Congressman Jared Polis Commended for Defending Rivers and Streams

DENVER (March 13, 2014) — Western Resource Advocates and Conservation Colorado applaud Congressman Jared Polis for his decision to protect the nation’s headwater streams and the rural communities that they support by withdrawing his endorsement of H.R. 3189, the so-called “Water Rights Protection Act.” In his Dear Colleague letter, Rep. Polis addresses the recent changes that have been made to the bill and acknowledges the major flaws to the legislation and how it could upset the balance between the needs of the growing population, aquatic habitats, and recreation opportunities.

“Gold medal trout streams and whitewater rafting help make Colorado’s high country so special. We thank Rep. Polis for protecting water in legendary rivers like the Fraser, Blue, and the Eagle.” said Bart Miller, Water Program Director for Western Resource Advocates.

The bill, in its current state, could have a much broader impact than what its sponsors intended. It was originally aimed at addressing the ski industry’s concern regarding a potential attempt by a federal agency to leverage federal ownership of their private water rights. The issue is contentious because the decision could impact ski companies’ private property. However, as currently drafted, H.R. 3189 could limit the Forest Service and other federal land agencies’ authority to protect streamflow below reservoirs for fishing, rafting and other important instream and downstream uses.

Rep. Polis’ proposed amendment to H.R. 3189 would preserve long-standing and legitimate authority to protect rivers arising on and flowing through federal land, while addressing the legitimate concerns of the ski industry.

Western Resource Advocates is a regional nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the West’s land, air, and water. Offices or staff are located in Boulder (CO), Phoenix and Tucson (AZ), Pocatello (ID), Santa Fe (NM), Carson City (NV) and Salt Lake City (UT). Go to [www.WesternResourceAdvocates.org](http://www.WesternResourceAdvocates.org) and follow us on Twitter @WRADV.