



**SHOSHONE**  
WATER RIGHT PRESERVATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **West Slope Counties Urge Department of Interior to Release Funds Awarded for the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Project**

**Grand Junction, Colorado** — On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, Mesa County, on behalf of six Western Slope counties, sent a letter to the Department of Interior requesting the release of the \$40 million in federal funding previously awarded to the Shoshone Water Rights Preservation Project. The letter was signed by all county commissioners from Mesa, Garfield, Delta, Montrose, Moffat, and Rio Blanco Counties.

“As County Commissioners presenting rural, agricultural communities across Colorado’s Western Slope, we write to strongly support full federal investment in the Shoshone water Rights Preservation Project,” the letter states.

Along with their public support for this effort, Mesa and Garfield Counties have also committed \$1 and \$3 million respectively towards the \$99 million purchase price of the Shoshone Water Rights. These funds, in addition to contributions from other local governments, water entities and regional organizations, have brought the total amount raised to over \$57 million. The \$40 million awarded by the federal government in January will bring the total to \$97 million but is still under review by the Trump administration.

“The Shoshone water rights are a lifeline for Western Colorado. Our farmers, ranchers, recreation enthusiasts, and energy producers depend on this water, and they’ve done their part to protect it,” said **Mesa County Commissioner Bobbie Daniel**. “I worked hard to gather support from counties across the Western Slope and deliver this message directly to the Department of the Interior. Now it’s time for Washington to step up. We are asking to keep water where it belongs and honor the communities that built the backbone of this state.”

“When the Colorado River is healthy, it supports us all,” said **Perry Will, Garfield County Commissioner**. “This project shows strong local leadership and regional collaboration. It’s a smart investment that puts federal dollars to work for agriculture, energy production, recreation, and the rural communities that rely on those.”

“Securing the Shoshone water rights has been a priority of the West Slope for decades,” said **Andy Mueller, General Manager of the Colorado River District**. “We are thankful for the support of

all of the counties and the leadership shown by Commissioners Bobbie Daniel and Perry Will in elevating the critical role played by the Shoshone water in all our communities, and their strategic efforts to secure this much-needed funding.”

These funds, awarded through the Inflation Reduction Act’s Upper Colorado River Basin Environmental Program, known as B2E, were dedicated to projects which will mitigate the impacts of drought and support ecosystems throughout the Colorado River Basin. Permanent protection of these senior water rights will protect drinking water for small communities, and irrigation water essential for the production of food and fiber.

The Shoshone Water Rights, some of the largest and most senior non-consumptive water rights on the Colorado River, are vital to maintaining flows that support a wide range of interests across Western Colorado. In December 2023, the Colorado River District reached a landmark \$99 million purchase and sale agreement with Public Service Company of Colorado, a subsidiary of Xcel Energy, to transfer ownership of those water rights. Representing a broad-based coalition, the Colorado River District is working to permanently secure these flows in partnership with the State of Colorado to ensure they remain in the Colorado River. With strong bipartisan backing and local support, the River District will continue to move forward toward fulfilling the financial obligations of this transformative agreement.

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