

Group: Dry times ahead without major H2O project

More information

The complete report by the Colorado Water Conservation Board on future water demands is available at <http://cwcb.state.co.us/IWMD/COsWaterSupplyFuture>.

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LOVELAND — Transferring agricultural water to meet future water demands in the South Platte River Basin is not the answer.

That was the consensus Thursday when the South Platte Roundtable of the Colorado Water Conservation Board unveiled the findings of its study, Water for the 21st Century. The group is one of eight in the state developed by the Colorado Legislature following the drought years of the early part of the century.

The South Platte group, which has 50 members from Park County north to Larimer County and east to the Nebraska and Kansas borders, has met monthly for more than four years.

The group believes that by 2050, the medium demand for Weld, Larimer and Boulder counties alone will require an additional 200,000 acre-feet of water just to meet municipal and industrial needs. An acre-foot of water is enough to supply two families with a year's supply of water.

"We will need another Colorado-Big Thompson Project or most of another Poudre River to meet those needs," Harold Evans told a group of about 150 people at the meeting at The Ranch in Loveland. Evans, chairman of the Greeley Water and Sewer Board, is vice chairman of the South Platte Roundtable.

Not everyone at the meeting believed study's accuracy — one person suggested limiting growth to reduce demands, while another claimed groundwater is not being considered as a future source.

Gary Wockner of Fort Collins, with the Save The Poudre Coalition, said the study has serious, "and perhaps fatal, flaws and appears to be rooted in the river-destruction policies of the 19th century rather than the diverse Colorado interests of the 21st century."

Evans said the roundtables have been asked to develop needs assessments for the future, not control growth. He said that Colorado water law will prevail to the use of groundwater. It looked at demands as of 2030 and on out to 2050.

He also pointed out that current 2008 water demands for the just the South Platte reflects a 13 percent decrease from the demands of 2000, and that reduction is "due to current conservation efforts." He and others who presented the more than three-hour report said, however, that conservation, while part of the puzzle, "will not get us to where we need to be."

2030 projected agricultural demands

2030 projected agricultural demands for water in the South Platte River Basin

Year; Irrigated Land; Water Deficit

2005; 840,000 acres; 210,000 acre feet

2030; 684,000-797,000 acres; 171,000-198,000 acre feet

The current and projected agricultural water storage in the basin is 200,000 acre-feet of consumptive use. Irrigated acres have decreased 70,000 acres from 2001-2005.

Source: Colorado Water Conservation Board.

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