

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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Salazar recognizes Colorado's efforts on Colorado River negotiations

DENVER, Colo. – Interior Secretary Ken Salazar today recognized the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the state's efforts in helping to develop a strategy for dealing with long-term drought in the Colorado River Basin.

Salazar awarded Colorado, along with the six other Colorado Basin states and other partners in the talks, with a "Partners in Conservation Award" for finalizing an agreement known as the Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lakes Powell and Mead.

The Colorado River provides water for 30 million people in seven states and two countries. It is often called the most regulated and litigated river in the United States.

The guidelines were developed during a period of severe drought, declining reservoir levels and continued growth in demand for water. The agreement, also known as the Interim Guidelines, has been hailed as the most significant change in river management since the Colorado River Compact was signed in 1922.

"We all recognize the benefits of collaboration over litigation," said Jennifer Gimbel, Director of the CWCB. "But saying it is one thing and doing it is another – especially when it comes to water. We're pleased that the entire Colorado River basin has begun to focus their attention on river augmentation and increased water efficiency."

Randy Seaholm, Chief of the Water Supply Protection Section, accepted the award on behalf of the Ritter administration at a ceremony in Washington D.C.

The Department of the Interior's Cooperative Conservation Award program recognizes conservation achievements resulting from the cooperation and participation of individual landowners, citizen groups, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and federal, state, local, and/or tribal governments.

These Guidelines, and the associated Record of Decision ("ROD"), represent the culmination of talks between the seven basin states and the Interior Department on how to manage the lower Colorado River during times of shortage, and how to coordinate the operations between the two largest reservoirs on the Colorado River. The agreement will be in effect until 2026.

“This award demonstrates the benefits of cooperation between the seven basin states, our federal partners, and other interested parties,” Seaholm said. “I am pleased that Secretary Salazar recognizes how important these Guidelines are, and I hope that we are able to continue to work together as we implement these Guidelines, and as we pursue other mutually beneficial projects.”

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