



June 22, 2020

Mr. Scott Fitzwilliams
Forest Supervisor
White River National Forest
900 Grand Avenue
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

Dear Mr. Fitzwilliams:

The Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance strongly opposes the requested special use permit (SUP) and related Categorical Exclusion (CE) for fatal-flaw geotechnical investigations in connection with Homestake Partners' proposed transmountain diversion of water from Homestake Creek in the Holy Cross Wilderness for the Whitney Reservoir project. The requested SUP/CE would allow for up to a year of drilling, road construction and cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment within the White River National Forest in support of the proposed reservoir and diversion project. We oppose both the SUP/CE and the underlying proposed Whitney Reservoir project.

ESWA is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that supports the Forest Service's effort to protect and preserve the Holy Cross Wilderness, Eagles Nest Wilderness, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas in Summit and Eagle Counties. See our website at <https://eaglesummitwilderness.org>.

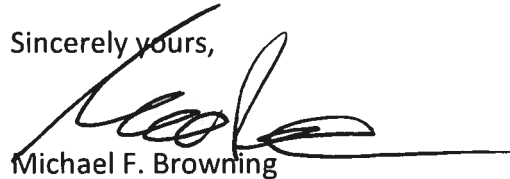
The work to be done under the proposed SUP/CE would cause significant damage to an ecologically unique and sensitive area, popular with outdoor recreationalists. But the work also is a critical step in advancing the Whitney Reservoir project, which would require making a Wilderness boundary "adjustment" to reduce the Holy Cross Wilderness by almost 500 acres. ESWA opposes the reduction of any federal Wilderness Areas, and especially the unique Holy Cross Wilderness which is already being dewatered by Homestake Partners. ESWA is also deeply concerned about the project's impact on the environment and the complex fen wetlands that would result. These wetlands are some of the finest of their type in the entire

White River National Forest. Reclamation and restoration of complex fen wetlands has not been proven to be possible.

We believe that the communities of Aurora and Colorado Springs should take action to reduce their water needs, and not destroy our Wilderness. Located on a dry prairie, these communities nevertheless continue to allow landscaping as if they were located in an area that had an abundance of water. It is time for them to face the reality that the era of big dams to solve water problems on the Front Range has passed, especially when it comes at the expense of already designated Wilderness Areas.

We urge the USFS not to grant SUP/CE, and to send a clear message to Homestake Partners that the Whitney Reservoir project cannot proceed further.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael F. Browning", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael F. Browning
ESWA 2020 Chair

Eagle County Commissioners
via eagleadmin@eaglecounty.us