

Colorado River District Board OKs budgets

The Colorado River District Board of Directors approved a 2010 budget of \$3.59 million at its Oct. 20-21, 2009, regular quarterly board meeting.

The projected 2010 mill levy is 0.165 mills. An owner of a house valued at \$300,000 will pay about \$4 in 2010 to support the Colorado River District's mission.

The Colorado River District is funded by this small property tax levied on 15 counties in Western Colorado. The District was founded by the Colorado General Assembly in 1937 to protect Western Colorado water, the same year it created the Colorado Water Conservation Board to work on water issues statewide.

For the 2010 budget, reports from the 15 counties show the District's total assessed valuation growing from \$17.7 billion to \$22.9 billion.

Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn told Board members he expects the national recession to catch up to the assessed valuation total in the next two years but that the Colorado River District's financial health should see it through the transition to a better economy.

The Colorado River District also has an Enterprise Fund through which it operates two reservoirs, Elkhead and Wolford Mountain, and conducts other water supply activities. The Enterprise Fund does not receive taxpayer support. Its budget in 2010 is \$7.5 million, which includes about \$2.5 million for project development.

For more background information, visit http://www.crwcd.org/page_220.



Randy Seaholm, right, the Colorado Water Conservation Board's Section Chief of its Water Supply Protection division, is retiring on Nov. 6, 2009, after serving 36 years with the CWCB. On Oct. 20, the Colorado River District Board of Directors honored Seaholm by passing a resolution commending his work and giving him a framed poster that might help him in the future. Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn presented Seaholm with his honors. Also attending the meeting were CWCB Director Jennifer Gimbel and Linda Bassi, Section Chief, Stream and Lake Protection. For more on the CWCB visit, please see summaries on page 2.

Kuhn, Fleming give updates on ongoing negotiations

General Manager Eric Kuhn and General Counsel Peter Fleming provided Board members updates on a number of ongoing negotiations with transmountain diverters, pending projects and the Wild and Scenic process on the upper Colorado River.

Their public reports can be found at <http://www.crwcd.org/media/uploads/20091020gm.pdf> and <http://www.crwcd.org/media/uploads/20091020gc.pdf>, respectively.



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

CWCB staff meets with Colorado River District

Top officials with the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) addressed the Colorado River District Board of Directors on CWCB programs, funding challenges and Colorado River Compact issues.

CWCB Director Jennifer Gimbel gave an overview of the CWCB and how it is funded.

She also discussed the water supply gap facing Colorado as its popu-

lation grows. Her presentation can be found at [http://www.crwcd.org/media/uploads/CWCB_Gimbel to CRD Board 10-09.pdf](http://www.crwcd.org/media/uploads/CWCB_Gimbel_to_CRD_Board_10-09.pdf).

Gimbel emphasized that while the CWCB loan program was crippled by budget transfers in 2009, the CWCB hopes to have between \$10 million and \$20 million to lend to qualifying water projects in 2010.

Linda Bassi, Section Chief, Stream and Lake Protection, discussed the instream flow program and Randy Seaholm, Section Chief, Water Supply Protection, updated Board members on Compact issues.

Seaholm is retiring from the CWCB on Nov. 6, 2009, and the Colorado River District Board honored him for his 36 years of service. (Picture on page 1).

Seaholm discusses 'big river' issues with board

Randy Seaholm, the Colorado Water Conservation Board's (CWCB) Section Chief, Water Supply Protection, reviewed a list of Colorado River "hot topics" with the Colorado River District Board of Directors.

Seaholm previewed the prospect that the Bureau of Reclamation might release large amounts of "equalization" water this coming spring from Lake Powell to Lake Mead under operational guidelines developed in 2007.

Both are two big reservoirs on the Colorado River. Releases from Lake Powell help ensure that the 10-year running average of flow past Lee Ferry, Ariz., does not fall below 75 million acre feet, thus protecting the Upper Basin from water curtailments.

Seaholm said that if the upcoming

winter snowpack is above average, Lake Powell would release up to 10.5 million acre feet of water to Lake Mead rather than the 8.23 million acre feet that has been the usual release in recent years.

If it is the higher figure, he said the state is looking closely at how the released water could best benefit power generation. He said that Lake Powell is currently about two-thirds full, and Lake Mead is about 40 percent full.

Seaholm said the CWCB is preparing a \$300,000 contract to study how the state would administer the Colorado River and its tributaries if the Upper Basin ever had to be curtailed to meet its obligations to the Lower Basin states under the Colorado River Compact of 1922.

He said a water bank, proposed by the Colorado River District and the

Southwestern Water Conservation District as a curtailment mitigation tool, will be part of the study.

Seaholm also said the state is monitoring entrepreneur Aaron Million's proposal to pump up to 250,000 acre feet of water from Flaming Gorge Reservoir on the Utah-Wyoming border, and the Green River in Wyoming to the Front Range of Colorado.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has begun environmental review of a permit application for the project. Seaholm said the Corps has asked Million to identify his customers. He also said a big concern is whether the project is public or private.

