

# COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

## Department of Natural Resources

Bill Owens, Governor

Greg Walcher, DNR Executive Director

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April 2002



## DROUGHT MITIGATION AND RESPONSE PLAN

The Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan provides a systematic means for the state of Colorado to reduce the impacts of water shortages. The Plan does not create a new government entity to deal with drought, but provides a means for coordinating the efforts of public and private entities that would be called upon to deal with drought impacts.

### Components of the Plan

#### Monitoring the Current Drought Situation

Monitoring is ongoing and is accomplished by monthly meetings of the Water Availability Task Force (WATF) to share information, discuss projections and assess the water situation. The WATF is comprised of Colorado's water supply specialists from state, local and federal governments and experts in climatology and weather forecasting. This task force monitors snowpack, precipitation, reservoir storage and streamflow and provides a forum for sharing the water availability information. The Plan is activated by the Governor when drought conditions, monitored by the WATF, reach significant levels.

#### Assessing the Impacts of Drought

In an emergency, specialized Impact Task Forces (ITFs) are activated as needed by the Governor to coordinate the assessment of drought impacts, appropriate responses to drought and mitigation actions. These task forces convene to determine impacts within specific sectors that effect the environment and economy. ITF members are technical experts from the following groups: municipal water, wildfire protection, agricultural industry, tourism, wildlife, economic impacts, energy loss, water availability, health and review and reporting.

The Review and Reporting Task Force (R&RTF) coordinates the assessment activities being performed by the ITFs. This task force will be lead by Don Ament, Commissioner of Agriculture, and composed of chairpersons of the WATF and the ITFs. This Task Force reviews reports from the WATF and ITFs, aggregates assessments and projections, evaluates overall conditions,

develops recommendations for drought response and will make timely reports to state leadership, the media, the response agencies and others.

#### Responding to Recommendations

Upon the identification of drought conditions, which cannot be abated under normal operating procedures of state government, the Governor issues a proclamation of a disaster emergency to create an Interagency Coordinating Group (ICG). The response process consists of several lead state agencies and an ICG. The ICG is comprised of senior management representatives from lead response agencies. The ICG ensures the coordination of drought response activates both at a regional and local level. Additionally, the ICG reviews unmet needs identified by task forces and lead agencies and identifies and recommends the means to meet those needs. The ICG coordinates with the Executive Branch and the state legislature and determines when its own deactivation should occur.

#### Mitigating Activities

Drought mitigation is an ongoing activity in Colorado through emergency preparedness planning and evolving water resources policy and management that includes the following:

- Improve water availability monitoring
- Increase public awareness and education
- Augment water supply
- Facilitate watershed and local planning
- Reduce water demand/encourage conservation
- Impact reduction

The CWCB's Drought & Water Supply Assessment, to be conducted in the fall 2002, will determine whether the state has enough water to meet existing and future needs. The primary goal with collecting information through the Assessment is to analyze and summarize it while providing justification for initiatives that drive future resource allocation to benefit local communities susceptible to drought.

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**For more information about this or other water resources topics you can contact the CWCB at:**

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