



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF RIO BLANCO COUNTY, COLORADO
RIO BLANCO COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
555 MAIN STREET, P.O. BOX 599
MEEKER, COLORADO 81641

This meeting will be streamed live on the RBC YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBicnhlMpB47tzL_NjN0FIg

To provide public input please call (970) 878-9432

Special Meeting Agenda June 3, 2021

Public Comment: *Any member of the public may address the Board on matters which are within the jurisdiction of the Board. If you are addressing the Board regarding a matter listed on the Agenda, you are requested to make your comments when the Board takes that matter. Please limit your comments to three minutes per member or five minutes per group. The public comment time is not for questions and answers. It is your time to express your views.*

1. **3:00 p.m. Call to order:**
 - A. Pledge of Allegiance
 - B. Changes to the June 3, 2021 Agenda
 - C. **Move to approve the June 3, 2021 Agenda including any changes**

2. **BUSINESS**
 - A. Move to approve/deny a letter of support for Congresswoman Lauren Boebert's opposition to the "'30 X 30 Program". (All sign)
 - B. Move to approve/deny a letter of support for Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District application for Congressionally Directed spending. (All sign)

Adjourn

The agenda is provided for informational purposes only; all times are approximate. Agenda items will normally be considered in the order they appear on the agenda. However, the Board may alter the Agenda, take breaks during the meeting, work through the noon hour and even continue an item for a future meeting date. The Board, while in session, may consider other items that are brought before it. Scheduled items may be continued if the Board is unable to complete the Agenda as scheduled.

The next regular Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 8, 2021 in the Rio Blanco County Historic Courthouse, 555 Main, St., 3rd Floor Hearing Room, Meeker, CO. Please check the County's website for information at <http://rbc.us/186/Board-of-County-Commissioners>. If you need special accommodations, please call 970-878-9431 in advance of the meeting so that reasonable accommodations may be made.

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June 3, 2021

Congresswoman Lauren Boebert
743 Horizon Court, Suite 112
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506

Dear Congresswoman Lauren Boebert:

The Board of County Commissioners of Rio Blanco County, Colorado, (herein RBC) is pleased to provide this letter in support of your continued efforts to oppose the proposed legislation known as the 30X30 Program. RBC strenuously opposes this legislation and unanimously voted to sign a resolution on April 13, 2021, titled “A Resolution of the Board of County Commissioners of Rio Blanco County, Colorado Opposing the Federal Government’s “30 X 30” Land Preservation Goal”.

Currently in Rio Blanco County, the federal government is the largest land owner, owning approximately 76% of the 2,062,720 acres. In addition, 7.7% of privately-owned land within the County is protected in perpetual conservation easements. Rio Blanco County and our constituents care deeply about our natural resources, water policy management, energy development and our critical infrastructure. Businesses like energy extraction and agricultural operations utilize federal lands within the County daily. Additionally, privately held land and its resources are the main contributors to the economy of Rio Blanco County and its communities.

The Board of County Commissioners strongly believes that “locking up” land compromises private property rights and does not ensure its conservation or preservation. Left in an undisturbed or a natural state, these lands are highly susceptible to wildland wildfires, insect infestation and disease. All of these factors exacerbate greenhouse emissions and adversely impact global climate change. The County is obligated to protect and ensure the local socioeconomic wellbeing, the culture and customs of the constituents, and conservation of natural resources of the County and is in the best position to protect these assets. The County adopted May 20, 2016, the 2016 Rio Blanco County Land and Natural Resources Plan, herein

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“RBC LNRP” with the intent to address issues at a federal level, however, the County relies on this document to guide all of our natural resource actions.

As expressed in the “RBC LNRP” RBC supports a “*no net gain on federal land*” policy. See Pg. 12, Section 4.1.2(1). Additionally, outlined in the above referenced document, RBC believes that conservation is defined as the wise, active management of natural resources not leaving the land in its natural and vulnerable state. Policy statements include: “*public lands must be managed in a manner that recognizes the Nation’s need for a domestic source of minerals, foods, timber, and fiber.*” and “*support continued access to natural resources development/use of federal lands to maintain economically viable communities in our County.*” See Pg. 12, Section 4.1.2(3) and Pg. 55, Section 4.8.2(4).

The Board of County Commissioners and the constituents of Rio Blanco County appreciate Congresswoman Lauren Boebert’s continued efforts to oppose this detrimental legislation. As stated previously, this legislation does little more than tie up additional federal lands and compromises private property rights. This attempt to regulate more land will ultimately be destructive to our economy, businesses, residents and visitors. We will continue to advocate for the wise use of our natural resources as the ultimate act of conservation and individual private property rights. Succinctly stated, the County and its residents are in the best position to protect this County’s natural resources today and into the future.

Should you require further information, please feel free to contact us at: bocc@rbc.us.

Sincerely,

Board of County Commissioner of
Rio Blanco County, Colorado

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June 3, 2021

The Honorable Senator Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Senator John Hickenlooper
United States Senate
B85 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Sirs:

The Board of County Commissioners of Rio Blanco County, Colorado (herein Rio Blanco County), is pleased to provide this letter in support of Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District's pursuit of funding for the Wolf Creek Reservoir, White River Water Storage Project. This crucial water storage project meets and exceeds the requirements of Senate Rule XLIV regarding Congressionally Directed Spending. The Wolf Creek Reservoir Water Storage Project will have a significant positive impact on the communities in Rio Blanco County and Moffat County and is overwhelmingly supported by both communities.