Colorado River District Board Vice President Tom Sharp said a concern the Yampa-White Roundtable has is not whether the project

How the states use the Colorado River

Under the Colorado River Compacts of 1922 and 1948, the amount of water consumed by each Upper Basin state — Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico and a small portion of Arizona — has a direct bearing on state water development and compact obligations.

The accounting is closely monitored by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB).

The CWCB's Randy Seaholm, Section Chief, Water Supply Protection, said Colorado is depleting about 2.3 million acre feet annually from the Colorado River basin between consumption and evaporative losses. He said the figure has been as high as 2.6 million acre feet.

For illustrative purposes, he com-

pared the depletion figure against the Bureau of Reclamation's "Hydrologic Determination (HD)," Reclamation's estimate of how much water can be consumed in the Upper Basin states. That figure is about 6 million acre feet. Seaholm offered the following figures:

Colorado is consuming 2.3 million acre feet. Its Upper Colorado River Compact allocation is 51.75 percent of the river. Compared to the HD, the state's limit would be 3.079 million acre feet.

New Mexico is consuming 451,000 acre feet. Its Upper Colorado River Compact allocation is 11.25 percent of the river. Compared to the HD, the state's limit would be 670,000 acre feet.

Utah is consuming 974,000 acre feet. Its Upper Colorado River Compact allocation is 23 percent of the river. Compared to the HD, the state's limit would be about 1.4 million acre feet.

Wyoming is consuming 480,000 acre feet. Its Upper Colorado River Compact allocation is 14 percent of the river. Compared to the HD, the state's limit would be 833,000 acre feet.

Arizona also gets to use part of the Upper Basin's total allocation and its limit is 50,000 acre feet annually. Seaholm said Arizona is consuming 37,000 acre feet. Seaholm used the calculations to the Hydrologic De-

termination as a tool of comparison. In Colorado's case, he said the numbers would be adjusted by the pending Colorado River Water Availability Study.

Based on the Colorado River Compact of 1922, each Upper Basin state has greater development limits except for the fact the Compact was based on records from a wet period in the early part of the 1900s.

The river is not producing the same flows on a consistent basis that would allow Upper Basin depletions of 7.5 million acre feet or more annually as envisioned by the Compact.

Seaholm said the Lower Basin states of Arizona, Nevada and California are using their full entitlement of water from the main stem of the Colorado River plus 2 million acre feet from tributaries, which is in excess of the 1 million acre feet of tributary uses provided for in the Colorado River Compact of 1922.

'Big River' issues

Continued from page 2

is public or private but rather that the water would be taken under a 1950s federal water right. He said that in the event of a compact curtailment, the 1950s water right would be senior to many significant water rights on the Yampa River. "It would, in fact, jump a project that has been only recently conceived ahead of many historical water users on the Yampa River. That is not acceptable," Sharp said.

The Colorado River District Mission Statement:

To lead in the protection, conservation, use and development of the water resources of the Colorado River Basin for the welfare of the District, and to safeguard for Colorado all waters of the Colorado River to which it is entitled.



Colorado River District

Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937

Colorado River District expands its Grant Program

To respond to an increasing demand and competition among worthy applications, the Colorado River District Board of Directors authorized significant changes to the District's Grant Program.

The Grant Program is designed to provide financial assistance for projects that will develop or improve water supplies within the District boundaries.

Dave Kanzer, the Colorado River District's Senior Water Resources Engineer who guides the Grant Program, noted, "The expanded program should ensure that more worthwhile water resource projects can move forward in this new era of limited funding resources. The effectiveness of the previous Grant Program will be increased by com-

bining the alternating biennial small and large Grant Programs into a larger single annual program with a common set of program objectives and guidelines."

Combining the two former alternating programs (small and large) into one enlarged and seamless annual program governed by consistent guidelines and policies includes increasing annual funding from \$150,000 to \$250,000.

The new program will help support projects with a wide range of costs and will generally fund up to 25-30 percent of the total project budget, using the historical formula that grants 50 percent of the first increment (either \$10,000 for small projects or \$100,000 for large projects) and 20 percent of the remain-

ing project cost thereafter.

Qualifying projects include objectives that develop new water supplies; improve existing water supply projects, improve water use efficiency, improve sediment control; improve water quality, undertake a watershed action and implement tamarisk control

The Grant Program will prioritize projects that protect pre-1922 water rights.

For copies of the 2010 grant application and guidelines visit

www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org

after Dec. 1, 2009. Applications must be received by Jan. 31, 2010.

The recipients will be selected after a staff review and approval by the Board in April.

Congress considering water issues involving Colorado

Reading the daily paper or watching TV, one might conclude the only issue the Congress is addressing is health care. Not so, and the Colorado River District is actively engaged in several important water issues currently before the Congress.

