

June 20, 2019

The Honorable Joe Neguse
U.S. House of Representatives
1419 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Neguse:

Thank you for introducing the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Extension Act (H.R.3237). Your legislation is critical to the continued success of species recovery efforts on the Platte River in Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) is a collaborative effort between the federal government, states, conservation organizations and other stakeholders that facilitates new and existing water use and development through streamlined Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance. It also supports the recovery of four threatened and endangered species: the piping plover, interior least tern, whooping crane, and pallid sturgeon. As one example of program success, the interior least tern is exceeding recovery plan goals and a recent 5-year review from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended delisting the species. Importantly, the Program is a successful, collaborative alternative to costly and contentious litigation between the states over limited water supplies and species recovery.

The Nature Conservancy is proud to be a partner in the Program and has been since its inception. TNC is a voting member on the governance committee, representing the views of environmental entities, holds positions on the water advisory and technical committees and participates in the adaptive management working group.

The authority for the Department of the Interior to participate in the Program expires in 2020, putting at risk ESA compliance for water users and the recovery of the four target species. H.R.3237 extends the first increment of the Program for another 13 years (through 2032) so the partners have additional time to meet the goals of the first increment:

1. Use incentive-based water projects to provide enough water to and through the Central Platte River habitat area.
2. Protect, restore and maintain at least 10,000 acres of habitat between Lexington and Chapman, Nebraska. (The Program currently protects more than 12,000 acres of habitat.)
3. Implement an adaptive management plan to provide a systematic process to test hypotheses and apply the information learned to improve management decisions.

In addition, during the first increment extension authorized by H.R.3237, the Program partners will acquire 1,500 additional acres of habitat.

We appreciate your leadership to ensure a healthy Platte River that can meet the many needs of our communities, and we offer our assistance to ensure timely passage of H.R.3237.

Sincerely,



Carlos Fernandez
State Director, Colorado



Mace Hack
State Director, Nebraska



Milward Simpson
State Director, Wyoming

CC: Representative Don Bacon
Representative Ken Buck
Representative Liz Cheney
Representative Jason Crow
Representative Diana DeGette
Representative Jeff Fortenberry
Representative Doug Lamborn
Representative Ed Perlmutter
Representative Adrian Smith
Representative Scott R. Tipton