

5/29/2014

Tomorrow is the future and water will be expensive and finite.

~ W.D. Farr, Northern Water Board of Directors, and President of the American National Cattlemen's Association

Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper has adopted the following resolution regarding the development of the South Platte/Metro Basin Implementation Plan, a component of the Colorado Water Plan.

Whereas

1. Flows in the plains' portion of the Cache la Poudre River have been severely compromised by numerous dams and diversions;
2. Water quality in the Poudre has been degraded by waste water discharges, irrigation return flows, runoff from adjacent lands, and urban stormwater runoff to the point that human contact is often inadvisable and several aquatic resources are at great risk;
3. Habitats for aquatic and terrestrial species (including at least one federally threatened mammal, two state threatened fish, and several rare plants) have been degraded both in and adjacent to the river;
4. The Cache la Poudre River has been declared an Endangered River by the highly regarded conservation group American Rivers;
5. The Poudre River has been nominated as an Urban River Corridor Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society;
6. Completing any of the Poudre basin's consumptive Identified Projects and Processes (IPPs, specifically additional dams or diversions) would:
 - a. sharply reduce peak flows such that the remaining flows would rarely have the energy to clean the channel of algae and silt, maintain the channel's capacity to carry flood flows, and be less effective in diluting pollution,
 - b. impair the river's ability to recover from disasters like the High Park Fire, which smothered the river with ash and sediment that are very harmful to the aquatic community, especially the invertebrate food supply,
 - c. further deplete flows critical to sustain downstream endangered species in Nebraska,
 - d. reduce the length of the recreational boating/floating season through Fort Collins and Windsor, and
 - e. would largely benefit people outside the Poudre basin, while most of the impacts would be left for people inside the basin to deal with;
7. It would appear that the draft Implementation Plan will essentially treat recreation and environmental needs (i.e., non-consumptive needs) as a constraint on development of new water storage, not as a fully-fledged objective;
8. There is a legacy of past abuse to rivers throughout the South Platte basin extending back to the mid-1800s¹ that must be rectified.

¹ See <http://savethepoudre.org/when-where-map.html>

9. Further draining Colorado's valued rivers does not in any way match the public's image of what our state is all about: a river should remain a river.

Therefore Be It Resolved

1. We support a variety of elements in the draft plan, including aggressive water conservation and incentives for wiser water use; voluntary water sharing between municipalities and agriculture; transferring irrigation water to municipalities from lands consumed by new subdivisions (given adequate land use controls for those new subdivisions); experiments with plains' aquifer storage such that our rivers can be used as conveyances to those downstream aquifers; and large-scale, environmentally-sensitive water reclamation and desalinization.
2. We also support optimizing our existing water supplies through infrastructure that enables sharing water resources -- and the risk of shortages -- as long as that does not further deplete our river and riparian ecosystems.
3. We recognize that some river-friendly water projects may be expensive. Such is the nature of dealing with a valuable and limited resource. We must pay the full cost for the damage that has been incurred.
4. The State of Colorado should prioritize and substantively fund projects that address recreational and environmental needs in the Cache la Poudre basin such as bolstering stream flows, upgrading diversions to improve fish passage, adding additional streamflow measurement capability, and the like.
5. The State of Colorado should take no actions to expedite, facilitate, endorse, fund, incentivize or otherwise promote the planned consumptive IPPs or similar extractive projects within the Cache la Poudre River basin.
6. The State of Colorado should not interfere with mandatory federal, state or local regulations regarding the IPPs or similar projects in the Cache la Poudre River basin.
7. No more major water diversion projects are necessary just as no more water waste is supportable.

/s/ John Bartholow, for the Board of Directors, for Save The Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper