



Colorado River District

75 Years

Protecting Western Colorado Water



MEMORANDUM

JANUARY 6, 2012

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CC: ERIC KUHN, GENERAL MANAGER

FROM: RAY TENNEY, P.E.

SUBJECT: ELKHEAD RESERVOIR STATUS – JANUARY 2012

Board action is requested to extend the agreement with URS for professional services through April 30, 2013 and add \$19,000 for the year 5 wetlands monitoring in 2012 and related reporting. Please see discussion below.

Elkhead Reservoir is currently about 2.4 feet or 1700 acre-feet down from full and releasing 20 cfs rather than the typical winter release of 5 cfs. The high inflows throughout 2011 and the lack of need to release all of the Recovery Program's fish water in 2011 left Elkhead much higher than normal. We have been releasing 20 cfs to reduce the reservoir level this winter in anticipation of sufficient water to fill and to assist with reducing the spill duration to contain non-native fish in the reservoir. While snow conditions are poor in the Elkhead Creek drainage we believe there will be sufficient water to fill. For comparison, in 2002 storable inflow into Elkhead exceeded 17,000 acre-feet. We will continue to monitor the snowpack above and inflows into Elkhead and make release adjustments should they be warranted.

Wetlands development in the mitigation areas at Elkhead Reservoir is going very well according to the 2011 assessment. We have one more year of required detailed monitoring of the constructed wetlands and then will need to monitor only the wetlands in the inlet "delta" for five more years. We request the agreement with URS, CA10010, be extended through April 30, 2013 and increased by \$19,000 to cover the 2012 wetland mitigation area monitoring work. This agreement also allows for minor engineering related consultations with URS on the dam features and operations if necessary.

The movable fish screen at Elkhead is again having some difficulties, not coming full open during testing. Divers have been contracted to go have a look at what might be hindering the screen travel. We may do this work through the winter ice cover or at ice out prior to runoff.

The Recovery Program and the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife have gained a better understanding of small mouth bass population dynamics in the Yampa River. In-river bass spawning and escape of bass from Elkhead are of growing concern in the efforts to recover the

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listed fish in the Yampa and Green rivers. The Recovery Program and the CDOPW have begun discussions on eliminating the non-native fish escape risk at Elkhead by poisoning the reservoir fishery and re-stocking with species such as trout and crappie which are not successful in the Yampa River. The River District is monitoring these discussions. Any such measures will need to be championed and undertaken by the Recovery Program and the CDOPW.