External Affairs Manager Chris Treese updated the Colorado River District Board regarding the District's federal activities.

Congressman John Salazar (D-

CO) and Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) introduced legislation to provide annual funding for the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

This bill is critical to continuing the positive efforts of the Recovery Program and the protections it provides to Colorado River water users. Treese also noted that the Colorado River District is working actively on an allied legislative effort to provide annual water re-

leases from Ruedi Reservoir for the benefit of the Recovery Program at no cost to West Slope water users.

This effort has recently been stalled pending resolution of contracting issues between the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

The Colorado River District is working with advocates for the Hidden Gems Wilderness proposal

Continued on page 5

Scopings set for environmental review on '10,825'

Work continues on finding a solution for water users to continue to supply 10,825 acre feet of water to improve endangered fish habitat in the Colorado River.

As part of the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program, water users contribute water as one of the tools necessary to recover the fish.

The 10,825 obligation to provide the water is shared equally by Front Range transmountain diverters and West Slope water users.

The two groups must make agreements to supply the water on a permanent basis by the end of this year, and the water must be pro-

vided annually beginning in 2013.

The Bureau of Reclamation is conducting an environmental assessment of a proposed agreement that would have the West Slope employing water in Ruedi Reservoir and the Front Range supplying water in Granby Reservoir.

Scoping hearings on the Environmental Assessment are set for 6 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 4, at Basalt Middle School, 51 School Street, Basalt, and Thursday, Nov. 5, at The Inn at Silver Creek, U.S. Highway 40, Granby.

For more information on the 10,825 issue, visit <http://www.grandriver.us/10825/node/4>.

For more information on the scoping, visit <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca/>.

An Environmental Assessment of the plan is required by the federal National Environmental Policy Act.

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

Treese reviews federal activities regarding water

Continued from page 4

to identify present and future water rights in the proposed areas and water-related concerns or benefits related to wilderness designation. The Hidden Gems proposal would add 450,000 acres to Colorado's wilderness system, principally in Summit, Eagle and Pitkin Counties.

Treese also noted that the Bureau of Reclamation selected the Colorado River as one of three river basins in the nation for intensive study under recently passed federal legislation. The Basin Study Program will "better define options for future water management where climate change, record drought, population increases and environmental needs have increased competition for water supplies.

"Each study will include state-of-the-art projections

of future water supply and demand, including an assessment of the impacts of climate change on water resources; analysis of how the basin's existing water and power operations and infrastructure will perform in the face of changing water realities; and recommendations on how to optimize operations and infrastructure to supply adequate water and power in the future while accounting for environmental values," according to a press release from the Bureau of Reclamation.

Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn noted that he has been asked to assist with a National Geographic-sponsored effort to create an "interactive map" of the Colorado River basin. He promised to keep Directors apprised of the direction of this just-forming effort.

Water legislation proposed for 2010 session

Colorado River District External Affairs Manager Chris Treese highlighted several state legislative proposals anticipated for the 2010 Colorado General Assembly.

The Legislature's Interim Water Committee endorsed three bills this summer, including one to assure a more stable and certain source of funding for the Division of Water Resources (State Engineer's Office and water commissioners) within the Department of Natural Resources. Under this proposed bill,

Water Resources would be funded principally by severance tax revenues, as are most Department of Natural Resources divisions. The Division of Water Resources is currently funded through the state's general fund.

Treese also noted that the Attorney General's Office is drafting a bill addressing importation of water into Colorado from another state, clarifying the role of the Water Courts and Division of Water Resources regarding adjudication and

administration of such waters.

Treese also highlighted a proposal by Representative Sal Pace (D-Pueblo) to allow the Water Court to impose conditions on new decrees for water transfers across Colorado's water divisions (basins). As currently drafted, the bill would allow the Water Court to consider mitigation provisions protecting both present and future water users in the exporting basin.



Signs of the times: Visitors to the Colorado River District's Wolford Mountain Reservoir saw this sign this past summer if they headed for the public dock. An inspection crew stood ready to check boats for zebra mussel contamination. If necessary, boats were directed to a decontamination area. Invasive mussels clog up dam works. They are not yet in Wolford Mountain Reservoir.

Contact us

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

Future meetings

- **Dec. 9-11:** Colorado River Water Users Association Convention, Las Vegas
- **Jan. 27-29, 2010:** Colorado Water Congress Winter Convention, Denver
- **Jan. 19-20, 2010:** First quarterly CRD meeting, Glenwood Springs
- **April 20-21, 2010:** Second quarterly CRD meeting, Glenwood Springs
- **July 20-21, 2010:** Third quarterly CRD meeting, Glenwood Springs
- **Sept. 16, 2010:** Colorado River District Annual Water Seminar, Grand Junction
- **Oct. 19-20, 2010:** Fourth quarterly CRD meeting, Glenwood Springs