



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Kevin Houck, P.E., Chief
Watershed and Flood Protection Section

DATE: January 17, 2019

AGENDA ITEM: Agenda Item 7, Four Corners Area Permanent Radar Update

Background:

In addition to the San Luis Valley, a well-known “radar hole” exists in the Four Corners area of SW Colorado. This radar gap exists because beams from nearby radar towers (primarily Grand Junction) are blocked by mountain topography. This problem has been known for many years. In fact, in a 2017 publication issued by the Colorado Climate Center, “An Assessment of Weather and Climate Monitoring Systems in Colorado - Current Systems, Gaps, and Future Needs”, a survey of local stakeholders around the state indicate that the biggest weather and climate data unmet need is gap filling radar in the San Luis Valley and Southwestern Colorado. This has recently increased urgency due to the recent 416 fire, and the resulting flood and debris threat that will exist for the next few years.

Through a partnership of numerous local and state agencies, a gap-filling radar has been funded and in the process of being implemented at the Alamosa Airport to serve the San Luis Valley. With this success, focus has been extended to the SW basin to provide a similar tool for improving emergency management processes and water supply forecasting, as well as several related efforts such as transportation condition monitoring.

A working group consisting of local, state, and federal agencies as well as other stakeholders has been established that is led by CWCB staff. The purview of this working group is to examine logistical issues (most significantly, where to site the proposed radar), develop local partnerships for the purposes of ongoing operations and maintenance activities, and identify capital funding for the radar itself. The first meeting of this group took place on November 9, 2018, and the group has held monthly meetings since that time.

Since the convening of the working group, much progress has been made in all three areas. Most significantly, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs has allocated \$1.7M of state funds to the capital costs of building the radar. Work continues in all three areas, and CWCB staff hope to have the radar operational prior to the 2020 flood season.

Staff recommendation:

This is an informational item and no board action is requested at this time.

