



THE SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Developing and Conserving the Waters in the
SAN JUAN AND DOLORES RIVERS AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES
West Building – 841 East Second Avenue
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July 7, 2023

Submitted via email to: UCBEfficiency@usbr.gov

Wayne Pullan, Regional Director
Upper Colorado Basin
Bureau of Reclamation
125 South State Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84138-1102

Mr. Pullan:

The Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments in response to your request for input on Phase 2 water conservation project funding in the Upper Colorado River Basin under the Inflation Reduction Act.

SWCD was created in 1941 by the Colorado General Assembly (CRS 37-47-101 et seq.). SWCD is comprised of all or part of nine counties in southwestern Colorado: Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan, San Miguel, and parts of Hinsdale, Mineral, and Montrose. SWCD's statutory authority provided by the General Assembly is to protect, conserve, use, and develop the water resources of the San Juan and Dolores River Basins for the welfare of the SWCD, and safeguard for Colorado all waters to which the state is entitled. Following this mandate, SWCD has assumed a broad strategic role on behalf of its diverse constituents for more than 80 years.

As you are aware, funding made available thru the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is to provide grants, contracts, or financial assistance agreements, in accordance with the reclamation laws, to or with public entities and Indian Tribes, that provide for long-term system efficiency improvements that will result in additional water conservation for the entire Colorado River system. SWCD is working to develop a Southwestern Colorado Water Conservation Program. The geographic extent of this is the San Juan and Dolores River basins in Colorado and will be

designed to include the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, local water conservancy districts, and others as partners.

The program will be designed to help provide funding and technical assistance to local water users to implement projects that will provide for long-term (permanent) water conservation savings as well as ensure the economic viability of the local communities. We believe this is the type of program that these funds were intended to help support. Types of projects that could be implemented, include:

- Support that helps the agricultural sector adapt to using less water via upgraded infrastructure, new technologies and/or crop switching. Important in this is the need to maintain the economic viability of producers and local communities.
- Forest management efforts that not only provide for public safety by reducing wildfire risk and protecting drinking water supplies but provide for forests that support ecological health.
- Work with local communities to ensure the education and implementation of municipal water conservation programs.
- Water exchanges that are designed to increase system efficiencies and reliability while also achieving important environmental benefits.

SWCD is well positioned to provide support to this effort in that we currently operate a small grant program that serves all water users in southwest Colorado and can receive federal funds directly to expand that program to address the specific needs identified in the IRA. We understand the needs of local water users and can better serve them than a single statewide or multistate program (such as the System Conservation Pilot Program).

We appreciate the Bureau of Reclamation seeking input on the best use of this Phase 2 funding. We would reiterate that locally developed solutions are best to support and maintain the needs of local communities. Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Steve Wolff, General Manager

cc: SWCD Board of Directors