River users of the state, including trans-mountain diversions. The possibility of a mandatory curtailment raised by front range interests shouldn't be implemented unless there is widespread agreement that the Upper Basin is in violation of the Colorado River Compact.

We encourage the State to adopt the principles being requested by the two west slope conservation districts in a policy or public resolution, and we appreciate your consideration of our comments regarding the Drought Contingency Plan.

Sincerely,

Hinsdale Board of County Commissioners

Handwritten signatures in blue ink of Susan P. Thompson, C. J. Dozier, and Stan Whinnery, positioned above a horizontal line.

Susan Thompson  
Chair

Cindy Dozier  
Vice Chair

Stan Whinnery  
Commissioner