

# STATE OF COLORADO

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## Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Kevin Houck, P.E., Engineer  
Thuy Patton, Floodplain Mapping Coordinator  
Watershed & Flood Protection Section

DATE: June 29, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 17**  
**July 12-13, 2011 Board Meeting**  
**Watershed & Flood Protection Section – Alamosa Levee Update**

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John W. Hickenlooper  
Governor

Mike King  
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel  
CWCB Director

### Background

The Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the City of Alamosa, constructed a levee within the City to protect significant areas from flooding by the Rio Grande. This levee, completed in 1998 along the south bank of the river, was built to FEMA requirements, including three feet of freeboard above the 100-year flood profile. As such, FEMA regulatory floodplain mapping currently show lands on the south side of the river as being protected by the levee. However, the levee on the north bank of the river was not built with the required freeboard and is therefore not considered to protect the north side of the City from a regulatory flood.

Following an inspection in September 2008, the Corps of Engineers (Corps) rated the levee as “unacceptable” for a number of reasons including vegetative growth, encroachments, and substandard maintenance. A follow up inspection by the Corps was performed in April 2011 to monitor the City’s progress on addressing the deficiencies outlined in the 2008 inspection report. CWCB staff was present during both inspections. Although certain issues, including rodent damage and erosion problems, have been addressed, the majority of issues outlined in the 2008 inspection report remain. A final report has not yet been issued for the most recent inspection, although the Corps has verbally indicated that the levee will still be rated as “unacceptable”.

CWCB staff is concerned about the levee and its ability to perform as intended during a major flood event. Staff is also wary of consequences in the future, such as public safety and flood insurance requirements, if the levee can’t be certified for regulatory flood protection. The Alamosa area is in the queue for a future flood mapping update, at which time the integrity of the levee will be analyzed. Depending on the outcome of the future analysis, the regulatory floodplain for the City of Alamosa could be radically altered. Staff will provide the Board with a summary of the entire situation.

### Staff Recommendation

This is an informational item and staff is not requesting board action.