



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CO Depts Express Concern over Federal Executive Orders to Lift Environmental Reviews

DENVER - The Colorado Departments of Natural Resources, Public Health and Environment, Transportation and the Colorado Energy Office joined together in a statement expressing concern about President Donald Trump's Executive order to lift reviews of environmentally impactful activities.

"The June 4, 2020, Executive Order from President Donald Trump directs federal agencies to bypass requirements for a number of bedrock federal environmental laws, including:

- The National Environmental Policy Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Clean Water Act
- Federal Policy and Land Management Act

It leaves to the federal agencies what projects or decisions they may move forward without complying with the protections of these and other laws, and removes the public's ability to know about and comment on how such agency decisions will affect them and their communities.

Our Departments have successfully worked with local governments, businesses, stakeholders and citizens on numerous high profile projects where public engagement and

additional environmental review enabled better projects, greater community buy-in, and increased protections for wildlife and natural resources. Specific examples include the Central I-70 Development in Denver, I-70 Mountain Corridor near Glenwood Springs, Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument and Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project.

The attempt to avoid public engagement, environmental analysis and mitigation will damage Coloradans' health, environment and economy. It will affect all parts of the state, from our prized public lands to urban development. It will threaten protections and careful balancing for water projects, as well as progress towards environmental justice including in building transportation infrastructure -- which has had a legacy of significantly impacting urban downtowns and minority communities in the 1950s and 1960s, before these environmental protections were put in place. At a time when the risks of respiratory illnesses are especially worrisome, we should be doing more to account for communities' health, not less.

The state of Colorado prioritizes efficient government processes with respect to project approvals, but emphasizes that public input and participation is a critical step in that efficient process, ensuring we're not allowing public resources to be spent or used for publicly harmful practices.

While emergency exceptions do occur for some federal environmental rules, they are intended for true physical emergencies such as washed out roads from the 2013 floods, replacement of critical facilities after wildfires or failing dams.

Neither the COVID-19 emergency nor current economic conditions fall into that category that would justify shortcutting engaged, smart and thoughtful projects and decisions. Indeed, now more than ever, we need to ensure that projects protect our communities and safeguard Coloradans' health, land, air, water, and wildlife.

Unilateral Executive Orders will only serve to delay needed highway improvements, critical energy infrastructure or efforts to protect our endangered wildlife and their habitat through litigation and administrative appeals.

We urge the Trump Administration to work with the State of Colorado on mutual beneficial projects which are collaborative, thorough, and protective of our environment and communities while providing long term benefits for all Coloradans."

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