Letter from the Board President

2012: Our history teaches us that the future is now

In 2012, the Colorado River District celebrated its 75th anniversary with the book “Water Wranglers: A Story About the Embattled Colorado River and the Growth of the West.” The summation of the history is this: the demand for Western Colorado water on the Front Range is never ending and the Colorado River District must be ever vigilant and always engaged to protect Western Colorado’s interests. This, we promise to do.

In fact, our history inspires us and reminds us that our work is even more critical today than perhaps it was in the year of our founding. It is clear that our predecessors understood that growth in demands would steadily gobble the West Slope’s available water supply. The Colorado River Compact of 1922 limits our use of a river that we must share with six other states and the Republic of Mexico.

Drought is a short-term but poignant reminder that regardless of that limit on use, the river’s supply is short of serving its full needs today. Climate change looms in the long-term as a pending crisis for our water-sharing realities.

Recent data on the river’s supply (both state and federal studies) have increased our knowledge, but the debate of how much water can be developed is far from settled.

As a four-term County Commissioner from Grand County, the most heavily impacted county in Colorado for transmountain diversions, I can attest that the seriousness of the future of water on the West Slope is more dire than any time in our past. The vital role the Colorado River District will play in that future is in our hands.

So it is that the Colorado River remains in the bulls eye as the source of new water development to help meet a supply gap focused on 2050, when Colorado’s population is slated to as much as double to 10 million people. The nine Basin Roundtables and the Interbasin Compact Committee are working on a “four-legs-of-the-stool” approach to meeting this gap through conservation, reuse, the following of agriculture and new water development. The Colorado River District will remain vigilant to ensure that West Slope agriculture, the West Slope economy and the river are not sacrificed to meet the gap. The “legs” of the stool must be truly balanced. And if it is possible to develop more of the river, it is imperative that risk of overuse and the triggering of a Colorado River Compact curtailment be prevented.

This risk must be tightly managed. Triggers or signposts that a curtailment is looming must be put in place. New projects must not be allowed to topple the whole system into curtailment. Water banking should be thoroughly examined so we can determine if temporary agricultural fallowing – where willing producers are fully compensated and secondary impacts are mitigated – can cover critical uses if a curtailment looms or is triggered. We do not pretend to know if that’s possible, despite early work on the idea. The Colorado River District is helping steer this research and we proceed onward. Phase II of the Colorado River Water Availability Study, soon to be commissioned by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, will be an important navigational guide.

Our anniversary year was noteworthy on other fronts as well, the most prominent being the resolution to the growing financial debt on Ruedi Reservoir and the uncertainty of who’s responsible for the bill. With a 2019 deadline on the debt looming, the Colorado River District reached out to the West Slope to find takers for that water. Additionally, previously uncontradicted water will now benefit Western Colorado. Ruedi’s construction debt had grown to $34 million, the result of there being about 20,000 acre feet of stored water not under contract. That leadership produced interest for all of the water and the debt will be paid. Details can be found elsewhere in this report.

The Colorado River District also participated in the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study that warns of future water shortages if steps are not taken to mitigate the inexorable forces of supply and demand. The biggest challenge we have in the West is water availability and how we address water needs in the coming decades. You can learn more about that landmark study elsewhere in this report.

The past year also saw implementation details being worked out for the historic Colorado River Cooperative Agreement (CRCA) with Denver Water. Denver Water and 42 West Slope entities are in accord and nearly all have signed the CRCA. Final execution by the River District and a few remaining West Slope entities awaits completion of an agreement on Green Mountain Reservoir administration and progress on finalizing the Shoshone Outage Protocol.

The CRCA is part of the negotiation for Denver Water’s Moffat Tunnel Project. In exchange for diverting more runoff across the Continental Divide.

I believe we are accomplishing win-win agreements that will improve current conditions and give us continuing opportunities to improve habitat, streamflows and recreation. This can be a much better way to create real progress than engaging in protracted legal battles with uncertain outcomes other than enormous expenditures of public funds.

As Colorado River District Board members, we want to make sure that the District is serving its constituents in the 15 Western Colorado counties that we represent. Are we meeting your expectations? What do you want the Colorado River District to be? If you have comments, please contact your county’s Board member. The names and contact information can be found on page 26 of this report.

James Newberry
Colorado River District Board President, 2013
The Colorado River District protects Western Colorado water resources on behalf of the 500,000 people in Northwest and West-Central Colorado west of the Continental Divide. The Colorado River District was founded in 1937 to be a watchdog of Colorado River diversions across the Rocky Mountains to the east. The watchdog role continues with an urgency surpassing the days of our founding.

Population growth, drought and climate change promise the coming years will bear many more ideas to move water. The Colorado River District also watches to the west, to Lake Powell, Lake Mead and how six other states and the Republic of Mexico compete to use Colorado River water. Decisions concerning the Colorado River by others affect Colorado water users.

The Colorado River District holds and develops water rights for the benefit of Western Colorado. We own and operate Wolford Mountain Reservoir in Grand County in conjunction with our partner Denver Water. In 2006, we completed expansion of Elkhead Reservoir in Northwest Colorado. Additionally, the Colorado River District controls water in various other reservoirs to support West Slope people, industry, environment and recreation.

We are a public, governmental entity governed by a Board of Directors, one director from each of our 15 counties. Property owners within the District pay a small property tax to support our mission. Our District includes all the lands of Moffat, Rio Blanco, Mesa, Delta, Ouray, Garfield, Gunnison, Pitkin, Summit, Eagle, Grand and Routt Counties as well as portions of Hinsdale, Montrose and Saguache Counties.

The Colorado River District offices are based in Glenwood Springs.

Our address is P.O. Box 1120, 201 Centennial St., Glenwood Springs, CO 81602.

Our phone is (970) 945-8522.

Our website offers much more information about us, our work and current water issues.

www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org

Cover: Late fall view of Dillon Reservoir in Summit County. Photo: Bob Berwyn

Our mission: To lead in the protection, conservation, use and development of the water resources of the Colorado River Basin for the welfare of the District, and to safeguard for Colorado all waters of the Colorado River to which the state is entitled.
March is supposed to be the snowiest month of the winter, but in 2012, it was the driest and it sent the snowpack into a tailspin. March started unusually warm and stayed that way. The runoff commenced weeks ahead of normal. Snowpack on average builds to its highest levels in March and April but in March 2012, it started going backward at an alarming rate. March snowpack was 27 percent of average and April was 61 percent. The 2012 water year was the fourth worst on record overall, leading to the declaration of severe or extreme drought in much of the Colorado River District by the middle of summer.

