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**THE COLORADO RIVER  
 WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
 Grand Jtnction, Colo.  
 9 April 1951.

Ed. L. Dutcher, Esq., Chairman,  
 Gunnison Watershed Conservation Committee,  
 Gunnison, Colorado,

My Dear Mr. Dutcher:

Understanding that you are the Chairman of a Committee with the name as above, to which has been delegated the task of compiling the comment and the decision of Gunnison County regarding the Gunnison River Project and Colorado River Storage Project Reports, I am writing you to bring to your attention and that of the Committee some things which, because of circumstances I will later detail, have not been made known to Gunnison folks. I feel that these things are so important that they should be made known to them and I want to propose a way in which this can be done. If you are not the Chairman of this Committee or if I have the wrong name for it I wish you would correct me and tell me how I can get in touch with the Committee and its Chairman.

While the details of Jex' 'Basin Report' on Gunnison river, and the broad outline and expectations of the Colorado River Storage Project were completely aired at the recent meeting in Gunnison, and some of us tried to bring into the discussion the effect these projects would have on Gunnison County, there was one subject that was not discussed — trans-basin diversion. Since several folks from Pueblo were present it must appear that this is still a very live subject.

I had reduced the things I was prepared to say to writing, and a large part of that writing had to do with trans-basin diversion, as you can see from the copy I am sending you. After arriving at Gunnison I was requested not to mention that subject in my talk — and did not do so as you will remember. The same folks who asked me not to mention diversion then, could see no harm in bringing it to the attention of the Gunnison County people at a subsequent meeting, when no outsiders were present. The District Board feels, I believe, and I know I do very strongly, that the effect of some of these things on trans-basin diversion is something the Gunnison people ought to know about, before they make any decision. With this in mind the District Board planned, even before the meeting Thursday, to come to Gunnison the day before their regular meeting and on April 16th, to meet either with the Committee or Gunnison people generally to point out how the building of Curecanti reservoir would practically prevent diversion from Gunnison river. At the worst it would reduce any such diversion to a nominal amount.

When I mentioned in my talk that we Western Colorado folks could not hold a meeting about our own affairs without California or Eastern Colorado looking

A MUNICIPAL DISTRICT  
 ORGANIZED UNDER STATE LAW  
 FOR DEVELOPMENT UPON AND  
 CONSERVATION OF  
 COLORADO RIVER IN COLORADO

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over our shoulders, it was somewhat in a spirit of raillery, but there was some rancor in it too. If we had talked about the effect of Curecanti on diversion, the Arkansas valley folks would have rushed home and raised up that whole valley to fight the Storage Project, which not only Western Colorado, but the whole Upper Basin desperately needs. If we do not raise this issue publicly in the open, however, perhaps those folks will not fight the Storage Project and Colorado will appear at least, to be solidly for it, which is not only highly desirable but something we owe the other Upper Division states. As a matter of fact the Eastern Colorado people who have diversions now or expect to have them cannot, in their own interest, oppose the Storage Project, because the safety of their own diversions, as of our water rights, depends upon the ability to make the necessary deliveries to the Lower Basin without curtailing some of our later and all of our future water rights.

IN all the hours of explanation about the purpose and features of the Storage Project, there was not one word said about how it would affect Gunnison County, which is what you people want to know. Some of that information I tried to supply and I want now to complete it by talking about the one thing I could not talk about at the recent meeting — trans-basin diversion.

According to the record of flow at Iola (1938-1948) there has been during the irrigation season (May 16--August 15) an annual average of 357,200 acre-feet; plus the consumptive use in Gunnison County, out of an annual average flow, after that consumptive use, of 667,000 acre-feet. (Annual average flow for the period 1920-1948, after consumptive use, was 712,000 acre-feet). For the non-irrigation season average flow of 309,800 acre-feet, it does not seem likely Gunnison County can develop any use, but Curecanti reservoir would be such a use and would go far to prevent the diversion of this water. No study of Gunnison County irrigation has ever been made, beyond a few yearly studies on Tomichi creek, that I made years ago. Assuming, as is virtually true, that 60,000 acres is irrigated for hay and some pasture, at and above Gunnison, it seems probable that water is applied to this 60,000 acres at an average rate of 4.00 acre-feet per acre, even in the short irrigation season of 92 days, with a consumptive use of 60,000 acre-feet. Actually the season varies in length, and is often shorter, but only varies by a few days either way.

