

Rio Grande Inter-Basin Roundtable

c/o San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
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Todd Doherty
Greg Johnson
Intrastate Water Management & Development
Colorado Water Conservation Board

Reference: Trinchera Irrigation Company –
Sangre de Cristo Tinchera Diversion Canal Restoration

Tod and Greg:

This is in response to your questions regarding the captioned project and their request for Rio Grande Basin funds in the amount of \$54,000.00.

The Irrigation Company will accept the conditions in the Water Supply Reserve Account Standard Contract and the associated Insurance requirements as detailed in Attachment 3 of the new Grant Application Form.

The Rio Grande Inter-Basin Roundtable (R.G.R.T) has determined that the single, most critical water issue confronting the Rio Grande Basin is the current unsustainable management of surface and ground water.

As described in the Project Overview, page 2 /3 of the Application, the original irrigation infrastructure allowed for early runoff of Trinchera Creek to flow into storage at Mountain Home Reservoir, to be used starting in April to irrigate the southern part of the system and later in the year when Sangre de Cristo Creek runs low and stops. However, for the past fifteen years or so, due to reduced capacity in the Canal caused by deterioration of the infrastructure, the Irrigation Company must prematurely release water from Mountain Home Reservoir during the regular irrigation season, tapping reservoir supplies sooner than necessary and causing shortfalls in late summer and early fall, when the need is greatest.

These shortfalls have resulted in increased pumping to meet the irrigation requirements. This unnecessary pumping is depleting the aquifers at a time when the San Luis Valley is seeing significant depletions in the aquifers. Currently, the new Groundwater Subdistrict # 1 is considering removing 40,000 acres out of agricultural production to meet an estimated 80,000 acre feet annual shortfall in aquifer recharge. This shortfall in water supply has been recently addressed in the Basin's Consumptive Needs Assessment dated November 30, 2009.

The Irrigation Company's water in Mountain Home Reservoir is decreed for irrigation purposes, and the Department of Wildlife has leased rights as a State Wildlife Area (SWA) and maintains a

conservation pool of 653 acre feet. Mountain Home Reservoirs is stocked with rainbow trout by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW), providing recreational fishing and boating activities for residents and tourists. The Irrigation Company's primary responsibility is to provide irrigation water. The Irrigation Company's is also committed to sustain DOW's small conservation pool in the reservoir during dry times, although Mountain Home has been dried up to meet irrigation commitments late in the season. The early releases of water from Mountain Home Reservoir have the effect of reducing the conservation pool in the reservoir, which in turn reduces the Non-Consumptive water uses of recreation, fishery and wildlife.

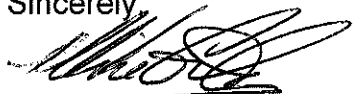
In summary, the proposed water activity addresses multiple needs or issues, including Consumptive and Non-Consumptive needs, or the needs and issues of multiple interests or multiple basins:

- Helps meet agricultural irrigation water needs by reducing water losses in the Canal, thus overcoming difficulties in diverting irrigation water in priority.
- Limits further deterioration in the Canal for the next 30-50 years, creating many cost benefits, reducing maintenance, preventing further losses of water, and benefiting downstream consumptive uses in irrigation.
- Promotes cost effectiveness and operational flexibility optimizing existing and future water supplies for agriculture as well as for riparian areas in Mountain Home and Smith Reservoirs.
- Improves Non-Consumptive uses for wildlife by reducing premature draws from Mountain Home Reservoir and improves fishery conditions.
- Helps to meet Rio Grande Basin objectives for a sustainable water supply.
- Directly supports the goal of the Rio Grande Basin to fulfill its mandate to more effectively manage its surface and ground water supplies.

On behalf of the Rio Grande Roundtable members, we appreciate the Board's consideration of this request and urge your support to the fullest extent possible.

If you require additional information, please notify me accordingly.

Sincerely,



Mike Gibson
Chair, Rio Grande Inter-Basin Roundtable

cc: Trinchera Irrigation