

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

FROM: Interstate, Federal, and Water Information Section Staff

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

DATE: May 2, 2012

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 6, May 15-16, 2012 Board Meeting**
Interstate, Federal, and Water Information Section Programming

Introduction

As part of the Water 2012 celebrations, each section of the CWCB will be highlighted at Board meetings during the year. At the May meeting, the Interstate, Federal, and Water Information section is being highlighted, and we have chosen some of our keystone programming to present to the Board. We hope that this brief overview of our work will be helpful to Board members new and experienced, and will provide a behind-the-scenes look at some of the ongoing issues dealt with daily by section staff on behalf of the Board.

Background Information

Compacts Overview

In keeping with the theme of the CWCB's 75th anniversary, this year the Colorado River Compact also celebrates a milestone: 90 years of the Law of the River. A large part of the work this section performs falls under the ongoing operations and preservation of the various compacts to which the State of Colorado is a party. These include:

- The Colorado River Compact, 1922
- The Arkansas River Compact, 1948
- The Upper Colorado River Compact, 1948
- Various other compacts and equitable apportionment decrees.

The section works with the federal government and the other impacted states to assure that Colorado's compact obligations are met, and that the state's rights under these agreements are protected. The section advises Director Gimbel in her dual roles of Colorado River Commissioner and Arkansas River Commissioner. At the May meeting, a presentation will be given to provide an overview of the compacts to which Colorado is a party, and the various ways in which our section works to protect and preserve Colorado's compact apportionments in these crucial river basins.

Decision Support Systems (DSS)

In 2012 we also celebrate 20 years of Colorado's Decision Support Systems. These information and analytical resources are developed jointly by CWCB staff and the Division of Water Resources (DWR). In short, these water resources decision support systems are developed for Colorado's major water basins, providing an efficient and up-to-date manner for water managers to make fully informed decisions.

The DSS program was initiated in 1992, when the Colorado legislature authorized the CWCB to conduct a needs analysis and feasibility study for a Colorado River Decision Support System. This system has expanded since then to include the Rio Grande and South Platte Basins, with an Arkansas River DSS currently in the planning stages. The information gathered and processed by the DSS is used by the CWCB and DWR regularly, and was instrumental in CWCB work such as the Colorado River Water Availability Study (CRWAS) and the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI).

The DSS will continue to evolve, with the hard work of CWCB and DWR staff and the evolution of new technologies. At the May meeting, an overview of the DSS and the system's application to ongoing CWCB projects will be presented to the Board.

Recovery Programs

The State of Colorado is also party to a number of Recovery and Adaptive Management Programs, which seek to restore and protect endangered species, and other resources, through water-related initiatives. Section staff participate in meetings of the various committees of these Programs, and provide technical support to the governing bodies and stakeholders.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program is an agreement between the states of Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado, as well as the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Program seeks to maintain, improve, and conserve habitat for four threatened and endangered species which use the Platte River in Nebraska. The Program enables existing and new water users in this river basin to proceed without additional Endangered Species Act requirements for the four target species: the whooping crane, piping plover, interior least tern, and the pallid sturgeon.

The Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program focuses on four endangered fish in the Yampa/White/Colorado and Gunnison basins: the bonytail chub, humpback chub, razorback sucker, and Colorado pikeminnow. The Program's recovery strategies include conducting research, improving river habitat, providing adequate streamflows, managing non-native fish, and raising endangered fish in hatcheries for stocking. The DSS is also instrumental in CWCB's contribution to the Program, used for depletion accounting and involvement in programs that enhance spring peak and later summer flows in designated critical habitat through voluntary reservoir operation coordination. CWCB also provides funding for the Program and section staff provide program oversight.

The San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program focuses on the San Juan River basin and two endangered fish: the razorback sucker and Colorado pikeminnow. CWCB staff provide funding and program oversight through participation in various Program committees. Also, the DSS surface water model is used to develop an operating plan for Navajo Reservoir, taking into consideration the benefit of these endangered species.

The Glen Canyon Adaptive Management Program seeks to coordinate dam operations and other management activities to protect and enhance the natural resources of the Colorado River ecosystem in the Grand Canyon in a manner consistent with the Law of the River. In addition to working for the benefit of endangered species, Glen Canyon Dam operations allow Colorado and the other Upper Division states to comply with the provisions of the Colorado River Compact and the associated Law of the River. Section staff serve as technical work group members, and advise Director Gimbel in her role in the Adaptive Management Work Group.

At the May meeting, the Staff will provide an overview of the Recovery and Adaptive Management Programs, to further explain the CWCB's role, and how the Staff works to advance the goals of these important Programs.

Staff Recommendation

These items are informational in nature, and no Board action is required.