

EL PASO COUNTY



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JIM BENSBERG
DISTRICT #5

June 7, 2010

Ms. Helen Hankins
State Director
BLM Colorado State Office
2850 Youngfield Street
Lakewood, CO 80215-7093

Dear Ms. Hankins:

I respectfully submit this letter to relay my strong support for Christo and the late Jeanne Claude's proposed work of art, *Over The River*. As a third-generation Colorado native, and current El Paso County Commissioner, I consider this to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for visitors that will present many great opportunities to Colorado and El Paso County. *Over The River* will be a project that my community, Coloradans and people around the world will treasure for years to come.

Visitors from around the world will travel to Southern Colorado to view the 5.9 miles of silvery, luminous fabric along a 40-mile stretch of the Arkansas River. Many of these visitors will stay in or travel to Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region. With the closest major airport located in Colorado Springs, our museums, natural beauty and other amenities will benefit from the national and international visitors, serving to promote El Paso County for years to come. It will be an honor for Colorado to host this project and I hope that the artists' project, as proposed, is ultimately approved by the BLM once it completes the exhaustive EIS process.

Any art of import almost always elicits controversy and I am aware that *Over The River* has its critics. I have attended several meetings on this project and am also aware of the artists' excellent reputation regarding the mitigation and planning around potential environmental, traffic and community impacts. I am convinced that Christo will address every reasonable concern, while making certain that the construction, viewing and removal processes are as safe and organized as possible. The fact that Christo is funding this project without taxpayer support is a testament to his commitment to our communities.

I understand that the draft Environmental Impact Statement will be released on July 15th, followed by a 45-day public comment period. At that time I will make certain to review the

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draft EIS and submit additional comments. However, I wanted to make you and your office aware of my support immediately.

If I can be of any assistance or provide additional information, please do not hesitate to ask and I thank you for your commitment to a fair and open process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Bensberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Jim Bensberg
El Paso County Commissioner, District 5

c: Steve Coffin, Managing Principal, GBSM, Inc.