

David Nickum
Executive Director
Colorado Trout Unlimited



March 12, 2014

The Honorable Jared Polis
US House of Representatives
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Polis:

On behalf of Colorado Trout Unlimited and our 10,000 members throughout Colorado – including local chapters in the 2nd Congressional District in Boulder, Ft Collins, Estes Park, Summit County, Grand County, and Eagle County – I write to thank you for supporting conservation of rivers by withdrawing your support for HR 3189, the Water Rights Protection Act.

We have great sympathy for the concerns that led to the introduction of HR 3189 and your original decision to cosponsor the legislation. Forest Service policy requiring ski area water rights to be transferred to their ownership raises many very legitimate issues for ski areas in Colorado and beyond. However, as referred from committee, HR 3189 goes far beyond addressing that problem. As you recognized in your “Dear Colleague” letter explaining your concerns, it would put at risk the ability of federal land managers and hydropower regulators to incorporate much-needed protections for rivers as they issue permits. Healthy rivers are a vital part of Colorado’s outdoor economy – fish and wildlife-related recreation alone contributes \$3 billion annually. They also are a central part of our quality of life, making Colorado a wonderful place to live, raise a family, or start a business. Instead of providing a narrowly-tailored solution to the ski area concern, HR 3189 would jeopardize the ability to protect the value of healthy rivers on our public lands.

The Forest Service is in the process of revising its policy on ski area water rights, which should eliminate the problem which originally led to HR 3189’s introduction. We would wholeheartedly support the amendment you intend to offer to HR 3189 which would direct the Forest Service to issue a new draft directive within 60 days, and ensuring that it would not require transfer of ski area water rights to the United States. We appreciate your commitment to oppose the bill absent such action to fix its problems.

Colorado Trout Unlimited deeply appreciates your leadership in seeking reasonable solutions that reaffirm protections for rivers and streams on our public lands. Thank you for standing with Colorado’s rivers!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Nickum".

David Nickum

Trout Unlimited: America’s Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization
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