In Colorado, the biggest reservoir of water storage is accumulated snow at elevations above 9,000 feet. It is the snowpack and then the spring runoff—and the capturing of some of the runoff in man-made reservoirs—that allows people, agriculture and industry to exist in a state that is mostly arid, on both sides of the Continental Divide.

Only because the previous water year was bountiful, with a snowpack at more than 120 percent of average in many places across the District, did most constituents escape the consequences of drought. Reservoir storage was 120 percent of average as the drought started. Still, many ranchers found their forage production drastically cut by the ensuing dry summer and many had to extend themselves financially to buy hay at a high cost wherever they could. Reservoirs offer water users protection for dry years, but many water users irrigate by means of direct streamflows only and are heavily impacted by an early and meager runoff.

Here are some of the dramatic figures from the April 30, 2012, snowpack survey:
- Gunnison Basin—56 percent of average
- Blue River Basin—53 percent of average
- Upper Colorado River Basin—47 percent of average
- Roaring Fork Basin—47 percent of average
- Yampa-White Basin—52 percent of average

By May 16 those totals averaged only 11% statewide.

Whenever conditions are dry, attention in the Colorado River Mainstem Basin, which is heavily impacted by transmountain diversions, turns to the senior water rights on the river and how they are going to operate. The oldest major water right is the Shoshone Hydro Plant in Glenwood Canyon. It did not operate at full capacity during the 2012 irrigation season and its 1,250 cubic foot per second water right was not “called.”

Without that non-consumptive water being called down the river through the power plant, the suite of Grand Valley irrigation rights known as the “Cameo Call” was the centerpiece of river operations. The Cameo Call comes on the river primarily for the benefit of the agricultural industry in the Grand Valley. It went into effect on June 21, 2012, and stayed active through October 22, 2012, when many of the irrigation companies cut back in order to preserve water supplies in upstream reservoirs such as Green Mountain Reservoir for the 2013 irrigation season. Cooperation and flexibility in water use was a hallmark of how water users and reservoir operators worked through the drought of 2012.

Unfortunately, the start of winter in late 2012 did little to predict a better snowpack year in 2013 and the prospect of two bad years in a row loomed large as the year closed.
The Pine Ridge fire near De Beque, summer of 2012.

A drawn-down Dillon Reservoir in November of 2012. Dry conditions continued to the end of the year.
Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study portends challenges and calls out strategies

The Colorado River Water Supply and Demand Study (Basin Study) that was released in 2012 called attention to a widening gap in the coming years between demands on the Colorado River system and the amount of water it supplies.

The study pointed out that:
— Imbalances will grow in the future if the potential effects of climate change are realized, demands continue to increase and stakeholders do not take any mitigating steps.
— A combination of options, including conservation and reuse, development of local groundwater supplies, desalination, augmentation and the transfer of water from agricultural to urban uses will be needed.

The study creates a common platform upon which discussions can occur to refine recommendations and actions to sustain the environment, people and economy of this region.

The Basin Study: what is it?

The study is a scenario-based planning effort by the Bureau of Reclamation and the seven states of the Colorado River Basin — Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, California, Nevada and Arizona.

The objective is “to define current and future imbalances in water supply and demand through 2060 in the Basin and the adjacent areas of the Basin States that receive Colorado River system water, and to develop and analyze adaptation and mitigation strategies to resolve those imbalances.”

It cost more than $4 million and took more than three years to complete. It was released Dec. 12, 2012. The Colorado River District is a participant in the study, which continues to evolve as the organizing entities continue to take “next steps” forward.

Important to note is that the study is not a decisional document. Rather, some have called it a call to action for Reclamation, the seven states and other stakeholders to engage in forward-thinking planning.

The study developed 24 supply-and-demand scenarios. On supply, it looked at hydrologic tracks involving observed flows, paleo hydrology (reconstructed flows from tree-ring studies) and simulated flows under projected climate change.

Demand was developed from six different projections based on various growth estimations, development, economic and technological adoption scenarios.

Key assumptions are that demands for water will rise because of population growth (at varying rates) and with climate change, supplies will decrease an average of 9 percent as measured at Lee Ferry, Ariz., to an average of 13.6 million acre feet a year (maf/yr).

Bottom lines
— Current basin-wide demands (15.3 maf/yr) outstrip average supplies (14.0 maf/yr from 1953-2012);
— The current basin-wide gap is mitigated by storage in Lakes Powell and Mead, plus other reservoirs;
— Significant future mitigation and actions are needed;
— The gap is greatest in the Lower Basin, where shortages are “when, not if;”
— The gap in the Upper Basin is more uncertain but the shortage risk is greater than zero and can be significant in the future if no mitigation is accomplished;
— For the Upper Basin (above Lee Ferry) supply (hydrology) is the most significant factor;
— For the Lower Basin (below Lee Ferry) demand is the most influential factor.

According to Colorado River District Senior Water Resources Engineer Dave Kanzer, the District’s representative to the study team, while the Upper Basin is in a better position than the Lower Basin, “Upper Basin interests must care about the big picture because solutions for the Lower Basin will directly affect users in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Mitigation actions (such as increased water development) can increase the risk to historical (and future) users,” he said. “Others’ rewards are our potential risk.”

“The study confirms what we already understand: The Colorado River is already fully used,” said Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn. “In the very near future, the demand for the river’s resources will far exceed the available supply. In order to meet the needs of people and aquatic-dependent species and habitats, new ways of thinking and doing business will be essential.”

The study demonstrates that demands in the seven basin states and the Republic of Mexico will frequently exceed the system’s estimated annual supply in the coming years, a gap that is projected to widen to 3.2 million acre feet by 2060 when the population that depends on the river system is estimated to double. An acre foot is a measurement standard for water volume. It is equal to 325,851 gallons, enough water to submerge an acre of land with one foot of water and supply the needs of two average families of four for a year. Thus the imbalance could mean inadequate water supplies for more than 20 million people by 2060.

