

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) and
Basin Roundtable Members

FROM: Jacob Bornstein and Eric Hecox, Intrastate Water
Management & Development

DATE: March 20, 2009

SUBJECT: **Status Update for the Nonconsumptive Needs Assessment Processes**

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

Harris D. Sherman
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The Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act asks each basin roundtable to develop a nonconsumptive needs assessment. We are nearing completion of Phase I of this work which involves gathering data on non-consumptive needs (attributes) and helping each roundtable use that data to establish priority areas. The purpose of this memo is to: 1) outline what has been accomplished; and 2) lay out a schedule for completing Phase I.

Because of budget realities it is necessary to close out the technical support for Phase I of the nonconsumptive needs assessment at the end of June. We have asked CDM to provide a deliverable at the end of June. This deliverable will document what has been accomplished to date, include draft or final priority maps (depending upon the status of roundtable approval), and transfer GIS data to CWCB.

Over the last two years, over \$400,000 was spent on conducting nonconsumptive needs assessment (NCNA) work statewide. Respecting the grassroots nature of this process, most of the time and effort was spent meeting with each of the basin roundtables, or their designated subcommittees, to develop and assemble data on the nonconsumptive resources in their basin. CWCB staff or the technical consulting team (CDM) has met with the roundtables or related subcommittees more than forty times over the past two years. Through this process, the roundtables identified, scrutinized, and debated important nonconsumptive attributes, and used those attributes to establish priority areas. As a result two basins have approved their maps (Arkansas and Colorado) and two others have fully resolved their remaining issues (North Platte and Rio Grande).

The purpose of the attribute maps are to:

1. Be a useful guide for water supply planning up front
2. Help identify future study or implementation projects in the basin
3. Help plan to prevent species of special concern from becoming federally listed
4. Point to collaborative opportunities for future multi-objective projects
5. Help identify how future conflicts may be avoided

At the end of June CDM will give CWCB final deliverables of the attribute maps, priority maps, and GIS data. We recognize that for some of the basin roundtables these products may still be in draft form. However, any further technical work on this phase will primarily rest with the basin roundtables, whether through further Water Supply Reserve Account funding or local volunteer GIS expertise. We will ensure complete data transfers for those basins that request it.

An additional component of the nonconsumptive needs assessment involves pilot testing a “Watershed Flow Evaluation Tool.” These pilot studies are being conducted on the Fountain Creek and Roaring Fork watersheds and will be completed this spring. We will evaluate the usefulness of this tool and hold two workshops, one on the east slope and one on the west slope, to discuss the results. We anticipate that this effort will be wrapped up by end of June.

After June, we will work with each basin roundtable to decide how they would like to proceed. Questions each roundtable may ask include:

1. *Are there existing protections/efforts for priority areas?*
2. *Are there areas without protections that need further study?*
3. *What strategies are needed to support nonconsumptive priority areas?*
4. *Are there areas where new flow or water level quantification is appropriate?*
5. *Are there areas where a project, whether structural (e.g. river restoration) or nonstructural can be identified and implemented?*
6. *Are there areas no action is needed at this time?*

The answer to these questions, whether gathered by subcommittee or the full roundtable, will guide how each basin roundtable continues to develop their nonconsumptive needs assessment. Basins such as the Colorado and the Arkansas are moving forward with Water Supply Reserve Account applications that set out, from their basins’ perspective, the next phase of how to address these questions.

We encourage each roundtable to move forward with their maps during the April and May roundtable meetings, if you have not done so already. The technical team is available to make final changes to the maps between now and then. Should final maps not be approved, draft maps and the supporting data will be included in the deliverable from CDM for further refinement by the basin roundtable.

This has been a challenging budget year with numerous starts and stops on all of our consumptive and nonconsumptive technical work. In this time of statewide budget crisis this program has fared remarkably well. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we’ve adjusted to these changes. Please feel free to call with questions.