

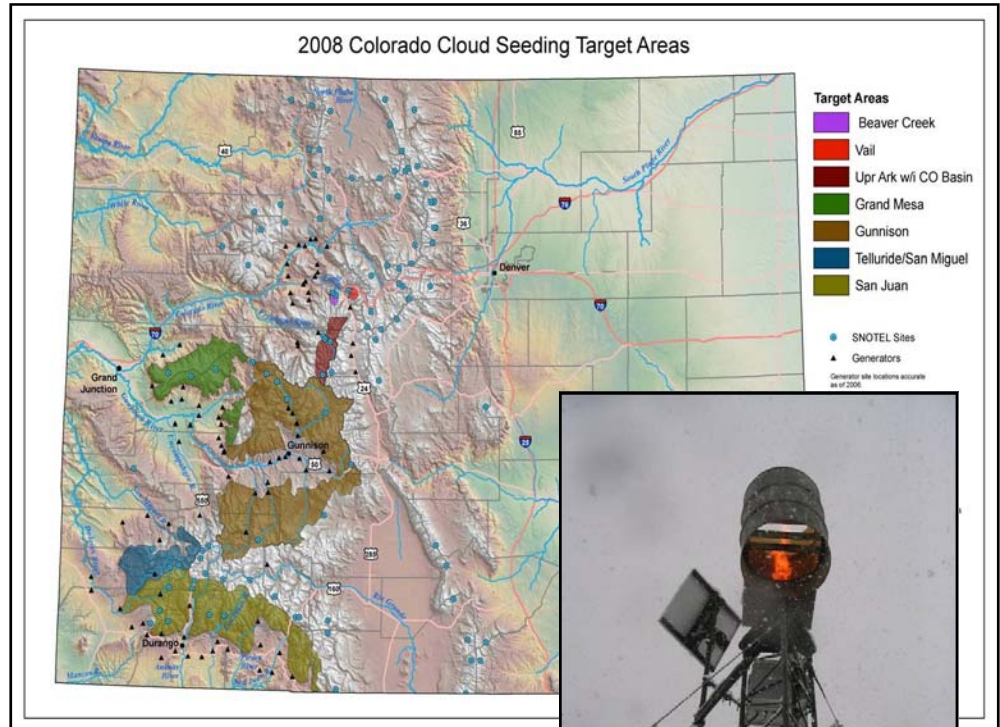
Policies discussed on transmountain diversions, Compact issues

The Colorado River District Board of Directors convened its third quarter meeting on July 15-16, 2008, and approved a new policy on Existing Transmountain Diversions while reviewing drafts of two other new policies on Pre-Compact Water rights and Colorado's Remaining Allocation of Colorado River Water.

The policy on Existing Transmountain Diversion Projects recognizes the importance of the terms and conditions associated with existing transmountain diversion projects and their companion water rights. It commits the Colorado River District to ensuring enforcement of those terms and conditions that protect West Slope water users and stream flows. This policy and other previously adopted Colorado River District policies are available at www.crwcd.org/page_9.

The board reviewed a new policy on Pre-Compact Water Rights that stresses the importance of water uses that pre-date the 1922 Colorado River Compact and the need to explore legislation, policies and programs that protect those uses. Water uses in existence prior to the Colorado River Compact are explicitly exempt from curtailment in the event of a Lower Basin "call" on Upper Basin waters to meet interstate water delivery obligations. As such, they are especially valuable and must be protected against loss or diminution.

Additionally, the board reviewed a draft for a policy on Colorado's Remaining Allocation of Colorado River Water. The policy addresses both the impor-



A Colorado Water Conservation Board map shows areas of focus for weather modification. At right is a cloud seeding generator in action. Details, page 2



tance and difficulties of determining how much water Colorado can safely develop under the provisions of the 1922 and 1948 interstate Colorado River compacts.

The Colorado River Basin in Colorado, which includes the main stem and all tributaries, has never been subject to an interstate call. Water users in other basins in the state on the East Slope are annually called out to meet Colorado's interstate water delivery requirements to downstream states.

The Colorado River District believes that any curtailment of Colorado River water uses to meet the Upper Colorado Basin's (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico) water delivery obligation would have dramatic, adverse impacts

on Colorado's economy and environment.

Accordingly, the Colorado River District's draft policy calls on all water interests in the state to work cooperatively and proactively to prevent a Colorado River Basin compact curtailment.

