

To: CWCB Water Plan Grant Program  
From: Southwest Basin Roundtable  
Date: October 24, 2024  
Re: Support for Ute Mountain Ute Tribe Water Plan Grant

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The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is submitting an application for a Water Plan Grant to identify and prioritize full use of their Reserved Water Rights on the reservation. Specifically, these rights include a large storage right in the lower Mancos River basin, several direct flow rights on the San Juan River and McElmo Creek, stock pond storage rights for domestic and stock use, and stock pond storage rights. The Tribe is interested in understanding the feasibility of using these rights confirmed through Consent Decrees with the federal government and the state of Colorado that have yet to be fully developed. The ultimate purpose of the proposal is to provide more economic benefits to the Tribal members.

The Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe Federal Reserved Water Rights Options Study was a Basin Identified Project in the recent Southwest Basin Implementation Plan as follows:

“The Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe plans to seek funding to begin exploring options to develop the Tribe’s unused Federal Reserved water rights for the benefit of the Tribal membership. As specific uses are identified as part of the study, separate projects will spin off for further analysis to include more detailed economic benefits, infrastructure needs, and marketing opportunities. These separate projects will then be included in future updates to the IPP database and may be included in more detail in future water availability analyses.”

The Southwest Basin Roundtable members recognize the importance and certainty associated with tribal water development to both the Tribe and to the economy of the entire region. As noted in our Principles for Cooperation and Collaboration, “The Southwest BRT limits conflicts and promotes collaboration within the framework of state, tribal, and federal plans, policies, authorities, and rights.” Although the use of the Reserved Rights associated with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe Water Plan Grant are completely within their Reservation, they share the scarce water supply with others within the watersheds and will continue to work cooperatively and transparently with those water users throughout the study.

The Southwest Basin Roundtable included in their Principles for Legal Acknowledgements a clear statement that “The Southwest BRT recognizes and upholds the unique settlement of tribal reserved water rights claims through Colorado water rights settlements and consent decrees” and support the Tribe moving closer to full use of their settled water rights.

As such, the Southwest Basin Roundtable is please to provide this Letter of Support for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe Water Plan Grant.