

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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News Release

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CWCB acquires water for instream flow use on Washington Gulch and the Slate River

DENVER, Colo. – The Colorado Water Conservation Board approved the acquisition of 5.45 cubic feet per second of water under the Breem Ditch water right for instream flow use in Washington Gulch and the Slate River, two highly visible water-short streams in Gunnison County.

The Breem Ditch water acquisition is the result of a unique, collaborative approach by the CWCB, the Colorado Water Trust, the Skyland Metropolitan District, Verzuh Ranch, Inc., a local development company owned by Billy Joe Lacy and Dan Dow. The CWCB approved the transaction at its January meeting in Denver.

“This is a great example of the benefits CWCB’s Water Acquisition Program can provide to our state’s streams through creative partnerships with water users,” said CWCB Director Jennifer Gimbel.

Despite sometimes water-plentiful summers, irrigation demand would often dry up Washington Gulch completely by the middle of July and significantly deplete Slate River flows as well. This transaction will allow Washington Gulch to flow year-round, even during dry summers, and will help fix flow shortages to the Slate River.

After use in the river, the water will be used in Skyland Metropolitan District’s system, which from 2002 to 2004 – Colorado’s most severe recent drought period – was in danger of impairment.

The CWCB will protect the water decreed to the Breem Ditch through the state’s Instream Flow Program on Washington Gulch and about two miles of the Slate River below the confluence with Washington Gulch.

The CWCB is the only entity in the state that can hold instream water rights to preserve and improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree. Under its Water Acquisition Program, the CWCB can acquire water from willing water rights owners by donation, purchase, lease or other arrangement to include in the Instream Flow Program.

The CWCB purchased a portion of the water using funds authorized in 2008 for instream flow water acquisitions, and the Colorado Water Trust donated a portion of the water.

Additional information on the CWCB's Water Acquisition Program is available on the CWCB web site: <http://cwcb.state.co.us/StreamAndLake/WaterAcquisitions/>

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