



The Colorado River District Board of Directors received an update from Chris Landry of the Center of Snow and Avalanche Studies about the dust on snow phenomenon that assaulted the Colorado snowpack this past winter, triggering quicker melt-out and earlier runoff. Landry showed this photograph of the dust-covered Senator Beck Basin in the San Juan Mountains. A detailed discussion of dust on snow will take place during the Colorado River District's Annual Water Seminar which is set for Friday, Sept. 18, 2009, at the Two Rivers Convention Center in Grand Junction, Colo. For more information, please visit www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org and see the back pages of this issue.

Budget cuts slash state water funding

The Colorado River District was active again this year representing Western Colorado water interests at the State Capital. The legislature adjourned its 120-day, 2009 session on May 6. The state's fiscal crisis

was the prevailing topic throughout the session and promises to loom even larger over the summer and through next year's session.

Of concern to water users statewide was the transfer of \$107 mil-

lion from water-related funds at the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to the state's General Fund for non-water uses.

These funds were designated at

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Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

Funds approved to assist endangered fish

The Colorado River District Board of Directors approved contributing \$75,000 to assist a proactive environmental program designed to recover four endangered fish in the Colorado River. In this case, the money will be pooled with other contributions from West Slope water-user entities to fund an environmental assessment of a plan to secure 10,825 acre-feet of water for fish habitat enhancement.

The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovering Program employs a tool box of initiatives to aid fish recovery, including the construction of fish ladders at dams, fish screens in irrigation canals, fish hatcheries, water conservation by irrigation companies and the contribution of stored water from reservoirs and water users to support habitat.

One of the agreements between water users and the Recovery Program for stored water is up for renewal in 2010 and is this year subject to an environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Colorado River District is leading an effort to help fund the assessment and has gained support from a number of Western Colorado entities that have benefited from the Recovery Program.

Contributors include Grand County, the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District (Eagle County),



The endangered bonytail chub.

the Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority (Eagle County), Breckenridge, Silverthorne, Frisco, Parachute, the Ute Water Conservancy District (Mesa County), the West Divide Water Conservancy District (Garfield and Pitkin Counties), the Basalt Water Conservancy District (Pitkin, Eagle and Garfield Counties), the Grand Valley Water Users Association (Mesa County), the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District (Mesa County), the Grand Valley Irrigation Company (Mesa County) and the Colorado River District.

This 10,825 acre-foot water obligation is split 50-50 by West Slope water users of the main stem Colorado River and Front Range entities that divert water from the Colorado River through transmountain diversions.

Under interim agreements, the Colorado River District has been releasing half the water from Wolford Mountain Reservoir on behalf of the West Slope and Denver Water has been releasing half from

Williams Fork Reservoir on behalf of the Front Range. A new arrangement would provide half the water from Ruedi Reservoir and half from Granby Reservoir.

The environmental analysis will cost an estimated \$550,000, which will be split 50-50 between the Front Range and the West Slope. Dan Birch, Deputy General Manager of the Colorado River District, is coordinating the effort to achieve the new deal and to gain financial support from West Slope water users. Negotiations continue to bolster the West Slope's half of the commitment.

"We are pleased that 13 water providers have committed thus far and we look forward to help from other water users in the basin," Birch said. He commended Ute, the Eagle County districts and Grand County for being leaders on this environmental issue.

If water users cannot win approval of the 10,825 plan, the blanket protection afforded water users by the Recovery Program would be jeopardized, forcing entities who need to improve their water supplies from the Colorado River and its tributaries to undergo expensive, individual consultations with federal authorities under the Endangered Species Act.

The water in question, as well as
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State Legislature budget crisis hits water funding

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the CWCB for water project grants, loans and other water-related support programs within the state.

Moreover, with the state announcing that it had to “borrow” \$250 million from this year’s budget to close the books on last year’s budget and a projected further \$135 million budget shortfall this year, water programs are likely to again be under the gun.

The Colorado River District, along with other water entities, are working this summer with the state to identify long-term, stable sources of funds to support the state’s commitment to water resource develop-

ment and administration.

The Colorado River District Board discussed various options among unattractive alternatives for future funding of the state’s water programs.

Directors spoke strongly against any effort to sell existing water project loans or any repeat of the failed effort from 2003 to impose fees on water rights.

