

STATE OF COLORADO

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

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Bill Owens
Governor

April 22, 2002

Mr. Brad Lundahl, Chair
Colorado Water Availability Task Force
1313 Sherman Street, #721
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Mr. Lundahl and Task Force Members:

I am writing to you in advance of your April 24 Water Availability Task Force (WATF) meeting to express my deep concern regarding Colorado's current drought conditions. I believe that immediate and decisive action by the Task Force and the agencies represented by the Task Force membership can help mitigate some of the water shortages we will no doubt face.

I have long recognized the impacts that drought can have on agriculture, natural resources, energy, tourism, public health, and the state economy. In response to these concerns, I organized the Governor's Flood and Drought Conference in 1999 to bring the state's experts together to review and assess Colorado's ability to prepare and respond to these natural disasters. A result was to pursue a short-term and long-term strategy to address planning, management, and infrastructure.

The original plan for Colorado's response to drought was developed in 1981. One of the recommendations of the Flood and Drought Conference was to update the state's drought response plan. At my direction, the plan was updated in January 2001 to better reflect the current drought cycle and Colorado's need to prepare and respond to drought. This plan identifies key actions to be taken by various governmental agencies in response to current drought conditions.

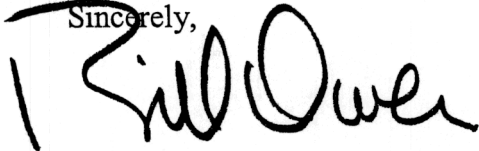
In addition, the conference identified the need to address the long-term implications of drought in Colorado. To that end, the Colorado Water Conservation Board has funded a Drought and Water Supply Assessment to identify the short-term planning and long-term infrastructure needs of all water providers in the state.

Within the context of the State Drought Response Plan, the WATF is a forum to address drought issues on an ongoing basis. Its role is to advise me on actions that should be taken related to the monitoring, assessment, response, and mitigation of drought in Colorado. As a result of current conditions, I am asking the WATF to do the following:

1. Appoint and convene the appropriate Impact Task Forces (Agriculture, Municipal Water, Wildlife, Tourism, Economic Impact, Wildfire Protection, Energy, and Health).
2. To minimize the impacts of this drought cycle on Colorado, develop mitigation measures such as increased public education, water supply augmentation, technical and financial assistance for local community drought planning, and the encouragement of water conservation. Include an implementation schedule of the chosen mitigation measures.
3. Identify the appropriate federal, state, and local governmental agencies responsible for implementing these measures.

I am requesting that the WATF and its Impact Task Forces provide this information and recommendations to me by May 1, 2002. I will then move forward with the appropriate agencies in the implementation of those recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Owens". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "B" and "O".

Bill Owens