Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 19, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our support of *Over The River*, the temporary work of art that internationally renowned artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have proposed to exhibit in Colorado. We ask that the Department make this project a priority and that the Bureau of Land Management give a fair, full and expeditious environmental review of the artists' application. This project involves suspending 5.9 miles of silvery fabric high above a 40-mile stretch of the Arkansas River between Cañon City and Salida. It would be exhibited for two weeks, hopefully during the summer of 2012.

We believe that *Over The River* has the potential to be of great benefit to the state of Colorado, both culturally and economically. Estimates by independent researchers have projected that nearly $200 million in additional spending could flow into the Colorado economy as a result of this project. Furthermore, *Over The River* will leave Colorado with a lasting artistic legacy and will help enhance our state's growing reputation as a place of cultural excellence. Even more impressive is the fact that Colorado will reap these benefits without public subsidy or taxpayer support, as the estimated $50 million cost of *Over The River* will be entirely funded by the artists.

This project has received widespread support throughout Colorado, including tourism organizations, the commercial rafting community, chambers of commerce, economic development groups, the arts community, and many residents from the Arkansas River Valley and across the state. A list of some of the supporting organizations and individuals is attached.

We recognize that there are challenges to completing *Over The River*, particularly as it relates to traffic and safety. It is important to us that these issues are aired and mitigated before the work of art will be exhibited. We commend Christo and Jeanne-Claude for requesting a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – as opposed to a less extensive Environmental Assessment – in order to thoroughly analyze and address the concerns of local residents. We look forward to reviewing the EIS, and we have confidence that the artists are willing to take the necessary actions to mitigate the impacts outlined in the final document. Given Christo and Jeanne-Claude's track record of sensitivity to environmental and public concerns, we believe that the project's challenges can be addressed and that *Over The River* can become a reality.

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We appreciate your office's hard work on this project. We will look forward to communicating with you about *Over The River* in the future as this project continues to move forward.

Sincerely,

Mark Udall
U.S. Senate

Michael Bennet
U.S. Senate

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

John Salazar
Member of Congress

Betsey Markey
Member of Congress

Mike Coffman
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

***Over The River* Supporters**

Many organizations have already pledged their support of *Over The River*. Below is a partial list of the individuals and organizations that have submitted statements of support to date.

- Arkansas River Outfitters Association
- Art Works For the Heart of the Rockies
- Canon City Chamber of Commerce
- Richard F. Celeste, President of Colorado College
- Chaffee County Visitor's Bureau
- Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center
- Colorado Council on the Arts
- Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR)
- Maggie Divelbiss, Executive Director of the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center
- Dvorak Expeditions and Bill Dvorak
- Fremont Center for the Arts
- Fremont County Tourism Council
- Dr. Robin Gooldy, Superintendent of Canon City Schools
- John W. Hickenlooper, Mayor of the City & County of Denver
- The Mountain Mail
- Barbara O'Brien, Lieutenant Governor of Colorado
- Sangre de Cristo Arts Center Board of Trustees
- Doug Shane, Executive Director of the Canon City Chamber of Commerce
- Lewis Sharp, Denver Art Museum Director
- George Turner, Former Executive Director of the Canon City Chamber of Commerce
- Visit Denver, The Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Whitewater Adventure Outfitters