This prospect targets agricultural communities because large metropolitan areas often view irrigated agriculture as a prime
Industrial, agricultural and municipal demands use water from the Colorado River, shown here near Rifle, Colo.

Low levels in Lake Mead show the effects of dry conditions and heavy water use in the lower Colorado River Basin.

Population is projected to double in Colorado and throughout the Colorado River Basin and adjacent areas served by the Colorado River during this century putting further demands on the water supply.

Most of the water in the West is used for agriculture. Because of this fact agriculture is a constant target for the transfer of water to population centers.
Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study identifies conservation to address imbalances

The study analyzes various combinations of possible future river supply and demand scenarios. Under the 1922 Colorado River Compact and the 1944 Treaty with Mexico, 17.5 million acre-feet of water a year (maf/yr) is allocated for annual consumption. The Lower Basin (California, Arizona and Nevada) is apportioned 8.5 maf/yr, the Upper Basin (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico) 7.5 maf/yr and Mexico 1.5 maf/yr.

When the 1922 Compact was signed, negotiators assumed that the natural flow (unused by man) of the river at the mouth of the Colorado River near Yuma, Ariz., exceeded 20 maf/yr. Unfortunately, as the study shows, the natural flow of the Colorado River averages about 16.4 maf/yr at this location.

“We are surviving the imbalance by drawing down storage in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The situation is complicated by the reality that the Lower Basin is using more than its share of the river, relying on surpluses and water that flows from the Upper Basin’s undeveloped share of the river,” Kuhn said.

The problems are exacerbated when one considers the impacts of projected climate-change. Under the study’s robust analysis of climate-change, the average natural flow of the Colorado River at Lee Ferry, Ariz., (about 85-90 percent of the river’s flow originates above Lee Ferry) is projected to decrease to an average of 13.6 maf/yr. This is a decrease of approximately 9 percent from the long-term observed average flow at Lee Ferry of 15 maf/yr.

Kuhn said that based on almost three decades of observations and measurement, 13.6 maf/yr may be optimistic.

“In the last 25 years, the average natural flow at Lee Ferry has only been 13.3 maf/yr,” Kuhn said. “In other words, the last 25 years have actually been worse than the average flow projected under the study’s climate-change scenario.”

The study pointed to the fact the Upper Basin is not fully using its compact entitlement and projects that more water development will occur in the Upper Basin.

However, Kuhn cautioned that the study also suggests serious problems for the Upper Basin. Under the climate-change scenario depicted in the study, without additional action the Upper Basin may experience a future deficit of its compact obligation as often as every one in five years by 2060.

“The Upper Basin is currently unprepared for this possibility,” Kuhn said. “To address an uncertain future, Upper Basin users will need to develop new risk-management strategies including improved, aggressive conservation, optimal use of storage and water-banking options.”
Lake Powell has not been full since 1998. The view is from Hite, Utah.
Compact Water Bank: A possible tool to deal with a compact curtailment

The Colorado River District (CRD) along with the Southwestern Water Conservation District, the State of Colorado, The Nature Conservancy and the Front Range Water Council continued their investigation into a water bank to address a possible curtailment of water uses that would be caused by future administration of the Colorado River Compact.

To date, the Colorado River Compact has never been triggered and one goal of the Colorado River District is to keep it that way – to avert the chaos and hardship a curtailment would cause. The compact divides the Colorado River between the Upper and Lower Basin states and governs the limits of water use. It was signed in 1922 and ratified in 1929.

Pre-compact water uses are explicitly grand-fathered under the compact. Any pre-compact rights used in substitution for critical, post-compact uses would be exclusively from willing pre-compact water owners.

The basic concept of a Compact Water Bank is to temporarily use pre-1929 compact water rights as replacement for critical water uses (e.g., health and human safety needs) that have post-compact rights and are therefore at risk of being pre-empted to meet interstate commitments.

Most West Slope municipal and industrial uses are pre-compact uses, but key post-compact, West Slope uses exist (many ski towns and snowmaking operations have junior water rights).

A Phase I report on the water bank is complete and includes several important new developments for the planning process. Eighty-four percent of post-compact municipal and industrial uses of Colorado River basin waters is on the East Slope.

The initial thought among water bank organizers was that certain agricultural lands with pre-compact rights could be voluntarily fallowed to provide exchange water for critical uses.

However, the Phase I report revealed that no more than one-third of the pre-compact water needed for exchange is currently used for crops suitable for fallowing.

“This is not a silver bullet. It will not solve all our problems. We don’t have enough water, so really, water banking is an element of a risk-management program,” CRD Deputy General Manager Dan Birch said.

Other mechanisms for “saving” pre-compact water uses will have to be explored. These include:

- deficit irrigation;
- longer term fallowing;
- pre-emptive curtailment of new (future) water rights; and
- use of senior, post-compact water rights to avoid a compact administration.

CRD General Manager Eric Kuhn noted the original approach to the water bank was to help the state deal with a compact curtailment.

Birch emphasized a robust public outreach effort is being developed to explain the compact water bank concept and to commit that the bank will only operate with voluntary “contributions” of pre-compact water rights.

The principal goal of the bank is to avoid condemnation of water rights that could occur if no mechanism is created proactively to address these issues.

Other Colorado River District Activities in 2012

Construction at Old Dillon Reservoir in Summit County was scheduled for completion in 2012. Work will be necessary in 2013 to remedy a construction-related defect with hopes it can be completed in time to capture some of the 2013 runoff. The $3.6 million project increases locally controlled water supply available above Denver Water’s Dillon Dam by rehabilitating and enlarging the reservoir from 62 to 288 acre feet. The water supply comes from Saltlick Gulch north of Interstate 70 via a mile-long pipeline.

The Colorado River District assisted the Old Dillon Reservoir Water Authority, formed by Summit County Government and the Towns of Dillon and Silverthorne, with the enlargement and modernization. The project increases the Water Authority’s ability to provide for development, park irrigation and wetlands development in unincorporated areas; gives Dillon an alternative source of water supply other than Straight Creek; and provides flexibility for Silverthorne, which can use the facility to store water for dry years and to enhance flows in the Blue River.

