

MEDIA RELEASE

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AGNC RELEASES STATEMENT ON SKI AREA WATER RIGHTS ISSUE

RIFLE – Scott McInnis, Executive Director of the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC), released a statement today regarding the United States Forest Service’s attempt to make the renewal of special-use permits by Colorado ski areas conditional on transference of water rights to the federal government, and efforts in the Colorado State Legislature to prohibit such requirements:

“The AGNC vehemently opposes any attempt by the U.S. Forest Service, or any other federal agency, to make relinquishment of private water rights a condition of permit renewal for users of government lands, as demonstrated against our local ski industry last year. We believe this is in violation of Colorado water law, and represents an egregious intrusion on private property rights.

In addition to the immediate harm done to the property rights of the affected skiing businesses, AGNC is especially concerned with the broader ramifications of this action; what other permit holders on government land will be required to hand over their water rights in order to renew their permits? Energy developers? Farmers and ranchers? Grazing Associations? Local governments maintaining roads or facilities on these lands?

With nearly 70% of northwest Colorado’s land being government-owned (over 70% in Mesa and Rio Blanco Counties) it is easy to see how dependent our regional economy is on these lands. Nearly all of our local industries – energy, agriculture, tourism, and transportation, among others – rely on access to government land. It is unconscionable that the agencies charged with managing these lands for multiple uses would use private water rights as bargaining chips in the permit renewal process.

AGNC therefore supports efforts at the state level to prohibit this and similar future actions on the part of the USFS and other federal land management agencies.”

For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Scott McInnis at 970-285-7630

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AGNC is a voluntary regional association representing cities and counties in northwest Colorado including Mesa, Garfield, Rio Blanco, Moffat and Routt.