December 17, 2020

Gunnison County Commissioners
200 East Virginia
Gunnison, CO 81230

Re: Colorado River District Board of Directors – Gunnison County Representative Vacancy

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in serving as the Gunnison County Representative on the Colorado River Water Conservation District (Colorado River District) Board of Directors. I have the education, experience, and water resource knowledge to be a strong advocate and voice for all water users in Gunnison County. I have spent the majority of my career focusing on water resource issues within the Gunnison Basin and larger Colorado River System as a whole, while also having the great fortune to call Gunnison my home.

Following is a summary of my qualifications and 20+ years of water resource experience:

- **Gunnison County Resident**: County resident of eighteen years. Owner of real property in county. Native Coloradan. Raised in a small rural community in southwestern Colorado. Fifth generation ranching family.
- **Education**: Bachelors' degree in Environmental Biology and Masters' degree in Limnology (study of freshwater systems) from the University of Colorado.
- **Water Resource Related Experience**: Colorado Water Quality Control Division (Graduate Intern); Hydrosphere Resource Consultants (Water Quality Specialist); Summit County Government (Water Quality/Wetland Specialist); Colorado Department of Transportation (Environmental Planner); SC Environmental LLC (President); Colorado River District (Water Resource Specialist); Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (General Manager) – Current.
- **Knowledge of Water Resource Issues within the Colorado River District Boundary:** Served as a consultant to the Colorado River District for 12 years before joining them as staff in 2015 as a Water Resource Specialist. Assigned to the Gunnison Basin. Job responsibilities included coordination and collaboration with local water users and regional, state, and federal entities to implement water resource improvement projects. Also provided technical expertise across the District on water quantity and water quality issues, water conservation best management practices, federal environmental policy and compliance, agricultural irrigation infrastructure improvements, water banking, and drought contingency and demand management.
- **Knowledge of Gunnison County Water Resource Issues:** Currently the General Manager of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District serving all of Gunnison County and portions of Saguache and Hinsdale Counties. Primary focus of the District at this time is community outreach and public input into the development of watershed and stream management plans that protect, maintain and improve all water uses within the basin.
- **Knowledge of Gunnison Basin Water Resource Issues:** Currently serve as the At-Large-Representative on the Gunnison Basin Round Table (GBRT) and the Basin Implementation Plan Update Sub-committee. Served on the Gunnison County Land Preservation Board for approximately 12 years, the last 2 years of my service as the Vice Chair.
- **County Planning:** Summit County Community Development Department. Responsible for working with the general public, development community, and ski areas on water quality, water resource and wetland protection issues.
- **Statewide Water Resource Issues of Concern:** Currently serve on the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Demand Management (DM) Feasibility Investigation work group

(Economics and Local Government). Responsible for providing input to the CWCB about the potential impacts (positive and negative) of a potential DM program. Member of Colorado Water Congress (CWC) and serve on the CWC state legislative affairs and CWC water-quality committee.

- **Funding Acquisition:** As a private consultant, I worked in collaboration with the Colorado River District and directly with water users to raise over $40M in federal and state funding (leveraged with an additional $50M of other partner investment) to support water resource improvement projects within the Gunnison Basin.
- **Large and small group facilitation:** Served as the Coordinator of the Gunnison Basin and Grand Valley Selenium Task Force. Worked with the Department of Interior, Colorado River District and diverse groups of water users to develop and successfully implement a federal Selenium Management Program conservation strategy that allowed irrigation to continue in the Gunnison Basin under the Aspinall Unit Re-operations Record of Decision.
- **West Slope Drought Contingency Planning:** Served as Colorado River District staff lead for the Colorado River Water Bank Work Group which explored the feasibility of water banking as a demand management tool.
- **Clean Energy and Hydropower**: As a consultant I developed funding packages and oversaw federal reporting for multiple irrigation delivery system canal hydroelectric projects in the lower Gunnison Basin.
- **Western Climate Resiliency Strategy Work Group:** At the request of Senator Michael Bennet, I am currently serving on a western climate work group charged with assisting Senator Bennet with initial framing discussions around what a strategic approach to a national policy framework on climate resilience may look like from a western perspective.
- **Partnership Building:** Co-managed and coordinated all aspects of an $8M federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program in the lower Gunnison Basin to improve on-farm irrigation application efficiency and off-farm irrigation deliveries to ensure the long-term economic viability of agriculture.

In closing Commissioners, my eighteen years of water resource experience carrying out projects in the Gunnison Basin, previous employment with the Colorado River District, knowledge of greater Colorado River Basin issues and policy, and current position as General Manager of the Upper Gunnison District make me uniquely qualified to represent Gunnison County. I not only have experience working with all levels of government and directly with our community, but I also have intimate and detailed knowledge of what is takes to solve complex environmental, recreational, municipal, industrial and agricultural water resource needs starting from the concept phase through actual on-the-ground implementation. I will continue to take the time to listen closely to our water users, communicate regularly with the public and Gunnison County Commissioners, ensure the responsible use of our precious resource, and protect and defend the water resources within our County, the entire Colorado River District boundary, and the State of Colorado.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Sonja R. Chavez

Sonja R. Chavez

Phone: (970) 596-4066
Email: schavez@ugrwcd.org

Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District

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December 18, 2020

Transmitted by electronic mail

Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
200 E. Virginia Avenue
Gunnison, CO 81230
bocc@gunnisoncounty.org

Re: Gunnison County Director, Colorado River Water Conservation District

Dear Commissioners Houck, Mason, and Smith,

I am writing to convey the strong support of the Upper Gunnison District Board of Directors for the appointment of Sonja Chavez to represent Gunnison County on the Colorado River District Board. We must be represented by a Director who has the knowledge, skills, and experience to be the force for Gunnison County on that Board that Bill Trampe has been over the past several years. Sonja meets all of these criteria.

Sonja grew up on her family's cattle ranch located on the banks of the Purgatoire River in Southern Colorado, where she learned first-hand the value of water to agriculture and developed a passion for water that has carried over into her professional life for more than twenty years. She earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in environmental science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. During her professional career she has demonstrated expertise in water resource management and policy including working with various federal and state agencies, water users, water providers, the general public and technical teams to carry out research, planning studies, partnership agreements, and implementation of natural resource improvement projects that address water resource availability, water management, on- and off-farm efficiency, non-point source pollution control, drought, endangered species concerns, and has overseen all aspects of projects from planning, design, contracting, construction implementation, inspections and project close-outs. Prior to joining the Upper Gunnison District as our General Manager Sonja was employed at the Colorado River District as a Water Resource Specialist for four years, giving her an intimate knowledge of the River District's operations. She received outstanding references from River District management, and has exceeded our expectations as General Manager.

Sonja has been a resident of Gunnison County for seventeen years and is familiar with local issues related to serving effectively as Gunnison County's Director on the Colorado River District Board. We urge you to appoint her to that position.

Sincerely,

Michelle Pierce, President