If this assumption is correct, of the 240,000 acre-feet applied, some 180,000 acre-feet appears at Iola as return flow the rate of which is known to be high for this type of use. This means that during the irrigation season, from the average flow of 357,200 acre-feet, 177,200 acre-feet is never diverted or used in Gunnison County at all, and that 60,000 acre-feet is all that is actually consumed there. Now if all the projects proposed by Mr. Jex' report are built, but nobody has demonstrated that they are either needed or desired, 121,000 acre-feet of demand water will have to be stored or diverted and consumptive use in Gunnison County might approach or somewhat exceed 100,000 acre-feet and irrigation demand would approach 360,000 acre-feet, both yearly, which is just about what the river flows during the irrigation season. Of course, the reservoirs Mr. Jex proposed would have to be, and would be, filled to a

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large extent from non-irrigation season flow.

Now any attempted diversion must be built so that it will operate the year round, since almost half the water flows during the non-irrigation season. It would, however, be aimed primarily at the high flood flows during the irrigation season and the water of those flows which is not now a part of your irrigation demand and use. If people can be found who want the new lands, and are willing to settle on them and pay for the new projects reported by Mr. Jex, this would practically wipe out the excess flood water that is not now being used. If this is not done the Arkansas people will be after at least 150,000 acre-feet out of the flood and all the non-irrigation season water they can secure, unless we put that water to use by building Curecanti reservoir.

If Curecanti and the participating projects are built this is about what will happen:

	<u>1938-1948</u> <u>acre-feet</u>
Unused in Gunnison County	56,000 a.f.
Return flow from present use	180,000 a.f.
Return flow from additional use	81,000 a.f.
Non-irrigation season flow	<u>309,800 a.f.</u>
Total flow at Iola	626,800 a.f.
Inflow below Iola	<u>321,000 a.f.</u>
Total inflow to Curecanti reservoir	947,800 a.f.

If we build the participating projects but not Curecanti reservoir, we are immediately in trouble with priorities down the river, and at the same time subject to large diversions, while if we build neither this situation is simply made worse.

From the inflow to Curecanti reservoir tabulated above it is hard to see how any item can be eliminated or lessened without seriously interfering with the utility of that reservoir for the purpose for which it is proposed. There has to be supplied from it, water needed by the Uncompahgre Project, water for several canals near Delta and the Redland Water & Power Company near Grand Junction. A rough estimate of the annual draft of these several rights is that they will take 500,000 acre-feet of the inflow while Curecanti is filling, but will be fully supplied by power releases as long as it can be kept full.

And the intention, of course, is to keep Curecanti reservoir full, except in extreme emergency, because water can be stored there with less evaporation loss than anywhere else in the reservoir system. Once the reservoir is filled, the Arkansas people would probably say that now the reservoir was filled that left water they could divert, but the answer is that we must have not only a reservoir full of water, but the means of filling it again when we have to empty it. Thus it would appear that by building Curecanti reservoir we could provide a use for all the water that might otherwise flow, unused, out of Gunnison County. This use, the payment of our Lower Basin obligation, is just as real a use as any of our own water rights and must be so recognized by both

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their principal means of livelihood are greater than any disadvantages to their incidental means of income.

I do not like the idea of filling this reservoir with water any better than any of them do, but I know that we cannot have growth and improvement without change and it appears also that in this case we cannot even have safety in our water rights without some change.

Because of the short time in which a decision has to be made, and also because the proposed meeting with the District Board comes so late in that short time, it has seemed wise to lay out for you the general outline of what we can expect with regard to trans-basin diversion in this letter, even at the risk of making it too long. It hardly seems necessary to say to you that for the same reasons of policy that prevented me from talking about this subject at the last meeting, the less publicity this thing gets the better it will be for us all. Finally, I hope that, no matter what their decision may be on their own particular problem the Committee will give their assent to the Storage Project as a general proposition, having in mind that while they may not want to avail themselves of the good things it would do for them, the rest of us want and greatly need it.

I hope your Committee will agree to meet with the District Board on the 16th, for I am sure they will learn things there that they need to know. Will you write me your ideas about this thing?

Sincerely yours,

*F. C. Merriell*  
F. C. Merriell  
Secretary

cc-Frank Delaney Esq.,  
Glenwood Springs, Colo.  
Hume S. White, Esq.,  
Eagle, Colorado  
Hon. Dan H. Hughes,  
Montrose, Colo  
Hon. Clifford H. Stone,  
Denver, Colo.