

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

1313 Sherman Street, Room 721
Denver, Colorado 80203
Phone: (303) 866-3441
Fax: (303) 866-4474
www.cwcb.state.co.us



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 12, 2012

CONTACT

Ted Kowalski, CWCB, 303-588-6661
ted.kowalski@state.co.us

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

Jennifer L. Gimbel
CWCB Director

Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study Released

Cooperative study assesses potential water supply and demand imbalances for the future of the Colorado River basin

The federal government and the seven Colorado River basin states today released the final results of the cooperative Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study. The report evaluates the future reliability of the Colorado River system to meet increasing demands and outlines potential strategies for dealing with projected imbalances. The nearly three-year project began in January 2010 as a joint effort of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and representatives of the basin states.

Future demands on the river system are analyzed under six hypothetical situations, which include varying factors that will affect the system over the next few decades: population growth in the basin states, potential savings from conservation, and economic conditions in the watershed. Under these projected situations, the demand for consumptive uses in the Colorado River system is projected to range between 18.1 and 20.4 million acre-feet by 2060.

The projected supply of the river system is analyzed under four different supply scenarios, taking into account historical hydrological records and the potential effects of climate change. Under the demand and supply analyses presented by the study, an average supply imbalance of 3.2 million acre-feet per year is expected by 2060.

The study team reviewed approximately 160 options for dealing with the potential imbalances on a basin-wide level, submitted by participants, stakeholders in the system, and the general public during a general request for options between

November 2011 and February 2012. These submissions were organized by the project team, and assembled into portfolios, representing a varied range of ideas and effectiveness for dealing with imbalances.

The basin states have committed to remaining within the bounds of the “Law of the River,” the evolution of management and cooperation for governance of this resource, and the path forward in consideration of this study will remain a cooperative effort. Director Jennifer Gimbel of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) said: “This study reaffirms the concept under which Colorado water agencies such as the CWCB and Interbasin Compact Committee have been operating: There is no silver bullet, or easy answer to the supply and demand imbalances on the Colorado River. The way forward is through cooperation with our neighbors, holistic management of the river, and a varied portfolio of strategies.”

Added Ted Kowalski, CWCB section chief, who served on the Basin Study Project team: “We’ve already been addressing these issues on a Colorado-wide scale, with projects such as the Colorado River Water Availability Study, and through the work of the basin roundtables. Now, with this basin-wide, cooperative effort, we can get a glimpse of the bigger picture, and begin to work towards planning for the future, with a well-informed idea of where we’re headed.”

The complete study is available at <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/crbstudy.html> and more information can be obtained by contacting CWCB staff. In addition, the Colorado River basin states have signed a set of commitments following the release of this study, which are available at <http://cwcb.state.co.us>.

#