A potential project to provide up to 15 cubic feet a second (cfs) in supplemental irrigation and municipal water and up to 5 cfs of industrial water near De Beque in Mesa County was being analyzed in 2012 by the Bluestone Committee, which is made up of representatives from the Colorado River District and the Bluestone Water Conservancy District. Black Hills Production LLC, an oil and gas operator in the Roan Creek Basin, is interested in developing a portion of what is known as the Kobe Project. Specifics were still being analyzed to determine if the project can proceed to construction.
Colorado River District champions ‘risk management’ in discussion of future water development

A primary policy of the Colorado River District is to avoid a future curtailment of Colorado water use from the Colorado River system – as might occur under the Colorado River Compact of 1922. The compact divides use of the river between the Upper and Lower Basin states and establishes limits.

This policy informs the District’s participation in a statewide effort to plan for water supplies for a Colorado population that is slated to double to 10 million people by 2050. The planning work is taking place through nine basin Roundtables and the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) under the auspices of the Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act.

In 2012, District officials emphasized the necessity of a “risk-management” analysis and mechanisms attached to any new big water-development project on the Colorado River. The concept is to create “triggers” that would signal approaching overuse of the river and mechanisms to curtail a new project’s water use in order to protect longtime users of the river from being tipped into curtailment by the new project’s depletion of the river.

Statewide water supply planning is targeting the Colorado River system for possible development because other systems in the state are viewed as exceeding their individual, multi-state compact limits.

General Manager Eric Kuhn said risk management means that a new project could take water in wet years but not necessarily in dry ones. In other words, new projects will have to be based on an intermittent supply.

Bill Trampe, a Colorado River District Board Director, spelled out his thoughts on risk management in a white paper released in 2012 through the Gunnison Basin Roundtable. The paper details five levels of triggers and responses. “Risk Assessment Scenario for the Portfolio Tool” can be downloaded from ColoradoRiverDistrict.org.

The paper advanced a discussion begun a year earlier by Kuhn, who published a paper, “Risk Management Strategies for the Upper Colorado River Basin.” It also can be found on the District’s website.

The risk-management concept was timed to correlate with development of water supply Portfolio Tools by the Roundtables. In 2012, the IBCC started to synthesize more than 30 Portfolio Tools submitted by the Roundtables into six “scenario planning” story lines.

Scenario planning is a process that looks at a number of possible futures that are considered plausible. The futures are not assigned a probability. All are considered probable.

“We then look for a road map of solutions that works for all futures. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘no regrets strategy.’ This process never really ends, it’s always being updated,” Kuhn told the District Board in 2012.

Kuhn also reported to the Board that Denver Water CEO/General Manager Jim Lochhead, an IBCC member, told the IBCC that the process is incomplete because it is not addressing land-use decisions. In Colorado, water planning and land-use planning take place at local levels and are often not linked.

On the continuing Colorado River Water Availability Study, Kuhn said the Colorado Water Conservation Board had begun scoping Phase II of the work that originally said that from zero to 800,000 additional acre feet of water could be developed in the Colorado River system, depending on alternative forecasts of future water supplies.

Instead of narrowing that wide range, Kuhn said Phase II should focus on risk management related to a Colorado River Compact curtailment.

Kuhn said that if risk management is not addressed, post-compact water rights could be undermined – curtailed because of the development and use of newer water rights. He said some water officials have described this as the haves versus the have-nots.

“The Prior Appropriation System sets up haves and have-nots based on priorities. That’s what it is,” Kuhn said. “This is a very heated subject at the Inter-Basin Compact Committee.”
The Windy Gap Firming Project (WGFP), like Denver Water’s Moffat Tunnel Project, proposes to improve existing transmountain water rights by building more storage for those diversions on the Front Range. Both build upon existing facilities and both would take more Colorado River system water from Grand County when it is available for diversion during runoff.

The original Windy Gap Project was approved in the 1980s but never lived up to its potential because when water was plentiful, there was not enough storage space to hold the water the project could pump, and when years were drier, its junior water rights were often not in priority. The proposed solution is to build the new Front Range Chimney Hollow Reservoir, just west of Carter Lake near Loveland, to store Windy Gap water when it can be pumped and make it available in years when Colorado River water cannot be pumped.

The Municipal Subdistrict of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District operates Windy Gap on behalf of municipal and power-generating interests in Northern Colorado. For a number of years, it has been negotiating with the Colorado River District, Grand County and the Middle Park Water Conservancy District to reach a sweeping agreement that would offer benefits to both sides of the Continental Divide.

In 2012, negotiations bore fruit. Grand County Commissioners issued what is known as a 1041 Permit for the project, satisfied that even though more water would be taken, the project offered compensating benefits to the county documented in a negotiated Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA).

The project still depends on a Bureau of Reclamation Environmental Impact Statement, a Record of Decision and other legal determinations related to Colorado water law, the Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) Project and Senate Document 80. The C-BT and its operations are central to the project because the C-BT facilities are used to move Windy Gap water to the east.

The IGA still is being negotiated and is not final. But the primary points are:

- agrees to the construction and operation of up to 90,000 acre feet of storage for the WGFP on the Front Range;
- confirmation that the benefits provided under the agreement are enhancements and are not a substitute for mitigation required by governmental agencies with jurisdiction over the WGFP;
- Middle Park will receive 2,300 acre feet of firm yield;
- Grand County will get to use water not needed by Middle Park;
- upon completion of the WGFP, Grand County will be provided the opportunity to receive 3.8 percent of Windy Gap Project water diverted and stored in excess of 15,000 acre feet, up to a maximum of 1,500 acre feet. Grand County also retains the right to pump 1,500 acre feet in the event the WGFP participants elect not to divert and store 15,000 acre feet;
- Grand County, as it has in the past, may request end-of-year pumping of water at Windy Gap;
- both Middle Park and Grand County get the right to a defined amount of carryover storage; and
- consistent with the 1980 and 1985 Windy Gap agreements, the Subdistrict and its participants will not operate Windy Gap in a way that would diminish the ability of the Colorado River District to divert and operate Wolford Mountain Reservoir.

There are many other aspects to the proposed agreement that are noted in Grand County’s 1041 Permit Approval. Complete details can be found at the Grand County website at: http://co.grand.co.us/
Since the late 1960s, nobody knew for sure who would pay off Western Colorado’s share of the Ruedi Reservoir construction debt owed to the federal government. The question was solved in 2012 by the Colorado River District.

