



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Amy Ostdiek and Michelle Garrison

DATE: January 23, 2023

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 9: System Conservation Pilot Program

This is an informational item with no board action requested.

In June 2022, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation called on the Colorado River Basin States to create a plan to conserve an additional 2-4 million acre-feet of water above efforts already underway, in an effort to protect critical infrastructure at Lake Powell and Lake Mead. In July 2022, the Upper Division States responded with a Five-Point Plan, while recognizing that we were not the cause of the crisis and had limited options to respond due to ongoing and deep hydrologic and legal water shortages coupled with depleted storage.

One component of this plan is reauthorization of the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP). This program entails temporary, voluntary, and compensated reductions in consumptive use across the Upper Basin for the purpose of mitigating the impacts of drought in the Upper Colorado River Basin. While similar in nature to the concept of Demand Management, SCPP does not require the same monitoring, verification, and shepherding requirements that would be part of a potential Demand Management program.

The SCPP was previously operational from 2014-2018, and in that time, it is estimated to have conserved roughly 40,000 acre-feet of water across the four Upper Division States.¹ It is expected that the project review and approval process will be similar to that in place previously: this work will be coordinated through the Upper Colorado River Commission with consultant support; Upper Division State staff will play key roles in review and selection of proposals; and the Colorado Water Conservation Board will be presented with a slate of proposed projects for approval following the review process. The process will differ from the previous effort in that it will be funded entirely by federal funds made available by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. Additionally, Commissioner Mitchell and staff will work closely with the conservation and conservancy districts within which projects are located in the project approval process.

The application period is currently open and will remain open through February 1, 2023. The Request for Proposals and SCPP Project Application Form are available at the [UCRC website](#). Staff will brief the board and seek approval of proposed projects in February or March 2023.

¹ Additional information on the 2014-2018 SCPP is available at the [UCRC website](#).

