

Water Quality

Colorado River Water Conservation District Policy Statements:

The Colorado River District's primary objective with respect to water quality is to protect the ability of the district's residents to use water beneficially now and in the future. To this end, the River District supports the following concepts:

1. The River District will advocate for and may participate in the prevention or mitigation of those activities that adversely impact water quality to the extent that existing or future beneficial water uses, the ecological health of rivers and streams, or local economies dependent on water are threatened.
2. Water quality negotiations, classifications, and enforcement decisions should be based on sound scientific data and methodologies and should not impose unreasonable financial burdens or operational constraints on water users.
3. The River District will generally support legislative and regulatory measures that provide and protect water quality deemed reasonable or necessary to support and protect the present and future economy and quality of life in the region.
4. The River District will oppose any mandatory nonpoint source regulations for farming and ranching activities but will encourage the voluntary implementation of reasonable best management practices and programs. The River District will generally advocate for incentives and rewards for nonpoint pollution prevention and clean-up efforts.
5. Any new or substantially amended, regulations must be implemented with sufficient resources allocated to the affected enforcement authorities and any affected water users and land owners.

Background & Discussion:

The Colorado River District recognizes that water quality and water quantity are often inseparable. Water quality, however, can be an important factor in the ability of the Colorado River District's residents to beneficially use water. There is a causative link between the amount of stream flow present and water quality.

The River District is committed to meeting the present and future water needs of its residents.

The tension between water quality and water quantity interests is long and varied. The inter-relationship between the two, however, is better recognized and accepted today. Water

diversions inevitably have some impact on water quality. However, this impact may not be measurable or significant to either other water users or to the environment.

Water quality regulation is largely driven by federal statutes, principally the Clean Water Act. Historically, new programs, regulatory requirements, and judicial interpretations are required to be implemented without companion resources.

In Colorado, responsibility for water quality protection is almost exclusively vested in the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission and Division within the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment. In contrast, responsibility for water quantity allocation and administration is generally vested with the Water Courts and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. Only recently have these agencies had any formal communications regarding the overall health and availability of Colorado's water resources. As integration between water quantity and water quality evolves, local governments may have a role in the monitoring and management and enforcement of water quality programs. Local governments' role, however, should be voluntary, based on the needs and resources of the community and not mandated.

As consumptive water uses in Colorado continue to be developed and drought cycles occur, water quality will be an ever greater issue for Colorado water users.