Ruedi Reservoir is located on the Eagle-Pitkin County line and is the West Slope’s mitigation for the transmountain Fryingpan-Arkansas Project that diverts water from the Fryingpan River and Hunter Creek watersheds to the Arkansas Basin. It is a Bureau of Reclamation project.

At issue was 19,585 acre feet of uncontracted water in the reservoir that was not generating any debt repayment or contributions to operations and maintenance (O&M) of the facility. Because of this, unpaid interest and O&M were compounding the debt. A debt that started at $9.3 million had ballooned to $34 million as of 2012. It stood to grow larger unless the water was contracted. The debt is due in 2019.

The River District staff decided to find out if there was a demand for the water. The work was rewarded with interest greater across the West Slope than the amount of water available.

Those agreeing to the 2012 purchase will pay $1,300 an acre foot. The Ute Water Conservancy District in Mesa County deserves major credit for contracting 12,000 acre feet in order to shore up its future supplies.

The other contracting entities include: the Colorado River District, 4,683.5 acre feet; Wildcat Ranch Homeowners Association, 50 acre feet; Mid-Valley Metro District, 100 acre feet; Crown Mountain Parks and Recreation District, 62 acre feet; Owl Creek Ranch Homeowners Association, 15 acre feet; Town of Palisade, 200 acre feet; Snowmass Water and Sanitation District, 500 acre feet; Town of De Beque, 25 acre feet; Basalt Water Conservancy District, 300 acre feet; Garfield County, 400 acre feet; Town of Carbondale, 250 acre feet; City of Aspen, 400 acre feet; Summit County, 330 acre feet; Elk Wallow Ranch LLC, 30 acre feet; Wildcat Reservoir Co., 149 acre feet; and the W/J Metro District, 100 acre feet.

The contracting for this water requires an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act. The River District is working with the Bureau of Reclamation and the contracting parties to initiate and finance this effort.

Separate from solving the debt issue, the Colorado River District in 2012 sought contracts from the Bureau of Reclamation for 5,412.5 acre feet and 2,000 acre feet of Ruedi water for water users’ obligations to the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program.

This effort addresses the obligation for Colorado River water users on both sides of the Continental Divide to provide water to augment fish habitat in the critical 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River between Palisade and the confluence with the Gunnison River at Grand Junction. Water users split an obligation to provide 10,825 acre feet annually. On an interim basis, the West Slope’s share was provided by the Colorado River District out of Wolford Mountain Reservoir. Denver Water provided the East Slope’s share out of Williams Fork Reservoir. These releases ended in 2012.

A new permanent arrangement entails 5,412.5 acre feet coming from Ruedi Reservoir and the other half coming from Granby Reservoir.

An extra 2,000 acre feet out of Ruedi is being contracted as a dry-year insurance plan to offset a negative hit to Green Mountain Reservoir and other West Slope water rights caused by the Granby Reservoir component of the 10,825 water supply.
Colorado River District celebrates its 75th Anniversary

The Colorado River District’s (CRD) 75th anniversary in 2012 was cause to celebrate the organization’s founding, but more importantly, the reasons why: The necessity to protect Western Colorado water and balance demands on the Colorado River in an arid state where most of the people live on the east side of the Continental Divide and most of the surface water is on the west side.

This celebratory thread wove throughout the CRD’s many public events and invitations to speak to community groups, culminating in the District’s Annual Water Seminar held Sept. 13 in Grand Junction, attended by 190 people.

The keynote speaker for the seminar was Anne Castle, the well-known Colorado attorney and water law expert who is now the U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science. She praised the CRD’s work over the years, noting the collaboration and innovation that was often borne out of the eternal conflicts over the Colorado River.

The CRD was founded as a direct response to the creation of the Colorado-Big Thompson transmountain diversion project, the first big one in Colorado to move Colorado River water from west to east. The Legislature established the CRD as the entity to protect Western Colorado water in the many debates over transmountain water and to safeguard all of Colorado’s interests in the Colorado River in multi-state negotiations. Furthermore, the CRD was created to develop water for use on the West Slope. It became a partner with the Bureau of Reclamation to create West Slope projects such as the Silt Project, the Paonia Project and the Aspinall Unit. It went on to develop or enlarge water storage at Rangely, Wolford Mountain and Elkhead.

The seminar agenda reflected foundational issues of western water. Most importantly, the seminar was the occasion to introduce the book “Water Wranglers, The 75-Year History of the Colorado River District: A Story About the Embattled Colorado River and the Growth of the West.” The 466-page, soft-cover book was commissioned by the Colorado River District to tell the story of not only the organization but the trials and tribulations surrounding the Colorado River. Author George Sibley was on hand at the seminar to autograph books. As part of the program, Sibley was interviewed on stage by CRD General Manager Eric Kuhn and Communications Specialist Jim Pokrandt. As the book notes, the story of the CRD is the story of water development in Colorado and the West.

The seminar also reviewed the 2012 drought. State Climatologist Nolan Doesken of Colorado State University said 2012 was the fourth worst drought on record, exceeded only by the years 1934, 1977 and 2002. A panel discussion ensued with Eric Hecox of the South Metro Water Supply Authority representing an important water-seeking region in Colorado; Jennifer Pitt of the Environmental Defense Fund addressing environmental concerns; Chuck Cullom of the Central Arizona Project bringing a Lower Basin perspective; and Eric Kuhn of the Colorado River District tying in Western Colorado concerns.

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The 2012 Seminar focused on two other subjects that were as much a concern in 1937 as they were in 2012: how to deal with demand for water that promises to exceed supply and the overlay of drought, in this case, the drought of 2012. The modern-day take on Colorado River shortages was incorporated in the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study undertaken by the Bureau of Reclamation and the seven states that share the Colorado River. The study predicted demand exceeding supply in the coming decades by as much as two million acre feet under a climate change scenario. The study was released in December 2012 and is detailed elsewhere in this report.

The study was explained by project co-managers Carly Jerla and Kay Brothers. As Brothers said, water managers must plan for the worst, and the hope is that the study advances planning for how the states, water managers and other interests cope with the imbalances. A panel discussion ensued with Eric Hecox of the South Metro Water Supply Authority representing an important water-seeking region in Colorado; Jennifer Pitt of the Environmental Defense Fund addressing environmental concerns; Chuck Cullom of the Central Arizona Project bringing a Lower Basin perspective; and Eric Kuhn of the Colorado River District tying in Western Colorado concerns.

