Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding HR 4510, Bolts Ditch Access and Use Act.

HR 4510 seeks to resolve issues associated with the use and maintenance of Bolts Ditch near the Town of Minturn, Colorado. The headgate and approximately 450 lineal feet of the ditch are located within the Holy Cross Wilderness on the White River National Forest. The United States opposed two water rights application cases associated with this ditch in 2006 and 2007. Subsequently, the United States and the applicants reached a stipulated agreement and settlement in both cases; where it was agreed that the point of diversion would be removed from the Holy Cross Wilderness unless (1) the point of diversion in the Holy Cross Wilderness is specifically authorized by the President, (2) the Holy Cross Wilderness boundary is altered to exclude the point of diversion from the Wilderness area, or (3) the point of diversion is confirmed by Congress to be specifically included as a part of the authorization of the Homestake Reservoir Project within the Holy Cross Wilderness Area.
HR 4510 would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to issue a special use permit to the Town of Minturn authorizing non-motorized access to use and perform routine maintenance on the Bolts Ditch headgate and 450 lineal feet of Bolts Ditch in accordance with US Forest Service wilderness regulation. This bill does not authorize new construction or reconstruction.

HR 4510 has the support of Eagle County, the Colorado River District, and local and national wilderness advocacy organizations.

The Department does not oppose HR 4510.

This concludes my remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.