



MEMORANDUM

TO: Minturn Town Council
FROM: Siri Roman, General Manager
DATE: February 15, 2024
RE: Resolution supporting passage of the Bolts Ditch Act

As Town Council is aware, Eagle River Water & Sanitation District and Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority purchased the Bolts Lake property in Minturn to construct and operate a 1,200 acre-foot water storage reservoir, which will be critical to providing sustainable water supplies for our region. In turn, Bolts Ditch and the Bolts Ditch Headgate will be essential to fill Bolts Lake Reservoir. Town Council will consider a Resolution at its Feb. 21 meeting supporting the passage of the Bolts Ditch Act, which provides necessary federal authorization for the District and Authority to conduct maintenance work on Bolts Ditch and its headgate within the Holy Cross Wilderness.

In 2022, Town Council passed a resolution requesting that federal legislation be introduced to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act ("Dingell Act") to add the District and Authority as government entities, along with the Town of Minturn, that may use, maintain, and repair Bolts Ditch and its headgate. The Bolts Ditch Act was subsequently introduced on June 22, 2023, in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Joe Neguse (H.R.4297) and the U.S. Senate by Sen. Michael Bennet (S.2156). On January 31, 2024, I testified in support of H.R.4297 before the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands of the Committee on Natural Resources. Town Manager Metteer joined me in Washington, D.C., to attend the hearing in unity.

The Bolts Ditch Act is critical to the development of Bolts Lake Reservoir. When the Holy Cross Wilderness was originally designated in 1980, Bolts Ditch was mistakenly included within the wilderness boundary. While the Bolts Ditch diversion structure is only 450 feet within the Holy Cross boundary, the wilderness designation prevented the continued use, maintenance, and repair by any entity. In 2019, Minturn sought a narrow wilderness exemption to rehabilitate Bolts Ditch as part of its municipal water system. A provision was included in the Dingell Act directing the Secretary of Agriculture to issue a special use authorization exclusively to Minturn for non-motorized access and use for the purposes of the diversion of water and use, maintenance, and repair of Bolts Ditch and its headgate.

The Bolts Ditch Act is a simple amendment to the Dingell Act explicitly granting the District and Authority the same access as Minturn. On behalf of the 50,000 local customers of the Eagle River Water & Sanitation District and the Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority who will benefit from Bolts Lake Reservoir, thank you for your consideration of a resolution supporting passage of the Bolts Ditch Act.