Rio Blanco County and our constituents care deeply about our natural resources, water policy management, energy development and our critical infrastructure. The County is obligated to protect and ensure the local socioeconomic wellbeing, the culture and customs of the constituents, and conservation of natural resources of the County. The County adopted the 2016 Rio Blanco County Land and Natural Resources Plan, herein "RBC LNRP" with the intent to address issues at a federal level, however, the County relies on this document to guide all of our natural resource actions. The Wolf Creek Reservoir Water Storage Project will play a critical role in supporting our community and the Northwest Colorado region.

The Wolf Creek Reservoir has been in development since 2013. It is a result of a cooperating agreement between the White River Conservancy District, (herein RBWCD), the Yellow Jacket

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Water Conservancy District, Rio Blanco County and the Town of Rangely, Colorado. The cooperating agencies completed a feasibility study, which identified 23 potential sites, with the Wolf Creek Reservoir site being the preferred location. This off-channel dam would provide optimal benefits to the White River Basin, including, but not limited to; water storage in anticipation of drought conditions, protection of endangered species, economic diversification and recreation.

If awarded, these funds would go to an independent the third party contractor to complete and finalize the proposed project. It is understood that it may take months and even years to complete this process, however, it is necessary in order to move forward with the design and construction of the Wolf Creek Reservoir.

Currently the Northwest Colorado White River Basin has three water storage facilities. The existing water storage facilities do not supply enough storage to meet the current water needs during drought conditions. Unfortunately, Lake Avery and Rio Blanco Lake are not available for water supply. Kenney Reservoir is a run-of-the river hydropower project where over half of total volume has been lost to siltation and the current remaining expected life span is only 10 years from today. These pending water crisis conditions leave the entire White River Basin, specifically the Town of Rangely, with little or no water storage for drought protection. The Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District has secured a water right approved by the state for a 66,720 acre-foot reservoir. Upon completion, the Wolf Creek Reservoir will reliably provide critical water supply to this area.

The White River, which is situated below the proposed Wolf Creek Reservoir, is home to a variety of endangered fish species. The White River is under strict management by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFW) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in cooperation with the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program. The species included in the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program include Colorado Pikeminnow, Bonytail Chub, Humpback Chub, and Razorback Sucker. These endangered fish populations will continue to decline without active management to maintain current water levels. With predicted drought conditions over the next decade, the Wolf Creek Reservoir White River Storage Project will have the capacity to provide a critical supplemental water release, which will protect and enhance the stability of these endangered species.

For many years Rio Blanco County tax collecting entities have been fortunate to receive abundant tax dollars from the fossil-fuel industries. We anticipate the typical “boom and bust” cycle, which is prevalent in single industry economies, will look very different moving forward. Rio Blanco County understands economic diversification is essential to the well-being, health, safety, and welfare of our county, businesses and residents. The second largest economy within Rio Blanco is agricultural production. Rio Blanco County is home to some of the oldest

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privately held ranches and agricultural operations in the state. Obviously agricultural production is deeply affected by the ebbs and flows of drought conditions. When constructed, Wolf Creek Reservoir will have the capacity to help meet the needs of the agriculture producers down-river and allow producers up-river to use more of their water rights.

The Wolf Creek Reservoir, without a doubt, will provide recreational opportunities and additional economic diversification for much of the surrounding area. Initially the construction of the reservoir will provide economic stimulus for job creation and tax revenues. In the long term, the proposed reservoir will be a multiple use recreation site, including fishing and water-based tourism. The additional traffic to the area for recreation will add another layer of economic diversity for the entire region of Northwest Colorado, Eastern Utah and Southern Wyoming. As well, the reservoir could open the region to potential new businesses that are related to water activities or service based.

RBWCD has procured an extensive and varied list of regional support partners who value the work to address the water crisis in the White River Basin.

- Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado - Letter of Support
- City of Craig – Letter of Support
- Club 20 – Letter of Support
- Colorado First Conservation District – Letter of Support
- Colorado River District – Vocal Support, Letter of Support/Recognition, Financial, and Staff Time
- Colorado Water Conservation Board Financial and Project Support - Financial and Task
- Douglass Creek Conservation District – Letter of Support
- Lower White River Weed and Pest District – Letter of Support
- Meeker Chamber of Commerce – Letter of Support and Financial
- Moffat County – Letter of Support
- Rangely Chamber of Commerce - Letter of Support
- Representative Scott Tipton - Letter of Support and Site Visit
- Rio Blanco County - Letter of Support and Financial
- State Water Plan – Specific Mention of Project
- Town of Meeker - Letter of Support and Financial
- Town of Rangely – Letter of Support and Financial
- White River Conservation District – Letter of Support
- White River Integrated Water Initiative – Specific Project Support
- Yampa-White-Green Basin Round Table – Letter of Support, Financial and Basin Implementation Plan

Rio Blanco County appreciates the efforts of RBWCD. The RBWCD has continued its efforts to secure a viable, sustainable water storage solution for Northwest Colorado, Northeast Utah, and all of the White River Basin. Their proactive approach and unwillingness to ignore the current water crisis is instrumental in enhancing water storage options, preserving endangered fish populations, and providing additional economic diversification to our region. Rio Blanco County is committed to actively participating in this project throughout this developmental process. It is without hesitation that the Board of County Commissioners of Rio Blanco County, Colorado provides this letter of unwavering support for Rio Blanco Water Conservancy District's application for Congressionally Directed Spending.

Thank you for your consideration of this application. Should you require further information, please feel free to contact us at: bocc@rbc.us.

Sincerely,

Board of County Commissioner of
Rio Blanco County, Colorado

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