



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

John Hickenlooper, Governor

Robert Randall, DNR Executive Director

James Eklund, CWCB Director

TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Carlee Brown,
Interstate, Federal and Water Information Section Chief
Megan Holcomb, Water Supply Planning Section

DATE: March 22, 2017

AGENDA ITEM: 17. Board Discussion of Agenda Item 24(I): Basin Roundtable
Technical Study on Colorado River Risk Response Options

Background:

Four Basin Roundtables on the Western Slope have submitted a joint application for Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) support to engage in a technical study on Colorado River Risk Response Options ("Risk Study"). Those Roundtables - the Colorado, Gunnison, Southwest, and Yampa/White/Green - received WSRF funding for Phase I of this study in March 2016.

Phase II of the Risk Study proposes to examine voluntary demand management and reservoir operation scenarios as preemptive actions that Colorado water users could take as short-term measures (1-5 years in duration) to protect critical reservoir elevations. Phase II will also investigate ways to partner the two major water modeling programs used in Colorado: the Colorado River Simulation System (CRSS) with Colorado's own StateMod.

An earlier draft of the Phase II scope of work proposed to examine questions that may have implicated interstate policy issues. Director Eklund and CWCB staff worked extensively with the Basin Roundtables in creating a revised Phase II SOW that will be a useful follow-up from Phase I of the Risk Study, while avoiding concepts that implicate interstate negotiations and relationships.

CWCB staff recommends the Board's approval of this application. We believe that the revised scope of work offers the following important assurances that make it of value to the entire state (and not to any basin's detriment):

- (1) The study provides that interpretations of the scope that affect sensitive water policy issues will be governed by CWCB. We feel this is appropriate given our ongoing interstate work.
- (2) The study appropriately defers questions of administration of the Colorado River in the event of a compact call to the state and instead focuses on scenarios for voluntary demand management and reservoir operations.



- (3) The study establishes a Technical Advisory Committee to offer guidance on technical issues that arise in the course of modeling. The CWCB will be included on this committee as will any other Basin Roundtable that wishes to sponsor the study.

The three East Slope Roundtables have expressed some concerns with Phase II of the Risk Study. Most recently, CWCB facilitated a conversation between East Slope and West Slope representatives to work through these concerns. Due to the statewide interests addressed by this study, CWCB has asked the East Slope Roundtables to join as participating Roundtables. The West Slope entities wish to proceed with the study in its current form. The East Slope is reluctant to join the study without a Management Team that would be equipped to address policy questions that arise from the study.

CWCB staff recommends approval of the WSRF application at the appointed time. Staff has held several conversations over the past two months, and has worked with the Roundtables to address their concerns through the Scope of Work as drafted.

Staff recommendation: No Board action is required at this time. The Board will vote on this WSRF application as Agenda Item 24 (I) on Thursday, March 23, 2017.

