

STATE OF COLORADO

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Colorado River Basin Study Enters Options and Strategies Phase

Colorado, federal government, basin states begin phase with solicitation of stakeholder input.

Today, the Colorado River Basin States ("Basin States") and the Bureau of Reclamation publicly announced a process by which stakeholder and public input is being solicited for the most recent phase of the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study. This Study seeks to explore current and potential future imbalances in water supply and demand in this important basin system, as well as identify options and strategies for mitigating these imbalances.

In June 2011 the Basin States and the Bureau released Interim Report No. 1, which provided a snapshot of the work completed to that point. This Report provided an insight into the realities facing the stakeholders in the Basin. 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 first three phases are expected to be concluded by early 2012. On December 6th, the Bureau of Reclamation will formally begin the Options and Strategies phase by hosting a webinar to solicit stakeholder and public input. This webinar will provide an overview of the work completed on the Study thus far, as well as a selection of potential supply and demand imbalances. Stakeholders and the general public will have the opportunity to submit options and strategies using a standardized form, with a deadline of February 1, 2012.

In previous work by the Basin States and the Bureau, as well as studies conducted within each of the individual Basin States, it is apparent that the Colorado River Basin will face water shortages unless its natural flows are augmented, or Basin development is curtailed. This is true in Colorado, as was confirmed in the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) update in 2010. As the Study moves

forward, a wide array of options and strategies beyond the current ongoing efforts to balance today's supply and demand must be taken into consideration.

The Study is scheduled to be completed in July 2012. In evaluating potential options and strategies, the Study team will consider resolutions of water supply and demand imbalances throughout the Basin, identify potential legal and regulatory challenges, analyze effects on water users and Basin water resources, and recommend possible future actions, such as feasibility studies, environmental compliance activities, and potential demonstration programs.

Director Jennifer Gimbel of the CWCB hailed the Basin Study as a model of separate interests setting aside differences and working together: "From the State's work on SWSI 2010, we have a good understanding of the depth of challenges that the Colorado River Basin is facing in upcoming years. This current Basin Study builds on Colorado's successful planning work by bringing in many different stakeholders and competing interests, and expanding on our efforts to be more holistic. It's great to see this opportunity for future involvement Basin-wide."

More information on the Basin Study is available at the CWCB's website: <http://cwcb.state.co.us> or at the Bureau of Reclamation's Basin Study page: <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/crbstudy.html>.

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