

November 3, 2021

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

RE: H.R. 5001, Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Recovery Act

Dear Representative Neguse:

As partners in the successful fish recovery programs on the Upper Colorado River, we write in support of H.R. 5001, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Recovery Act. This legislation is critically important to maintaining the momentum we have built towards species recovery.

The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program are highly successful collaborative conservation partnerships involving the states of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as Indian tribes, federal agencies, and water, power, and environmental interests. These programs take a balanced approach to recovering four endangered fish species by implementing a range of basin-wide strategies, including optimizing operations for authorized purposes at federal water facilities and management of irrigation infrastructure, river and floodplain habitat improvement, fish stocking, and management of non-native fish species while still allowing water use and development in our growing Western communities. Since 1988, the programs have provided Endangered Species Act compliance without litigation for over 2,500 federal, tribal, state, and privately managed water projects across the Upper Colorado River basin. The programs are cost shared by the states, water users, and power customers.

Your legislation makes necessary technical amendments to the programs to assure continuity in recovery program operations until we can pursue a longer-term reauthorization after 2023. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge swift passage for H.R. 5001 in the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Leslie James
Executive Director
Colorado River Energy Distributors Association

Carlos Fernandez
Colorado State Director
The Nature Conservancy

Tom Pitts
Water Users Representative
Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program
San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program

Bart Miller
Healthy Rivers Program Director
Western Resource Advocates

CC: The Honorable Jared Huffman, Chair, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
The Honorable Cliff Bentz, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife