



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

La Nina settles in as dominant weather predictor

Bill Badini, HDR – Atmospheric Sciences, indicated that the data indicate a rapid onset of a La Nina winter.

La Nina conditions in the mid-Pacific typically result in above average winter precipitation for the northern half of Colorado, or at least the northeast quadrant of the Colorado River District. Conditions are forecast to be below average for the greater Gunnison Basin and San Juans.

For a summary of Badini's winter predictions, see graphic at right.

La Nina conditions are also likely to cause drier than normal conditions for most of the Front Range.

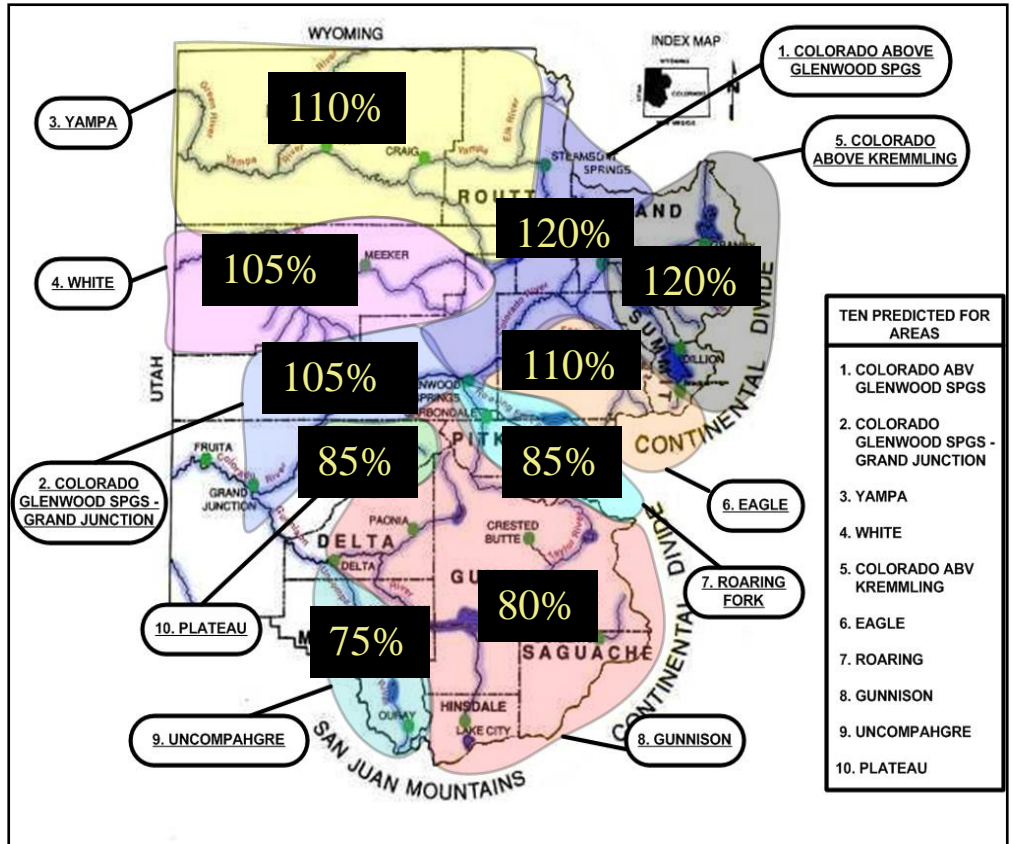
While Badini indicated it's premature to forecast spring and summer 2008 conditions at this time, he did say a reversal to El Nino conditions would likely herald a wet spring and heavy summer monsoons.

The Colorado River District contracts with HDR to advance the science of long-term forecasting and for periodic updates.

Dust on snow found to change runoff

Chris Landry of the Center for Snow and Avalanche Studies provided an update on his research into the effects of desert dust deposition on the Colorado snowpack. The Colorado River District contributes to the cost of the research.

The conclusions of his studies, to date, include a dramatic advance in snow melt when dirt accumulates on snow layers. Freshly fallen snow reflects almost 100 percent of sunlight. When a



A La Nina winter means more snow predicted for the northwest quadrant of the state, and less for the southwest quadrant. Even if the numbers pan out lower than predicted, history shows that it would be very rare to dip below 80 percent of average. Also, if El Nino returns for the spring, moisture usually returns in a strong way, helping to play catch-up.

dust event occurs and darkens the snow pack, solar energy is absorbed into the snowpack, causing it to degrade.

