

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Steve Miller, Senior Water Resource Specialist
Interstate, Federal, and Water Information Section

DATE: November 8, 2013

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item 28d, November 19-20, 2013 Board Meeting**
Finance – Construction Fund Non-Reimbursable Investment - Referred
Gunnison Basin Irrigation System Planning and Optimization Studies

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

James Eklund
CWCB Director

Introduction

Staff is requesting from the CWCB Non-Reimbursable Investment Program an appropriation of \$250,000 for the Gunnison Basin Irrigation System Planning and Optimization Studies project. For over 30 years, CWCB has been actively involved in the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (“CRBSCP”) and more recently has committed to participation in the Gunnison Basin Selenium Management Program (“SMP”).

The proposed project is to offer financial assistance to the non-federal irrigation systems in a portion of the Gunnison Basin to allow them to more effectively compete in the CRBSCP, which will also meet the goals of the SMP. These entities would obtain Board funded engineering services to evaluate and design enhancements to existing irrigation systems. These systems have opportunities to receive significant federal funding for infrastructure improvements because of the attendant water quality and water conservation benefits that can be realized in the basin. However, the federal funding is dependent on credible designs and cost-estimates for which no financial assistance is currently available. In addition, opportunities to realign and combine systems are overlooked in an effort to minimize design costs under the current system. The proposed program will enable irrigators to better compete in the 2015 CRBSCP Funding Opportunity Announcement (“2015 FOA”) and more effectively utilize any such funds awarded. The River District will coordinate the selection and distribution of the individual technical assistance grants to irrigation entities within the study area. This will allow utilization of the District’s expertise and personnel to target areas where modernization opportunities are the greatest

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve this request for the General Assembly to authorize this project and appropriate \$250,000 from the Construction Fund to the Department of Natural Resources for allocation to the CWCB for the Board to participate with the Colorado River Water Conservation District to conduct the Gunnison Basin Irrigation System Planning and Optimization Studies.

**CWCB Water Project Non-Reimbursable Investment Program
Project Data Sheet**

Sponsor: Colorado Water Conservation Board
and Colorado River Water Conservation District

Location: Delta, Montrose, and Gunnison
Counties

Project Name: Gunnison Basin Irrigation
System Planning and Optimization Studies

Project Type: Irrigation System Planning

Drainage Basin: Gunnison River Basin

Water Source: Gunnison River

Total Project Cost: \$250,000

Funding Source: Construction Fund

CWCB NRI: \$250,000

Type of Grantee: Conservation District and
Irrigation Companies

The proposed project is to offer financial assistance to the non-federal irrigation systems in the study area to allow them to obtain engineering services to evaluate and design enhancements to existing irrigation systems. These systems have opportunities to receive significant federal funding for infrastructure improvements because of the attendant water quality and water conservation benefits that can be realized in the basin. However, the federal funding is dependent on credible designs and cost-estimates for which no funding is currently available. In addition, opportunities to realign and combine systems are overlooked in an effort to minimize design costs under the current system. The proposed program will enable irrigators to better compete in the 2015 CRBSCP Funding Opportunity Announcement ("2015 FOA") and more effectively utilize any such funds awarded.

Grant funding is being sought to stimulate sound engineering designs and planning that can lead to a significant infusion of federal funding which may be combined with construction loans from the Board. The irrigation system operators have marginal resources with which to obtain high quality technical services at the beginning of the federal funding process offered through the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program. State financial assistance to defray or reduce the upfront application costs can result in major new irrigation modernization projects, producing Statewide and local benefits of improved water quality, improved water use efficiency, and more productive agricultural communities.

The River District will coordinate the selection and distribution of the individual technical assistance grants to irrigation entities within the study area. This will allow utilization of the District's expertise and personnel to target areas where modernization opportunities are the greatest.