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To commemorate its 75th anniversary, the Colorado River District commissioned author George Sibley of Gunnison to write a book about its history. The result was “Water Wranglers. The 75-Year History of the Colorado River District: A Story About the Embattled Colorado River and the Growth of the West.”

Born of conflict. That is how the Colorado River District came into the world. The year was 1937 and following the bruising battle over the Colorado-Big Thompson Project (C-BT), Colorado’s first big transmountain diversion, the Colorado Legislature agreed with the idea that a watchdog outfit should be created in Western Colorado to protect and develop the region’s rivers and streams. It also agreed there should be a centralized state entity to engage in water issues: the Colorado Water Conservation Board; and that there should be a mechanism to create local water development districts: The Water Conservancy District Act.

Before there was the Colorado River District, there was the Western Colorado Protective Association. It formed in 1933 to contest and negotiate the C-BT, but it was done on an ad hoc basis, a shoe-string budget begged from county commissions and on the backs of West Slope men who sacrificed their time, energy and surely their own funds to protect the long-term water interests of Western Colorado. There had to be a better way to develop the Colorado River – but not at the expense of foreclosing the future of the West Slope. The West Slope passion and vigor was matched by the water leaders in Northern Colorado. It was telling for the time, when Colorado was still feeling its way forward and leaders on both sides of the Continental Divide knew water was a limiting factor.

As Sibley established, the story of the Colorado River District was really the story of the embattled Colorado River and the growth of the West. As he also established, the issues of 1937 are still the issues of today. An arid climate and an imbalanced population, where most people in Colorado live on the drier side of the state, continue to drive the work of the Colorado River District. The Colorado River remains a target for water development.

Sibley’s read is far more than the history of the Colorado River District, because it had to be. You cannot write about the Colorado River District without offering perspectives on the likes of Northern Water, Denver Water, the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project – and for that matter – the history of Colorado. The Colorado River District engaged Sibley to write about the District’s history to fill a big gap in its archives and to help people in Western Colorado understand our work. What we got is a wonderful contribution to the contentious history of water in the West.

“Water Wranglers” is a gorgeous book at 466 pages and well illustrated with many photographs and maps. It can be ordered from Wolverine Publishing or from Amazon.com. It costs $24.96. E-book versions can be purchased for $4.99 from Amazon, Barnes and Noble and the iTunes Store.
H₂O Outdoors is a three-day, standards-based, educational camp held at the Keystone Science School in Keystone, Colo. The program, sponsored by the Colorado River District, Aurora Water, Denver Water and the Keystone Science School, is open to Colorado high school students.

The aim of the camp is to expose students to the complex world of Colorado’s water resources. The students hike the Continental Divide, conduct hands-on water-quality experiments and explore watersheds.

Students meet experts who are working to solve water-supply challenges faced by Colorado and collaborate with fellow students to create water-management policy recommendations. At the close of the program, students present their findings during a “town hall” formatted dialog.

By the end of the three-day H₂O Outdoors program, students are able to:

• explain the characteristics of a watershed;
• identify major watersheds in Colorado and the United States;
• identify key dates and events in Colorado water law history;
• apply basic vocabulary relevant to Colorado water management;
• recognize the importance of limited global freshwater resources;
• understand water supply and demand issues in Colorado;
• analyze and interpret the perspectives of real-life stakeholders in Colorado water management;
• practice “solutions-oriented” collaborative approaches to managing Colorado’s water resources;
• collect field data relevant to water quality related to non-point source contamination and water quantity; and
• give examples of major water-management scenarios in Colorado.

Highlights from the small group discussions:

“Everybody has different needs, and we all had to come together and make it possible – that was the conflict among us but we all had the same goal and that brought us together.”
- Student representing the Energy Exploration Company

“We came to a compromise by making sure we knew what we needed, not wanted.”
- Student representing the Colorado River District

Student Thoughts

Students were asked what they liked most about the program, what they learned, and what they are going to do about water management when they get home. Some highlights:

“I have learned a lot in the last two days. It’s probably a thousand new things beyond the five that I knew already. We learned everything from the politics of water to the health and safety of our streams and the people who use them.”
- Nan, age 15

“I am going to educate my friends and family about conserving.”
- Alandra, age 17

“I learned about how much people do to make (water) drinkable.”
- Kathryn, age 16

“I am appreciative of the experiences that I have had here… and learning how water gets from here to Denver. I never knew that.”
- Raymond, age 16

“If the general population understands why good clean water is so important in the West they will understand the need to conserve.”
- Sarah, age 14

“Water is something we take for granted. We turn on the tap, and out it comes. But what if one day it doesn’t? That is scary.”
- Preston, age 16
Colorado River District Board awards $237,000 in grants to 11 water projects

The Colorado River District Board of Directors awarded nearly $237,000 in grants in 2012 to support a variety of important water projects. This unified cost-share program now funds both large and small projects. In total, the program received requests for more than $991,000 from 24 qualified applicants.

Awards are made on a cost-sharing basis. Projects must meet one or more of these objectives:
- develop new water supplies;
- improve existing water supply projects;
- improve water use efficiency;
- improve sediment control;
- improve water quality;
- undertake a watershed action;
- implement tamarisk control; or
- preserve pre-Colorado River Compact water rights.

The North Fork of the Gunnison Invasive Weed Removal in Delta County was awarded $15,000 to control tamarisk along the river near Paonia extending upstream.

“Your grant program to assist in the removal of these invasives helps us bridge the gap between other organizations that are attempting to address invasives in the North Fork of the Gunnison River. The grant also benefits private landowners who would otherwise not be able to participate in a cooperative invasive weed control,” said Ralph D’Alessandro, Vice President of the Board of Supervisors, Delta Colorado Conservation District.

The City of Rifle in Garfield County was awarded $39,250 toward repairs to the city’s primary water intake. This intake constitutes the main source of water for Rifle’s approximately 9,500 citizens. Rick Barth of the Rifle staff praised the ease of the grant application and the assistance by Colorado River District staff.

