



Eighteen Conservation Groups Give Gov. Hickenlooper Input on State Water Plan

Focus on healthy alternatives, no new diversions from Colorado's rivers & river restoration

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Today, eighteen Colorado conservation and citizen groups sent [a letter](#) to Governor John Hickenlooper with recommendations for the Colorado Water Plan. The local, regional, and statewide groups pointed out that the Governor's Executive Order creating the Water Plan called for "Healthy Watersheds, Rivers and Streams, and Wildlife," and asked the Governor to prioritize these values in the Plan.

"Most of Colorado's rivers are extremely imperiled, diverted, and diminished—some are at times drained completely dry," said Gary Wockner of the Save The Colorado River Campaign. "As the Governor's Executive Order stated, the Plan needs to focus on 'a strong environment that includes healthy watersheds, rivers and streams, and wildlife.'"

The groups' recommendations include three "actions" for the Plan to implement:

1. Focus on "Healthy Alternative Water Supplies" including conservation and other measures that are cheaper, faster, and easier to implement.
2. Do not support any new diversions from Colorado's rivers.
3. Prioritize river restoration.

"This is the time to act," said McCrystie Adams, staff attorney at Earthjustice. "River flows are expected to plunge in the coming years as our climate grows warmer and the mountain snowpack is disrupted. What will happen to our rivers and the life they support if we are already diverting all of the flows that we physically can?"

The groups' letter highlights that seven extremely controversial projects are going through state and federal permitting processes, including the Halligan Project, Seaman Project, Bellvue Pipeline, Northern Integrated Supply Project, Windy Gap Firing Project, Moffat Project, and Chatfield Project.

The groups recommend that these projects be put "on hold" and that "Healthy Alternatives" be prepared that don't divert more water out of Colorado's rivers. The groups also point out that some of the participants in these projects are selling increasing amounts of water for fracking which is further degrading Colorado's rivers.

One of the projects, Denver Water's "Moffat Collection System Project," is scheduled to have its "Final Environmental Impact Statement" released in April. The groups are especially concerned about the Moffat Project.

"With so much of our clean, treated, drinking water being sprayed on non-native grass in a semi-arid climate, the opportunity for tremendous advances in meeting future supply needs through simple conservation seems a no-brainer," said Chris Garre of The Environmental Group which is addressing the threat of the Moffat Project. "Nevertheless, Denver Water is proposing to divert still more water off the Fraser River—85% of its natural flows—effectively killing the river."

The groups are responding to a call for input by the Governor, Colorado Water Conservation Board, and Interbasin Compact Committee. The Water Plan is supposed to be "grassroots" and "bottom up." By focusing on these citizen groups' recommendations, which represent tens-of-thousands of Coloradans, the State Water Plan can protect and restore Colorado's rivers and meet the needs of local communities.

Groups signing the letter include Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins, Clean Energy Action, Clean Water Action, Earthjustice, Earth Works Action, Environment Colorado, Frack Free Colorado, Fractivist.com, Plains Alliance for Clean Air and Water, Rocky Mountain Wild, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Save Chatfield, Save The Colorado River Campaign, Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper, Sheep Mountain Alliance, Sierra Club – Poudre Canyon Group, The Environmental Group of Colorado, and WildEarth Guardians.

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