



UPPER CLEAR CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 3058
Idaho Springs, CO 80452

November 16, 2023

Ms. Robin Graber
Program Coordinator
Water Resources and Planning Office
Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Letter of Support for Clear Creek Watershed & Forest Health Partnership's WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant Application

Dear Ms. Graber,

The Upper Clear Creek Watershed Association (UCCWA) is designated under Section 208 of the Clean Water Act as the management agency responsible for reviewing proposed actions that may impact water quality in the watershed. Our membership includes municipalities, counties, dischargers, and related entities located in the upper Clear Creek watershed, primarily in Clear Creek and Gilpin counties.

Our membership is acutely aware of the risks in the watershed including water quality degradation from historic mining operations, sediment and chemicals from major roadway operations, potential catastrophic wildfires and post-fire impacts, and other water quality and quantity stressors from drought and climate change. UCCWA supports any efforts to reduce those risks. We believe the best way to protect our source water is through collaborative efforts, and specifically through the Clear Creek Watershed & Forest Health Partnership, which we view as an implementation arm for water quality improvement and protection projects in our watershed.

UCCWA supports the Clear Creek Partnership's initiative to staff a coordinator for the organization and for that position and consultants to work on key development initiatives for the collaborative. A Watershed Coordinator would work directly with our watershed communities and stakeholders to evaluate the Clear Creek Partnership's governance structure and potential status as a not-for-profit organization, develop an organizational financial management plan, and increase organizational capacity to implement a watershed and forest health restoration plan.

Non-governmental watershed organizations have demonstrable value in aggregating resources, expertise, and perspectives to provide effective place-based resource management, and the Clear Creek Partnership is growing into that role for watershed. Hiring dedicated personnel for the Clear Creek Partnership will expand the organization's capacity and provide more effective stewardship of wildfire mitigation and watershed restoration efforts in the Clear Creek basin.

Sincerely,

Bradford R. Benning
Bradford Benning, Esq.
UCCWA, Chair