

STATE OF COLORADO

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New report to address growing pressures facing the Colorado River

Colorado, federal government, basin states collaborate on work to determine how to address increasing demands and dwindling supplies on the Southwest's largest river.

The Bureau of Reclamation, in conjunction with the State of Colorado and the other six Colorado River Basin States, today released the first interim report on the Supply and Demand for Water in the Colorado River Basin. The report is the first in a series that will be released over the next year as part of a collaborative, ongoing study of the Colorado River Basin. This Basin Study, funded jointly by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Colorado River Basin States, is a forward-looking cooperative effort by all parties to address what future water supplies may exist in the Colorado River, the demands on those supplies and potential strategies to deal with imbalances in this important river system.

The Interim Report addresses the issues confronted by water managers in the present with an eye to the future. The actual supply of the Colorado River falls short of the water allocations provided under the Colorado River Compact, and future demand is expected to be significantly greater due to region-wide stressors such as climate change, drought and continued development across the Southwest.

The Report utilizes four different water supply scenarios, including a climate change scenario. The climate change scenario was developed using published Global Climate Change Models and shows the potential impact of climate change on river flows. This supply scenario predicts decreases in average river flows by as much as 10% over the next fifty years.

The Study is a part of a continuing effort by federal representatives, state agencies, and stakeholder interests, to find cooperative approaches to resolve present and future conflicts over Colorado River basin resources. Though differences exist in the various groups' interpretation of the Law of the River, the parties have set those differences aside in favor of cooperation and greater communication.

"We are fortunate here in that the State of Colorado has recognized the importance of understanding the future water supply and demand challenges, and we have made great steps forward in identifying issues and strategies," said Jennifer Gimbel, Director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), "Studies such as the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI 2010) and the efforts of the CWCB and the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) help us to explore possible solutions to meet these future

challenges. The Basin Study is a model of states working together on these issues in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.”

This Interim Report is being made available to the public for review, and comments are being solicited from interested parties. Public outreach has been a part of the Basin Study since its inception, and federal, tribal, and non-governmental organizations have already provided input through participation in sub-teams and by attending numerous meetings.

Future releases of the Basin Study will begin to identify opportunities and solutions to the water supply challenges to be faced with regard to supply and demand imbalances. These future Interim Reports will assess the current infrastructure on the River and the capability of that infrastructure facing these water supply challenges. The Study will also explore solutions which could include: cloud seeding, water conservation, changes in reservoir operations, desalinization and water supply augmentation.

The report is available here: <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/crbstudy.html>

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