The Board also heard about the range of issues, in addition to the state budget, that the Colorado Legislature’s Water Resources Review Committee will take up this summer. Anticipated issues include:

- Need for a water importation

bill to address water imported into Colorado from another state (e.g., the Million Conservation Group’s Regional Water Supply Pipeline),

- Colorado River water availability under the Colorado River Compacts of 1922 and 1948,

- How an interstate “call” under the Colorado River Compact would be administered,

- Aquifer storage and recharge efforts and attendant legislation, and

- Ownership and water quality responsibility for water produced in association with oil and gas production.

10,825 funding

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other sources of environmental water for the endangered fish, helps bolster flows in the 15-Mile Critical Reach between Palisade and Grand Junction. The fish are the Colorado pike-minnow, the humpback chub, the razorback sucker and the bonytail chub.

How to contact us

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

Federal effort aimed at Ruedi water for fish

Colorado River District Directors emphasized their support and the importance of federal legislation designating that any water from Ruedi Reservoir permanently dedicated to endangered fish recovery would come at no cost to West Slope water users.

East and West Slope water users are already sharing the cost of an environmental assess-

ment related to permanently supplying 10,825 acre-feet of water to endangered fish recovery.

Consistent with existing U.S. Bureau of Reclamation law, water from federal projects dedicated to fish and wildlife purposes is not charged to water users.

The District is pursuing legislation amending federal legislation that authorized construction of Ruedi Reservoir to reclassify this new dedication of water as “non-reimbursable.”

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Property purchase eyed for Orchard Mesa improvements

The Colorado River District is eyeing the purchase of a 15-acre parcel on Orchard Mesa in Mesa County as a step in fostering a project to improve water use efficiency by the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District.

The cost for the land would be \$1.25 million.

The Orchard Mesa Irrigation District (OMID), a Bureau of Reclamation project, was created at the turn of the last century to irrigate the arid lands on Orchard Mesa that are now home to many orchards, vineyards and other farmlands. Increasingly, OMID serves residential development.

OMID owns senior water rights on the Colorado River and benefits from water stored in Green Mountain Reservoir upstream in Summit County.

OMID improvements would enable the district to divert less water,

thus saving water in Green Mountain Reservoir.

The saved water could be used in late summer to improve endangered fish habitat during average to wet years and to help the irrigators themselves in dry years.

The benefit to the fish would accrue to the 15-Mile Critical Reach between Palisade and the confluence of the Gunnison and Colorado Rivers at Grand Junction.

A similar program helps the Grand Valley Water Users Association save water in the Government-Highline Canal and contribute water savings to fish habitat.

The land to be purchased would be used for a re-regulation reservoir, a new feature on the canal system necessary to save water while making sure water users are getting their allotted shares.

In total, the project would engineer the canals so that they could

still deliver water to all users without having to run the canal full to the brim, as is currently required, even when water demand is lighter in the shoulders of the season.

Reclamation is looking at the project in cooperation with the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and the Colorado River District.

An important piece of the project is planning how OMID can meet continuing operation and maintenance (O&M) obligations after the project is completed, estimated at \$350,000 a year. Current thoughts are to contribute cash from the reimbursed value of the land to a trust fund that would help finance O&M obligations. But that would not be enough to cover operations. OMID, the Recovery Program and the Colorado River District are working to make up the difference from other sources.

Board hears about Ruedi funding; Roadless issue back

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Governor Ritter recently announced his intention to reopen the draft Colorado Roadless Rule for additional public comment.

The Colorado River District will reiterate its comments regarding reasonable access and protection of

water facilities and water rights within and adjacent to proposed Roadless areas.

Directors also heard about the Senate's latest efforts to revise the Clean Water Act.

The bill was rewritten in committee to address water users' con-

cerns but has not adequately addressed all the issue presented by the bill.

Discussions with Senate and House leaders continue to address the remaining concerns with this important bill.



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

Kuhn updates Board on state and basin-wide river challenges

Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn updated the Board of Directors on a range of intra-state and basin-wide Colorado River issues.

Kuhn said the first phase of the important Colorado River Water Availability Study, commissioned by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), is wrapping up and has developed some interesting preliminary information about consumptive use calculations and

river hydrology.

He said phase II will soon be scoped, and there needs to be good communication with the CWCB about the process.

He also said he has concerns about “expectations” for the study.

“This is not a study to evaluate water projects. It really is about the core question of how much water is available in the Colorado River system to develop and at what risk,” Kuhn said.

On larger river concerns, Kuhn said informal meetings have begun between the U.S. and Mexico about outstanding water issues related to the 1944 treaty between the two countries

that apportioned Mexico 1.5 million acre-feet annually.

