

Divert Green River water for Colorado? Utah says proposal all wet

[Amy Joi O'Donoghue](#) Published: November 8, 2018 2:29 pm

SALT LAKE CITY — Aaron Million is one of the least popular guys in Utah among water managers, conservation groups and environmental organizations with a likeability score not destined to change anytime soon.

Million, through Water Horse Resources, is asking the Utah state engineer to grant a 55,000-acre-foot diversion of Green River water in Daggett County to pipe to the Front Range of Colorado.

Raised in Utah and now an entrepreneur in Fort Collins, Colorado, Million says the Upper Basin states' share of the Colorado River remains underdeveloped, and that water could be put to use for growing populations in Colorado.



The Flaming Gorge Dam is pictured on Sept. 13, 2004.

In the first official hearing on the diversion application before the Board of

Water Resources, opponents panned the project, which has been more than a decade in the making and undergone several revisions.

The state of Utah formally opposes the project, as do Uintah and Emery county water districts, the Provo River Water Users Association, the Center for Biological Diversity and Trout Unlimited.

Paul Burnett, Utah's water project biologist with Trout Unlimited, argued several points at the Wednesday hearing, including:

- The water diversion would cause environmental damage to the Green and Colorado rivers.
- Water is not available in the amounts claimed under the Colorado River Compact.
- The proposed diversion does not serve Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and other states in the Colorado River Basin.

The downstream diversion of the Green River below Flaming Gorge would compromise critical riparian habitat in a project that Western Resource Advocates argues is overly vague and widely opposed.

“Million is proposing to divert water from Utah to the detriment of multistate water agreements, the recovery of endangered species and millions of dollars in recreation spending,” said Ariel Calmes, Western Resource Advocates’ staff attorney in Utah and Wyoming.

"Western Resource Advocates urges the state engineer to deny Million’s latest application and prevent this wasteful and unaffordable project from proceeding,” Calmes said.

Multiple federal agencies, including the National Park Service and the Bureau

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of Land Management, also oppose the diversion.

Million's project would pipe the water from Utah into Wyoming then Colorado and feature several hydropower components along the way.

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Marcie Larson, a spokeswoman with the Utah Division of Water Resources, said State Engineer Kent Jones wants more information on the petition for diversion of Green River water.

Once that additional information is received, the new petition will undergo another round of review followed by more time for public comment.

Larson added the petition review is in its infancy stage.