Schott K-Line Irrigation System in Delta County was awarded $24,000 toward converting a dirt-ditch, flood-irrigation system to a K-line sprinkler irrigation system for 28 acres of mixed grass, alfalfa and clover pasture. James and Carol Schott thanked the District for assisting with this on-farm project. “It was a big decision on our part to move ahead with this. We are already being looked at by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as a demonstration project,” James Schott said.

Other recipients included:
- Lederhause Pump Installation in Eagle County was awarded $5,938. The pump will connect to a sprinkler system and pump from the Colorado River into Tepee Creek to enhance productivity.

- Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers removed tamarisk at several Glenwood Springs locations along the Roaring Fork Basin including Three Mile Creek, Four Mile Creek, Atkinson Ditch and near Veltus Park in the late fall of 2012. The group was awarded $11,060 to help with the Garfield County project.

- Dallas Ditch in Ouray County was awarded $7,000 toward the repair of and improvements to the headgate inlet area and enlargement of stretches of the Dallas Ditch to improve water-carrying capacity.

- Lake Otonowanda Renovation Project outside of Ridgway in Ouray County was awarded $19,600 to assist in the redesign of the existing facilities to enable more storage of pre-Colorado River Compact water rights for the benefit of the town’s drinking water supplies.

- Culpit Headgate and Sprinkler System in Garfield County was awarded $5,500 toward the replacement of a headgate and repositioning of the takeout on the Glenwood Ditch. The system consists of a debris filtration system between the headgate and pump intake, 1,800 feet of buried PVC pipe and 18 sprinkler guns.

- Leon Park Reservoir Company in Delta County was awarded $11,400 toward the repair of its reservoir outlet control structure.

- Ware & Hinds Ditch Repair near New Castle in Garfield County was awarded $5,480 toward reducing leakage and potential damage to Highway 6 & 24.

The Relief Ditch Diversion Dam Modification Project on the Gunnison River in Delta County was awarded $90,000 by the Colorado River District. The project will move the diversion point upstream about 250 feet, providing a modern headgate and waste-gate, constructing a cross-stream, low-head diversion structure and a cross-stream, low-head grade-control-structure. It also will restore riverbanks and riparian areas. The new diversion will improve fish passage for flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker and roundtail chub, species in sharp decline in range and density throughout the Colorado River system. The State of Colorado designates these as “species of special concern.” Previous to this project, the ditch company’s practice was to reconstruct the Relief Ditch Diversion Dam by pushing up cobble and other material, which blocked upstream movement of the three species and other fish. The project will ensure access to 83 miles of habitat. Project partners include Gunnison Gorge Anglers, Grand Valley Anglers, Colorado Trout Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Colorado River District, Colorado Canyons Association, Federation of Fly Fishers and the Bureau of Land Management.
Colorado legislative summary

The 2012 session of the Colorado General Assembly will be remembered more for what it did not accomplish than what it did. While the highest profile failure was the Legislature’s inability to pass a civil unions bill, for the first time in history, it failed to pass the Colorado Water Conservation Board’s (CWCB) construction fund projects bill.

Passage of the projects bill required a special session of the Legislature called by the Governor and held immediately following the conclusion of the regular 120-day term. Similarly, other must-pass legislation, including the Species Conservation Trust Fund’s projects bill, languished until the very end of the session, caught up in the politics of unrelated legislation.

**Highlights of the 2012 session:**

- Defeat of legislation that would have prohibited continuous appropriations for CWCB and other state agencies;
- Successful amendment of the new Colorado Parks and Wildlife Board bill to require water expertise on the Board and that at least four of the 11 members reside west of the Continental Divide;
- $500,000 in the Species Conservation Trust projects bill for continued support of the Selenium Task Force and $1 million for tamarisk removal and remediation in the CWCB construction fund bill; and
- Although House Bill 1161, concerning water quality rule making on nutrient criteria, died, it appears to have influenced the Governor’s sending a “please justify” letter to the Water Quality Control Commission regarding its nutrient rules. Additionally, the Governor pushed nutrient criteria implementation off the Health and Environment Department’s priority list in his 2013 budget proposal. HB 1161 may have had some positive influence in the Commission’s deliberations on this contentious subject as well.

In related legislative activities, every state House and Senate district was reapportioned to comport with the new census data. After suits and countersuits, the final district boundaries saw significant changes from the 2002-2012 district lines. Statewide, Democrats were favored in the new boundaries; however, on the West Slope it was roughly a partisan draw.

In part due to reapportionment, more than one-third of the Legislature will be new faces in 2013. The River District worked early and often with candidates during the election season and with the elected victors to ensure strong and knowledgeable West Slope water representation in 2013.

The interim water committee (actually the “Water Resources Legislative Review Committee”) met several times over the summer and fall. The committee was uncommonly productive with six bills and two resolutions approved. Additionally, two bills that did not receive committee support are expected to be introduced by their respective legislative advocates without the committee’s stamp of approval. Of note, the two bills that failed committee approval were to be introduced by the House and Senate Agriculture Committee chairs. All eight bills considered by the interim committee were likely to receive considerable attention in the 2013 session.

The Species Conservation Trust Fund will support the Selenium Task Force which improves water quality in Western Colorado rivers.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board construction fund bill provides funding for tamarisk removal which in turn increases water inventories in Western Colorado and improves water quality.

The Dolores River in Southwest Colorado.
Federal legislative landscape

If the 2012 Colorado General Assembly will be remembered for what it failed to accomplish, the 112th session of the U.S. Congress may be forgotten completely. In addition to literally thousands of un-passed bills, the 112th Congress failed to pass a single budget bill, resorting once again to continuing resolutions to keep the federal government operating.

While any report card of this Congress would likely include many failing marks, nevertheless significant water-related legislation and non-legislative water accomplishments should be noted.

The Senate delivered a year-end holiday present when on New Year's Eve it passed H.R. 6060, reauthorizing funding for the Endangered Fish Recovery Programs for the Upper Colorado and San Juan Rivers. The bill passed and proceeded to the White House. The President was expected to sign it, removing a large uncertainty regarding continuing funding for these two critical programs addressing endangered fish recovery and a clear path through the ESA morass.