Comparing both actual measurements and historical runoff, Landry concludes that our present snowpack has more dust layers than historically, and that those layers are causing earlier and faster snow melt, in many cases by as much as a month.

These changes will have significant effects on reservoir management. Landry noted that additional study

should provide improved runoff forecasting and runoff modeling.

Board approves budgets

The Board unanimously approved 2008 operating, capital, and enterprise budgets. The general fund's mill levy was reduced 14% to 0.19 mills due to steadily increasing property valuations. This means a home with a market value of \$250,000 will pay about \$3.90 in property taxes to the River District.



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Long-term financing alternatives discussed

The Colorado River District Board discussed alternatives for future project financing. Directors recognize that a District-wide election will be very time consuming and the outcome still uncertain.

Pursuit of any financing alternative must be preceded with a firm commitment to specific, identified projects.

The Board directed staff to return in January with a proposal for establishing a District-wide citizen's advisory committee to improve two-way communications with District constituents.

Staff was also directed to continue exploration of federal legislation to ensure revenue dedication for water-related activities when federal lands are leased or sold.

Legislative activities reviewed

COLORADO — Chris Treese updated the Board with his outlook for water-related state legislation anticipated for 2008.

Among the proposals receiving the most discussion was one to proactively take action to avoid an interstate Compact curtailment by requiring new water rights be conditioned with terms limiting diversion to times when storage is sufficient to prevent a Compact curtailment.

Concerns expressed were that such a requirement would hurt Colorado water users while benefiting Utah and New Mexico water users, make water project financing more difficult by reducing project yield and put a target on conditional water rights that would be senior to this new requirement.

FEDERAL — Treese also highlighted recent Congressional activities including passage of the a \$5 million authorization in the Water Resources and Development Act for selenium control and remediation studies in Colorado.

He also noted the recent introduction of a \$22 million beetle bill to assist in addressing the spread of the spruce pine beetle and

its potentially catastrophic effects on forests and headwaters watersheds.

Stance taken on compact rules and regulations

After considerable discussion in executive session, the Board issued this statement:

"It is premature and distracting for the State Engineer's Office to promulgate rules and regulations to administer water rights in the event curtailment is necessary under the 1922 and 1948 Colorado River compacts.

It is first necessary to complete the SB-122 Colorado River water availability study and to evaluate the available supply and associated risks of a compact curtailment. More importantly, the state's policy priorities should be to avoid a compact curtailment and to work with water users to develop a plan to mitigate the adverse impacts of a curtailment.

Rules and regulations for an unavoidable curtailment can then be developed in a more orderly and equitable manner without tremendous controversy."

Colorado River water availability study issues

Senate Bill 122 this year authorized a \$500,000 study of Colorado River Basin water remaining for Colorado's development under the Colorado River compacts.

Eric Kuhn expressed his concern that the study is being weighed down with individual concerns and indefinable hypotheticals.

Kuhn commended the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) staff for their efforts to compose a concise scope of work but called on all those advising the CWCB to refocus on what is reasonably doable and what can be completed in a timely fashion.

Kuhn proposed a renewed focus on the Phase I determination of water available for development and allied risk implications for

differing development levels and hydrologic scenarios.

Elkhead Reservoir

The Elkhead Reservoir Enlargement Project is essentially complete. The project released 4,300 acre-feet of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's water to benefit the endangered fishes in the Yampa River.

Various post-completion construction activities are pending. The Board approved up to \$40,000 for engineering efforts in 2007 to address remaining construction items, monitor wetlands creation, and to finish required documentation on dam completion.

Old Dillon Enlargement

The District is moving rapidly toward permitting and design work in 2008 and initiation of construction in 2009.

The Board delegated to the Water Supply Projects Committee approval of a yet-to-be-negotiated inter-governmental agreement with reservoir owners — Summit County, Dillon, and Silverthorne.

There is some concern among the reservoir owners of continuing the Colorado River District's recent remuneration for project management services of 10 percent of contracted project costs.

Future meetings

- **Colorado River Water Users Association Convention** — Dec. 13-14, Las Vegas.
- **First Regular Quarterly Meeting** — Jan. 15-16, 2008.
- **Colorado Water Congress Winter Convention** — Jan. 24-25, 2008, Denver.
- **Second Regular Quarterly Meeting** — April 15-16, 2008
- **Third Regular Quarterly Meeting** — July 15-16, 2008.
- **Fourth Regular Quarterly Meeting** — Oct. 14-15, 2008.