

**Colorado Water Availability Task Force  
Review and Reporting Task Force Report  
May 1, 2002**

Dear Governor Owens,

I would first like to thank you for your leadership and direction on what is proving to be Colorado's worst drought in 25 years. With snowpack at historic lows and no immediate relief in sight, the drought we are experiencing brings with it consequences for nearly every Coloradan.

Upon your direction, the Water Availability Task Force (WATF) met on April 24, 2002, to review Colorado's drought conditions. At that meeting, I provided a letter from you that asked the Impact Task Forces to convene and respond to you by May 1, 2002, with an assessment of potential drought impacts on several sectors. Additionally, any activities that should be taken related to the monitoring, assessment, response and mitigation of the drought conditions in Colorado were to be included in the report.

I am pleased to report that the Impact Task Forces have been formed and are actively collecting useful information related to the current drought conditions.

As a first step, the Review and Reporting Task Force proposes the following actions.

The Water Availability Task Force and the Review and Reporting Task Force await your direction in the implementation of the next steps of the drought plan.

Sincerely,

Brad Lundahl, Chair  
*Water Availability Task Force*

## **AGRICULTURE**

*Chair, Bob McLavey, Colorado Department of Agriculture*

- Request that the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture make lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) available to farmers and ranchers for grazing and hay production. This would make additional forage available at a critical time.

## **ENERGY**

*Chair, Joe Lambert, Governor's Office of Energy Management & Conservation*

- With local governments and fire districts, develop an inventory of critical assets, including water, that need to be maintained during a fire response. Request that the Department of Local Affairs and the Department of Public Safety work with Colorado Counties, Inc. and the Colorado Municipal League develop this inventory.
- Increase the criminal penalties for arson during an established drought emergency. This is important in many areas of the state, but especially where power transmission lines, substations and other critical infrastructure are involved.
- Increase liability for negligence in causing a wildfire during a drought emergency.
- Through the Office of Energy Management and Conservation and the Public Utilities Commission, coordinate with railroads and electric utilities to assure that there are adequate fire prevention plans for their corridors.

## **HEALTH**

*Chair, David Holm, Water Quality Control Division, C.D.P.H.&E*

- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment should, as needed, expand existing grant and loan programs to assist public water systems in meeting emergency drinking water requirements, as well as the need for temporary water supplies and adequate treatment systems.
- The Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Department of Local Affairs should coordinate with all water providers to assure that they have adequate drought plans and mitigation measures for their systems and customers.
- Recommend that the General Assembly consider amending current statute to require all public water systems to develop drought contingency water supply plans for review and approval by the state by no later than July 1, 2003 for the largest systems and by no later than July 1, 2005 for the smallest public water systems.
- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment should verify that adequate programs are in place to monitor public drinking water systems, wastewater treatment systems and bodies of recreational water for contamination. This includes

working with the Health Task Force on early warning systems and interagency monitoring programs.

## **WATER PROVIDERS**

*Chair, Barry Cress, Colorado Department of Local Affairs*

- Closely monitor available water supplies through the local water districts, tracking the need for any water restrictions and notifying the Governor and the WATF on necessary actions and concerns.
- Redirect, as necessary, portions of the Energy Impact Assistance Fund in the Department of Local Affairs to fund drought planning efforts at the local level as well as the implementation of mitigation measures.
- Direct the Department of Administration and Personnel to develop water conservation plans for state facilities as appropriate.
- Request more advanced water providers, such as the Denver Water Board, to provide technical expertise to less sophisticated water providers in the development of drought contingency plans and mitigation measures.
- Support passage of HB02-1414 authorizing the State Engineer to review and approve substitute water supply plans that would provide alternative water supplies for drought-impacted communities. Additionally, reinforce the role of the State Engineer in verifying that the conditions of augmentation and substitute supply plans are met.
- Support passage of HB02-1152, which contains Colorado Water Conservation Board construction fund authorizations to repair water facilities that allow for more water storage.
- Provide support for additional storage reservoirs as appropriate through existing programs at the federal and state level. This would include immediate repairs to existing reservoir facilities, as well as long-range planning.

## **TOURISM**

*Chair, Stefanie Dalgard, Colorado Tourism Office*

- Be proactive in keeping the public informed about available tourism opportunities during times of drought.
- The State Tourism Board and federal and state recreation agencies should use the media to promote recreational opportunities in Colorado.
- The hospitality industry and service businesses such as golf courses should prepare for the impacts of reduced water supplies.

- Local government should prepare for reduced revenues from water dependent businesses.
- The Office of Water Conservation and the Office of Energy Management and Conservation should work with trade organizations such as the restaurant association to provide tips to the their members on water conservation measures.
- The Department of Natural Resources and water conservancy and conservation districts should maximize the use of instream flow opportunities to maintain water-based recreation.

## **WILDFIRE PROTECTION**

*Chair, Rich Homann, Colorado State Forest Service*

- Federal, state, and local fire agencies should provide technical assistance to counties for the development and implementation of expanded county Fire Management Plans.
- Federal, state, and local fire agencies should expand and strengthen existing wildland-urban interface-training programs for local fire service personnel.
- Make certain that all agencies (sheriff offices, fire protection districts, local fire responders) responsible for dealing with wildland fires clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. This would include the Colorado Interagency Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement, clarifying interagency roles and responsibilities for fire protection in the wildland urban interface.
- Federal, state, and local fire agencies should provide technical assistance to counties for the development and implementation of expanded county Fire Management Plans.
- Make certain that all agencies (sheriff offices, fire protection districts, local fire responders) responsible for dealing with wildland fires clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. This would include the Colorado Interagency Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement, clarifying interagency roles and responsibilities for fire protection in the wildland urban interface.
- Federal, state, and local fire agencies should improve statewide public awareness regarding the role of fire in Colorado landscapes and tools for wildland fire prevention.

## **WILDLIFE**

*Chair, Mary R. Halstead, Colorado Division of Wildlife*

- The Department of Public Health and Environment, the State Forest Service, and the Department of Natural Resources should improve interagency communication

regarding smoke regulations to increase the use of safe and contained prescribed burns as a means to reduce wildfire fuel loads and threats to wildlife habitat.

- Direct the Division of Wildlife to develop a process for enacting drought emergency closures, fishing restrictions, and fish salvage operations.
- Direct the Department of Natural Resources to evaluate and develop contingency plans for state owned water rights, water storage facilities, and aquatic and terrestrial habitat.