He noted that there could be pilot projects related to water efficiency and water quality that could be funded, perhaps, by Las Vegas that would allow the U.S. to retain some more of the river.

He said the larger issue of how “extraordinary drought” would reduce Mexico’s apportionment is not yet being discussed, and when it is, it will likely involve the U.S. Department of State, not the Department of the Interior.

Another outstanding issue, he said, is the respective obligations of the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins to supply Mexico’s apportionment.

Work continues on gas well rules

Colorado River District Associate Counsel Jason Turner reported he has been attending meetings where the State Engineer’s Office (Division of Water Resources) is working on new rules on how to deal with gas well drilling and tributary water.

The rule-making stems from a Colorado Supreme Court decision that said water from certain wells (mostly coal-bed methane) must be treated as tributary water to protect nearby senior water rights holders.

That means water well permits are required as are augmentation plans for natural gas wells.

Turner said the process is seeing heavy participation by the oil and gas industry and that water users are not well represented.

“My concern is protection for individual ranchers and farmers whose water may be impacted,” Board President Andy Mueller said.

Mueller said that the new rules should not force farmers and ranchers to prove gas wells are tributary or non-tributary.

Future meetings

- **Aug. 19-21:** Colorado Water Congress Summer Convention, Steamboat Springs
- **Sept. 17:** CRD Budget Workshop, Grand Junction
- **Sept. 18:** Colorado River District Annual Water Seminar, Grand Junction
- **Oct. 20-21:** CRD Fourth Regular Quarterly Meeting, Glenwood Springs — Board considers its 2010 budget.
- **Dec. 9-11:** Colorado River Water Users Association Convention, Las Vegas



Speakers



The Honorable
Anne Castle, Esq.
Assistant Secretary
of the Interior for
Water and Science,
Department of Interior



“Dust in the Wind and Other Winds of Change”

Friday, Sept. 18, 2009

9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Two Rivers Convention Center, 159 Main Street, Grand Junction, CO



Terry Fulp, PhD
Lower Colorado River
Deputy Director,
Bureau of Reclamation

Featured Speakers and Topics

- Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science
- Dust on Snow Panel with Tom Painter, Snow Optics Lab, University of Utah
- “Good to the Last Drop” — Operations on the Lower Colorado River
- Early results of the Colorado River Water Availability Study
- Big Straws: If There Is Enough Water, Is There a Transmountain Diversion
- A Well Run Dry: State Water Funding Hits Drought, Can Climate Change Bring It Back: A talk by The Honorable Kathleen Curry, Chair, House Ag Committee

For more information please call Jim Pokrandt, 970-945-8522 x 236
or email: jpokrandt@crwcd.org
or visit: www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org

\$25 fee includes lunch

Event coincides with Colorado Mountain Winefest, Palisade, making lodging limited. Room block for Sept. 17th available until Aug. 21st or until supply lasts. Please call the Hampton Inn (adjacent to the TRCC) at 970-243-3222 to reserve your room.



Tom Painter, PhD
Director,
Snow Optics Lab
University of Utah



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

2009 Water Seminar

"What would an Intra-State River Compact Look Like and How Would it Work?"

Friday, September 18th Two Rivers Convention Center, Grand Junction, 9 am – 3 pm
(Check in will begin at 8:15 am)

Pre-registration: The pre-registration fee of \$25 will help defray the cost of the seminar and must be received by 5:00 pm **Monday, September 14th**. Seminar fee will increase to \$35 (check and cash only) after Monday, September 14th.

Meal: Lunch will be provided. **CLE and CE credits available.**

For Additional Information: Please contact Meredith Spyker, 970-945-8522, ext. 210, email: mspyker@crwcd.org, or visit our website: www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org

Two Rivers Convention Center (identified on map as **END**)
159 Main Street, Grand Junction, CO



Driving directions:

From I-70 head SW on Horizon Dr. & continue 1 mile

At the traffic circle take the 2nd exit & continue on Horizon Dr. 0.6 miles

Left on N. 7th St. 2.0 miles

Right on Main St. 0.5 miles

Parking available at the corner of 2nd & Colorado Streets.



2009 Colorado River District Seminar Pre-Registration

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Pre-registration and \$25 check (Sorry no credit cards) must be received by Monday, **September 14th**.
Make checks payable to "CRWCD" and mail to:

Colorado River District
PO Box 1120
Glenwood Springs, CO 81602