The Colorado River District, working with the Bureau of Reclamation and East Slope partners, solved the impending debt crisis looming over the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project and Ruedi Reservoir. All of the water in Ruedi Reservoir is now committed to West Slope uses and the reservoir’s debt has been paid off. Moreover, project funds will pay for the costs associated with the West Slope’s commitment of Ruedi water to the endangered fish habitat flows, thereby avoiding any financial impact to West Slope water users. Additional details on this important accomplishment are covered elsewhere in this report.

Senator Mark Udall (D-CO) announced in mid-December that his relentless advocacy for “Good Samaritan” protections paid off. Senator Udall has been a champion for legislation and regulations to protect local watershed clean-up groups and others from liability exposure when working on abandoned mine and related tailings remediation. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December adopted a new policy clarifying that: 1) Good Samaritan agreements with EPA can include extended time periods for monitoring, thereby extending the legal liability protections contained in the agreement; and, 2) Good Samaritans are generally not responsible for obtaining a Clean Water Act permit during or after a successful cleanup conducted according to a Good Samaritan agreement with EPA.

Landscape for the 113th Congress:

• Colorado Representatives Scott Tipton (R-Cortez) and Doug Lamborn (R-Colorado Springs) will again serve on the House Resources Committee.

• House Resources Committee chair Doc Hastings (R-WA) named Lamborn chair of the Energy & Mineral Resources subcommittee.

• The next federal fiscal year begins October 1, 2013. The government, once again, begins the new calendar year and the new session of Congress operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) that passed in September. The CR funds the government with $1.047 trillion for discretionary spending. Agencies will see a 0.6 percent funding boost compared to fiscal 2012. The CR maintains funding through March 27, 2013; however, a 5 percent sequestration was to take effect March 1 unless the Congress reached a budget resolution. Few see this happening at least until the March 27 sunset of the CR.

• Resolution of the current year’s budget will precede passage of any 2014 budget bills, which are required by the start of the new fiscal year: October 1, 2013.

• Further complicating the budget dynamics before Congress and the White House, the national debt ceiling will again have to be raised by spring of 2013.
The Colorado River District conducts business through two budgets: One for General Operations and one for the Enterprise Fund. The General Budget is funded primarily by a property tax collected in the District’s 15 counties. The effective tax rate is currently 0.228 mills. The Colorado River District provides a temporary reduction as the District’s total assessed value base grows, a function of the revenue-limiting Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) amendment to the state constitution.

### General Fund Revenue 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Property Tax</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total Revenue</th>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>$2,881,912</td>
<td>$981,914</td>
<td>$3,863,826</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$3,201,868</td>
<td>$1,094,189</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$3,942,171</td>
<td>$2,129,316*</td>
<td>$6,071,487</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>$4,186,426</td>
<td>$247,021</td>
<td>$4,433,447</td>
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</table>

*Includes sale of property to benefit Orchard Mesa Irrigation District.

### General Fund Expenditures 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
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<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>32%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</table>

Total Expenditures 2012: 100%

### Gross Taxes Remitted by County 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>Ten Year Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>$58,539</td>
<td>1.64%</td>
<td>$44,794</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>$629,266</td>
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<td>$519,290</td>
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<td>Garfield</td>
<td>$857,544</td>
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<td>Grand</td>
<td>$185,051</td>
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<td>Gunnison</td>
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<td>Mesa</td>
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<td>Moffat</td>
<td>$111,266</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>$81,513</td>
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Total $4,186,425

Ten Year Change: $1,752,657
Enterprise Fund Report

The District’s Enterprise Fund is employed to build and operate reservoirs and conducts water leasing and marketing programs. Enterprise Fund income is derived principally from water leasing and water marketing activities.

Enterprise Revenue 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sale of Water</td>
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<td>$2,313,222</td>
<td>$3,952,206</td>
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<td>Interest Income</td>
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<td>$264,918</td>
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<td>Project Revenues</td>
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<td>$345,391</td>
<td>$326,536</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenues</td>
<td>$4,860,223</td>
<td>$3,225,314</td>
<td>$2,771,795</td>
<td>$4,353,202</td>
<td>$4,609,051</td>
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Enterprise Expenditures 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkhead Reservoir Enlargement</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization/Depreciation</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Late winter snowpack high in the Colorado mountains.
The Colorado River District is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors. Each member is appointed to a three-year term by the respective County Commissioners in each of the District’s 15 counties. Each year, a third of the Board seats are up for appointment. All policies, resolutions, budgets and major actions of the Colorado River District must be approved by the Board. The Board meets in regular session quarterly, in the months of January, April, July and October. Special meetings are called as needed. To stay up to date on Board meetings, visit the District’s website at www.ColoradoRiverDistrict.org. To contact a Board member e-mail edinfo@crwcd.org or call 970-945-8522.
The Colorado River District owns and operates Wolford Mountain Reservoir on Muddy Creek, north of Kremmling in Grand County. With 2012 presenting the fourth lowest snowpack on record in the District, Wolford was still able to fill to its 66,000 acre feet capacity. As would be expected in a dry year, the reservoir was heavily utilized.

The greatest use of the reservoir, 28,000 acre feet, was by Denver Water, which leases 40 percent of the reservoir's capacity to help meet its obligations to senior water rights on the Colorado River in dry years. By agreement, Denver fills Dillon Reservoir out of priority to Green Mountain Reservoir. If Green Mountain does not fill, Denver owes it water. Wolford is one source of that water.

Wolford water is also used to support endangered fish habitat in the Colorado River near Grand Junction. About 11,000 acre feet benefitted the fish. Wolford ended the year just over 40 percent full, a fact noticed by recreationists who frequent the facility.

In 2012, the District continued to place sophisticated monitoring equipment into the reservoir's Ritschard Dam, an operation that required construction equipment on the dam. The monitors are helping the District study settlement in the dam. All earthen dams are expected to settle over time. In Wolford's case, settlement is occurring faster than designers anticipated.

The District also operates Elkhead Reservoir on Elkhead Creek, located on the Routt-Moffat County line. Despite the low snowpack, the almost 25,000 acre-foot reservoir filled. One purpose of Elkhead is to help with endangered fish habitat flows in the Yampa River. About 6,500 acre feet was released for the fish. The Craig Station power plant also benefitted from releases. Elkhead ended the year about two-thirds full.
Snowpack about 9,000 feet provides water storage for the headwaters of the Upper Colorado River Basin.