

# Historic proposed agreement heralds a new path for Colorado Water

**Colorado River Cooperative Agreement ushers in a new vision for cooperative water management**

**Posted – May 15, 2012**

Leaders from Grand, Summit and Eagle counties stood with representatives from Denver Water, the Colorado River District, the ski industry and other main stem Colorado River Basin water interests to announce a historic proposed agreement, the “Colorado River Cooperative Agreement.” This proposed agreement will change the way water is managed in Colorado.

Focused on cooperation, the proposed agreement brings parties who traditionally have been at odds together as partners on a path to responsible water development benefitting both the East and West Slopes. It achieves better environmental health for the Colorado River Basin, maintains high-quality recreational use and improves economics for many cities, counties and businesses impacted by the river. The proposed agreement, which was five years in the making, will now be considered by towns, counties, and water entities from the headwaters to the Utah state line.

“This cooperative effort represents a new way of doing business when it comes to water,” said Gov. John Hickenlooper at today’s announcement. “It shows that water solutions must be crafted from a statewide perspective. We hope and expect that this process will ripple across Colorado to other areas of water conflict.”

With 34 partners stretching from Grand Junction to the Denver metro area, the proposed agreement is the largest of its kind in the history of the state. In addition to its benefits for Denver Water and the West Slope, the proposed agreement will trigger a major water-sharing and conservation arrangement between Denver Water, Aurora Water and water providers in the South Denver metro area. Taken as a whole, these landmark agreements mark the most significant change Colorado has seen in how the state’s water resources are managed.

“This all comes down to the health of the Colorado River Basin for us,” said Eric Kuhn, general manager of the Colorado River District. “I believe we can all agree that, in the end, the Colorado River and many of its tributaries will be healthier under the terms of the proposed agreement than it is today.”

The comprehensive proposed agreement focuses on significantly enhancing the environmental health of much of the Colorado River Basin and its tributaries, as well as supporting many West Slope cities, towns, counties and water providers as they work to improve the quality and quantity of water through new municipal water projects and river management initiatives.

“Denver Water is proud to be part of this new vision for water management in Colorado that seeks to ensure the good of the whole,” said Jim Lochhead, CEO/manager of Denver Water. “We

hope this first-of-its-kind agreement sets the standard for how the state thinks about building a secure water future.”

In exchange for environmental enhancements, including financial support for municipal water projects and providing additional water supply and service area restrictions, the agreement will remove opposition to Denver Water’s Moffat Collection System Project.

“We welcome the opportunity to discuss with our constituents this proposed agreement, which benefits Grand County and much of the Colorado River Basin,” said Grand County Commissioner James Newberry. “The specifics of the proposal have been a long time in the making, but we believe they represent the best opportunity to improve the health of the Fraser and Colorado rivers, the economy of our county, and provide additional water for community and recreational use.”

The Colorado River Cooperative Agreement also establishes a process, dubbed “Learning by Doing,” by which Denver Water, Grand County, the Colorado River District, the Middle Park Water Conservancy District and others will use the flexibility in Denver Water’s water system to manage flows for the benefit of the environment in Grand County.

“We hope our constituents will see the proposed agreement as a win for all of us by substantially moving away from the confrontational way water has been managed in the past to a more inclusive, collaborative process that seeks the best solutions for everyone,” said Thomas Davidson, Summit County commissioner. “It’s an impressive accomplishment when groups as diverse as the partners on this agreement come to the table and find common solutions.”

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