



## COSTILLA COUNTY CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

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President –Fernando Martinez    Secretary - Ronda Lobato    Treasurer - Earl Valdez

Douglas County Board of County Commissioners  
100 Third Street  
Castle Rock, CO 80104

RE: RWR Proposal

Dear County Commissioners,

We are writing this letter on behalf of our organization, the Costilla County Conservancy District. This week our Board approved the attached resolution opposing the RWR Proposal to export water from the Valley. The Costilla County Conservancy District is a political subdivision of the State of Colorado, organized pursuant to 37-1-101, et. seq. The District's jurisdiction includes approximately 14, 373 parcels within the southern half of Costilla County. When American Water Development, Inc. bought the Baca Grant Ranch and planned to ship millions of gallons of water from an aquifer below the valley floor outside the Valley including to the Front Range, the District in the 1990's, joined several valley objectors in the legal and political battle, to keep the water in the San Luis Valley. Similarly, the District fought the Court application to export water from wells drilled in the southern part of Costilla County to San Marcos, Texas in the 1970's. The mission of the Costilla County Conservancy District is "to act pursuant to its enabling legislation, with the purpose of recognizing the inherent value of waters, water interests, and water courses within the District and to promote the enhancement and efficiencies of existing water uses in a manner that benefits the community as a whole, with the recognition that a flexible approach may be used to accomplish such goals and to accomplish such other tasks as permitted by statute." The District strives to serve the community by ensuring the protection of the community from flooding, the preservation of waterways, the regulation and control of the flow of streams, ditch cleaning, and promoting conservation and water efficiency, and participating the development of parks and recreational facilities within the District. The district plans to implement these actions to protect the land, water, and historical values in the community consistent with our purposes. The district has held a number of regular meetings since the RWR Proposal and board members have attended meetings across the San Luis Valley and heard from many residents, businesses, and entities, the strong opposition to the RWR Proposal. The district has a real concern that the exportation of water will cause irreparable harm to the community, financially, livelihood, and core values, as well as to individual farmers. The San Luis Valley has received national recognition for its potatoes, alfalfa, and barley. The lifeblood of our home is its rich agricultural history, and our economy depends on this agriculture. In fact, the first Acequia was the San Luis People's Ditch, which was dug in 1851. Being the oldest in the valley, the People's Ditch also holds the first adjudicated water rights in the state of Colorado and currently it irrigates approximately 2,100 acres of hay and other row crops. This is one Acequia, which provides food and life in the Valley. Agriculture is the economic driver of the Valley. Roughly 1,600 farms and ranches in the Valley account for close to \$400 million market value of products sold. However, the Valley water is already insufficient to meet the needs of the Valley and RWR desires to cripple the Valley by exporting that water out of the Valley. There is no renewable water in the Valley to export. The aquifers are already being depleted and the



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community is working to find ways to replenish the aquifers but alas their efforts have been unsuccessful, despite farmers taking every conservation measure imaginable. This effort to export water will cripple the Valley, not just economically, but it will destroy lives and livelihood for the people, the real people, that live in the Valley. The Valley would not just suffer economic loss, but it could harm area creeks and streams that flow through habitats, tourist attractions, such as the Great Sand Dunes National Park, the Baca National Wildlife Refuge, and the San Luis Lakes State Wildlife Areas which supports at least 13 threatened and endangered species and more than 260 species of birds. While RWR desires you to believe that the \$50 million community fund would help the Valley, in reality the \$50 million community fund would be a one-time payment and would not cover the vast economic losses the Valley would suffer. Considering the damage, we anticipate this proposal to have on our communities, we oppose the RWR request and ask that you do the same. We are happy to answer any questions that you may have as you evaluate this proposal and look forward to meeting you when you travel to the valley.

Ronda Lobato  Date 2/18/22

Earl Valdez  Date 2/18/22

Fernando A. Martinez  Date 2/18/22

RESOLUTION 2022-02  
OF THE  
COSTILLA COUNTY CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

We, the directors of the Costilla County Conservancy District, by unanimous consent of the directors present, pass the following resolution opposing the exportation of water from the San Luis Valley in the Rio Grande Basin, as follow:

Whereas, the Costilla County Conservancy District is a conservancy district located in Costilla County with an interest in protecting water resources for the inhabitants of the community and the San Luis Valley, and;

Whereas, the conservation and preservation of water resources are vital to the economic prosperity and cultural interests of Costilla County and the San Luis Valley as a whole; and;

Whereas, the water resources are a vital component of maintaining the viability of farming and ranching in Costilla County and the San Luis Valley, and;

Whereas, the supply of both groundwater and surface water in the San Luis Valley is over appropriated under the Colorado priority doctrine, and;

Whereas, the District is aware of the efforts of Renewable Water Resources, an entity with backing of former Governor Bill Owens, with a plan to annually export a large quantity of water from the San Luis Valley for the benefit of the Douglas County, and;

Whereas, the plan for a trans-basin exportation of a proposed 20,000 acre - feet of water annually from the San Luis Valley will have an impact on the confined aquifer, will take agricultural lands out of production and will have detrimental effect on the economy of the San Luis Valley as whole; further, it and may impact existing water resources, both surface and groundwater, with the potential of permanent damage to property interests, including to the Great Sand Dunes, and;

Whereas, the exportation of water is a direct threat to maintaining a sustainable aquifer and a stable source of water supply for the San Luis Valley water users. and:

Whereas, the District supports the efforts of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District and others opposing the exportation of water from the San Luis Valley in the interest of protecting the agricultural interests, municipalities, governmental entities, residents, businesses, property and water right owners in the Valley community as a whole.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Costilla County Conservancy District through its Board of Directors hereby resolves and declares that it vigorously opposes the efforts for the exportation of water from the

San Luis Valley, including those of Renewable Water Resources and supports the efforts of others in opposition.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the directors have evidenced their approval of the above resolution and actions effective February 18, 2022.

Date: 2/18, 2022

  
EARL J. VALDEZ

Date: 2/18, 2022

  
RONDA M. LOBATO