Additionally, the policy ensures that the district will explore strategies to offset the impacts of a compact curtailment well in advance of such an event.

The revised drafts of these two policies are viewable at www.crwcd.org/page_9.

Public comments are welcomed and encouraged. Final Board action on these draft policies is anticipated in October.



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

Concept reviewed for compact curtailment insurance plan

The Colorado River District and its sister organization, the Southwestern Water Conservation District based in Durango, are in joint discussions on how they might create a water rights plan that would reduce the risk of a Colorado Compact call as water development in the state edges to the last increment available under the Colorado Compact.

The Colorado River District Board of Directors reviewed the conceptual outline of a plan at its July meeting.

Colorado River District General Counsel Peter Fleming and General Manager Eric Kuhn said that of the many concerns, the "insurance plan" would have to address land fallowing and its associated secondary impacts.

In the face of a compact curtailment, the plan would use willing sellers and willing buyers of pre-1922 water rights to meet interstate obligations. While the prior appropriation system recognizes senior water rights, the plan contemplates a crisis situation and the need to protect pre-1922 water rights in the face of what could become a legal scramble.

"We want to make compact-call avoidance a role of this plan," Fleming said.

"The first order of defense is to avoid compact curtailment, then go to this if we have to," Kuhn said. "We are trying to provide an alternative to chaos."

Discussion of the plan included a concern that the West Slope needs to protect pre-1922 water rights that are threatened by abandonment or that are included in change cases without proper thought given to the pre-1922 priority

date.

Southwestern District Consultant Steve Harris said the insurance plan might take five to 10 years to implement. Bruce Whitehead, Southwestern Manager, said his district supports the concepts. He said the plan is an important statewide issue.

Presentations support weather modification

In a presentation about weather modification, the Colorado River District Board of Directors heard that cloud seeding can work to enhance the high country snowpack, and that the technology is evolving to improve both the seeding process and measurement of results.

That assessment was made by Joe Busto of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), Tom Ryan of the Metropolitan Water District of California and Arlen Huggins of the Desert Research Institute of Reno, Nevada.

Ryan said that the Lower Colorado River Basin states of California, Nevada and Arizona assist with weather modification in Colorado as part of an augmentation initiative that arose out of the recent seven basin states agreement on how to share water supply shortages in the Colorado River.

Weather modification is an initiative to create new water supply in the high country of the Upper Basin, the major source of water for the entire basin.

For 2008, the Lower Basin states will increase cloud seeding funding from about \$131,000 to \$296,000 for efforts in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. Ryan predicted that more funding would be available in future years. The CWCB currently contributes about \$175,000 to cloud seeding efforts. In Colorado, vari-

ous entities seed clouds in the San Juans, Central Rockies, West Elks, Gunnison County and the Grand Mesa. Improvements are planned in 2008 for new generators and weather stations on the Grand Mesa.

River levels falling, East Slope dry

Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn reported that West Slope river levels are falling fast but are still high for this time of year because of a good snow year. He noted that the East Slope is facing a prolonged dry period and that moisture levels this summer are currently below the record 2002 drought year. The monsoon season has yet to give an assist.

"It is the classic situation where there is a lot of water on the West Slope and high demand on the East Slope," Kuhn said. He predicted transmountain diversions will be high this year.

"If you manage water, you should always assume the drought starts tomorrow," Kuhn said.

Board approves housing assistance

In recognition of the high cost of housing and the need to attract and retain top quality employees, the Colorado River District Board approved a new housing assistance program.

New employees and qualifying existing employees can apply for a loan of up to \$50,000. The 4 percent, secured loans would be for 15 years. On the fifth anniversary of employment, 20 percent of the principal is forgiven. On the tenth anniversary, another 20 percent is forgiven. As well, another 20 percent is forgiven on the fifteenth anniversary.

Continued on page 3



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

'Super Ditch' touted as boost for ag in Arkansas River Basin

The "Super Ditch" proposed for the Lower Arkansas Valley could be both an alternative to the outright buying and drying of agricultural lands and take pressures off new demands for West Slope transbasin water diversions for the East Slope, according to a presentation given to the Colorado River District Board of Directors.

Jay Winner, head of the recently formed Lower Arkansas Valley Super Ditch Co. Inc., said the concept behind the Super Ditch is to stem the loss of agricultural lands as municipalities continue to buy land and water rights to meet their water supply demands. He said the valley has lost 60,000 acres of irrigated land since 1950 and predicted that another 59,000 irrigated acres could be lost by 2030.

