



October 25, 2016

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
401 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Senate Environment & Public Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2251 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
House Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2134 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Inhofe and Shuster and Ranking Members Boxer and DeFazio,

The Colorado Water Congress (CWC) is a membership organization consisting of more than 350 members, serving as the principal voice of Colorado's water community. On behalf of our members, the Colorado Water Congress is writing to express our support for S. 2848, the Senate-passed version of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (WRDA). It is the more complete and comprehensive of the two houses' versions of this critical legislation. Accordingly, we encourage conferees to use S. 2848 as the template for resolving differences between the two versions of WRDA.

Under the leadership of Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer, S. 2848 deservedly garnered widespread, bipartisan support. The WRDA bill would reform and authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works programs related to navigation, flood risk management, recreation, infrastructure and environmental stewardship. The legislation also provides funding for drinking water infrastructure programs, including \$220 million to support repair of the lead-tainted drinking water system in Flint, Michigan.

Specifically, the Senate version of WRDA is important to Colorado because it contains the following provisions:

- the aquatic nuisance species language,
- the Innovative Water Technology Grant Program, and
- the Gold King Mine provision.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Provision

The Colorado Water Congress urges the inclusion of Section 4002 of S.2848 which expands a program that authorizes the Army Corps of Engineers to establish watercraft inspection stations for aquatic nuisance species in the Platte and Arkansas River Basins. The quagga and zebra mussels have infiltrated our nation's raw water storage and delivery systems. This provision is a critical step towards protecting our nation's headwaters against zebra and quagga mussels and other invasive species infestations.

Authorizing an additional \$25 million to establish and operate inspection stations in those river basins provides funding for several reservoirs in Colorado including Chatfield, Cherry Creek, John Martin, Bear Creek and Trinidad Lake. Colorado's budget constraints are negatively affecting existing inspection and prevention programs at a time when new mussel infestations are being reported in neighboring states.

Innovative Water Technology Grant Program

The state of Colorado and CWC member organizations would benefit from funding under Section 7304: "Innovative Water Technology Grant Program." S. 2848 would provide up to \$50M annually through grants for increasing adoption of innovative water technologies that increase water supplies in arid areas with minimal environmental impacts. For example, Ducks Unlimited, a CWC member, operates a recharge program on the South Platte that would benefit from funding under Section 7304.

As we have seen with the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), which has spent over \$40 million in Colorado, WRDA could be used as leverage for other dollars to "reduce ratepayer or community costs over time, including the cost of future capital investments." This program would effectively accelerate innovative technologies, including water reuse and recycling, to address water challenges. If this program is funded, its national allocation of money would be larger than that of NAWCA and could deliver much needed financial relief for water projects in Colorado.

Gold King Mine Provision

Another WRDA provision in S 2848 that is a priority for the CWC is Sec. 8010. The CWC is grateful to Senators Bennet and Gardner for working together on language that would expedite the reimbursement of emergency response costs assumed by states, Indian tribes, and local governments following the Gold King Mine spill. It also requires the EPA to pay for the response costs within 90 days if the costs are consistent with federal law. Lastly, S.2848 establishes a long-term water quality monitoring program and authorizes the EPA to reimburse the states, Indian tribes, and local governments for this monitoring activity. This provisions represent a positive step forward, but there's more work to be done for Southwest Colorado and its downstream neighbors.

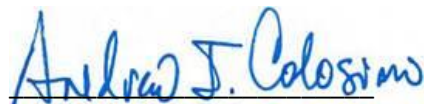
The Colorado Water Congress urges the conference committee to employ S. 2848 as its primary guide for resolving differences between the House and Senate versions of WRDA. Additionally, the CWC respectfully urges speedy resolution and final Congressional action during the 114th Congress and stands ready to assist in any way possible to ensure that Colorado is considered when allocating funds for water resources development.

Sincerely,



Doug Kemper

Executive Director



Andy Colosimo

Federal Affairs Committee Chair



Chris Treese

Federal Affairs Committee Vice Chair