"We don't want to lose 59,000 acres," Winner said.

Winner said the Super Ditch is a name only, that the company incorporates seven primary ditches between Pueblo Reservoir and John Martin Reservoir on the Arkansas River.

The goal is to keep land in production through rotational fallowing as water is leased to cities. Other goals are to contain irrigated land losses to the least productive land and to get the highest value for water rights that are eventually sold to municipalities.

"This is an alternative to being picked off one by one, to stick together and speak with one voice," Winner said. "Aurora says we are trying to put together a cartel. Yes. We want to cooperate, work together and get the highest value for our water. If we are successful, we will keep out of the West Slope."

West Slope water already augments water supplies in the Arkansas River through the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project and the Independence Pass Transmountain Diversion Project. Growth on the Front Range is pressuring agriculture as a source of water supply. The West Slope also faces the potential of more transmountain diversions.

Division engineers report local activities

Division of Water Resources Engineers Wayne Schieldt and Erin Light attended the Colorado River District Board meeting to give updates and continue State Engineer Dick Wolfe's policy of improved communication with the water community.

Schildt, Division 4 engineer (Gunnison Basin), said he believes final settlement of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park federal reserve water right case addresses all concerns, and that it is a big relief to the basin. "It is a great accomplishment to get it done and almost settled," he said of the negotiation that results in quantified flows for the National Park while taking in consideration water storage in Blue Mesa Reservoir, existing water rights and the

need to generate hydro power.

Schildt said he is retiring at the end of the year to enter the consulting world.

Light, Division 6 engineer (Yampa, White and North Platte Basins), said the usual administration of Piceance Creek is not taking place this year because Exxon is building a pipeline and not irrigating the agricultural land it owns.

She also said it remains to be seen whether the Yampa River will require releases from Elkhead Reservoir for endangered fish flows, but "it's not looking that way." Light also noted that the year 2007 saw 120 water rights applications on the White River, and 2008 is showing the same trend.

Future meetings

- **Aug. 20-22: Colorado Water Congress Summer Convention**, Vail
- **Sept. 18: Colorado River District Board budget workshop**, Montrose Pavilion
- **Sept. 18: Joint meeting with the Southwest Water Conservation District**, Montrose Pavilion
- **Sept. 19: Colorado River District Annual Water Seminar**, Two Rivers CC, Grand Junction
- **Oct. 21-22: Colorado River District fourth quarterly meeting**, Glenwood Springs, Hotel Colorado
- **Nov. 14: Four West Slope Roundtables meeting**, Montrose Pavilion
- **Dec. 15-17: Colorado River Water Users Association**, Las Vegas

Board approves housing assistance

Continued from page 2

The remainder must be repaid upon the employee's departure from the Colorado River District, at the loan's maturity, upon sale, upon refinancing or in the event the house is no longer a primary residence.

How to contact us

For more information about the Colorado River District or board actions, call Jim Pokrandt at (970) 945-8522 x 236 or e-mail edinfo@crwcd.org. Visit www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

Tamarisk Coalition reports on local work

Tim Carlson, Executive Director of the Tamarisk Coalition, reported on activities the coalition has spearheaded to eradicate non-native tamarisk invasions along western riparian corridors.

Tamarisk eradication is a priority to counteract the plant's effect of soaking up more water than native species because of its deep root systems and thick patterns of growth.

The Coalition coordinates volunteer groups to clear tamarisk in areas such as McInnis Canyon, Island Acres State Park and Watson Island; provides technical assistance to the Colorado Water Conservation Board; works with Congress on major appropriations; has been involved in bio-control monitoring on the Colorado, Dolores, Yampa and Green Rivers with Palisade Insectary; and assists with developing a salinity research program for tamarisk in conjunction with Colorado State University, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Society and Denver University.

On a broader venue, the coalition is coordinating a Colorado River assessment of the entire Colorado River Basin that includes forming an evapotranspiration peer panel, reviewing state-of-the-science techniques for tamarisk control and revegetation, working on programmatic issues for all seven Colorado River Basin states and identifying large-scale demonstration projects.

Carlson expressed appreciation for the support the Colorado River District provides to the coalition.

To learn more about tamarisk and Russian olive, another invasive plant, visit www.tamariskcoalition.org/.



Volunteers for the Tamarisk Coalition work on an eradication project, top, while another volunteer points out how large the invasive plant can grow.

