



COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT

PROTECTING WESTERN COLORADO WATER SINCE 1937

**UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
JANUARY 2020**

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

We have a very important mission here at the Colorado River District, one that we are truly passionate about:

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.

In a nutshell, that means our small team here at the Colorado River District works on several key themes which keep our efforts focused and productive:

- We are fighting to keep water on the West Slope.
- We are ensuring safe and reliable drinking water supplies for Western Colorado communities.
- We are safeguarding water supplies for farmers and ranchers and their local production of food.
- We are protecting fish and wildlife by maintaining healthy river levels and water quality.
- We are securing West Slope water supplies in times of increasingly unpredictable and rising temperatures.
- We are working to help farmers and ranchers modernize irrigation systems to conserve river water.

We are active in all corners of our 15-county district: protecting ranchers' historic livestock water practices in the Yampa; working with ranchers and ditch owners to improve irrigation in the Gunnison; coordinating reservoir releases to boost flows during hot, dry periods of the year for recreation, fish and agriculture on the Colorado; determining the cause and finding solutions for an algae infestation in the White; and helping develop a stronger year-round water supply in the Upper Uncompahgre. While we're involved in many other projects, we're also working in the abstract world of water policy as we negotiate with other states and federal agencies to safeguard

Colorado's share of Colorado River water. We are active at both the Colorado and United States Capitols, serving as a watchdog for Western Colorado by supporting legislation that is in our best interest and working to block or modify legislation harmful to the West Slope.

We are Western Colorado's principal water planning agency, so we're looking to the long term — 10, 20 and even 50 years out — to anticipate and prepare for the challenges of providing water for a growing population. The research is clear: conditions are changing in the Colorado River Basin. In many areas of our District, we have already experienced significant increases in average temperatures. Research and on-the-ground experience prove that higher temperatures mean less water in our rivers. We are working to identify these issues and create solutions to protect all of us here in Western Colorado.

The work of the Colorado River District has been critical to sustaining and growing the economy of the West Slope for our entire 82-year history, but in many ways, the challenges we face today are the most serious our communities have ever faced. Unfortunately, at the same time we are taking on these monumental challenges, our ability to do so is threatened by flat and likely decreasing revenues. Today, the average homeowner in our District pays about \$7.65 per year in taxes for all we do in protecting and stewarding Colorado's water. The Colorado River District is looking at a long-term financial decline as the energy industry in Western Colorado declines. Falling oil and gas production, the closure of coal mines and coal-fired power plants, and the impacts of state constitutional amendments including the Gallagher Amendment and the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights, are threats to the Colorado River District's financial stability.

This is occurring during a period when the West Slope needs us to be at the top of our game. So, in addition to the challenges of



protecting West Slope water supplies in a time of uncertainty, this year our Board of Directors will also focus on securing our financial ability to sustain the fight for West Slope water. It is likely that our Board will decide this year to ask you, our constituents and taxpayers, to help us secure Western Colorado's water future. If our Board makes the decision to ask for additional tax revenue, please know that we do not make that decision lightly. We understand and respect our fiscal obligation to our taxpayers; we use your money wisely and we leverage it in order to keep the water on the West Slope.

Sincerely,

COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT BOARD MEETS JANUARY 21-22, 2020

The Colorado River District Board of Directors will meet at District offices located at 201 Centennial St., Glenwood Springs, CO. Regular meetings occur quarterly, and this is the first one of 2020.

The public is welcome to attend Board meetings. A complete packet, agenda and background memos can be found [HERE](#). The public may also listen to proceeding on the Colorado river District's [YouTube channel](#).



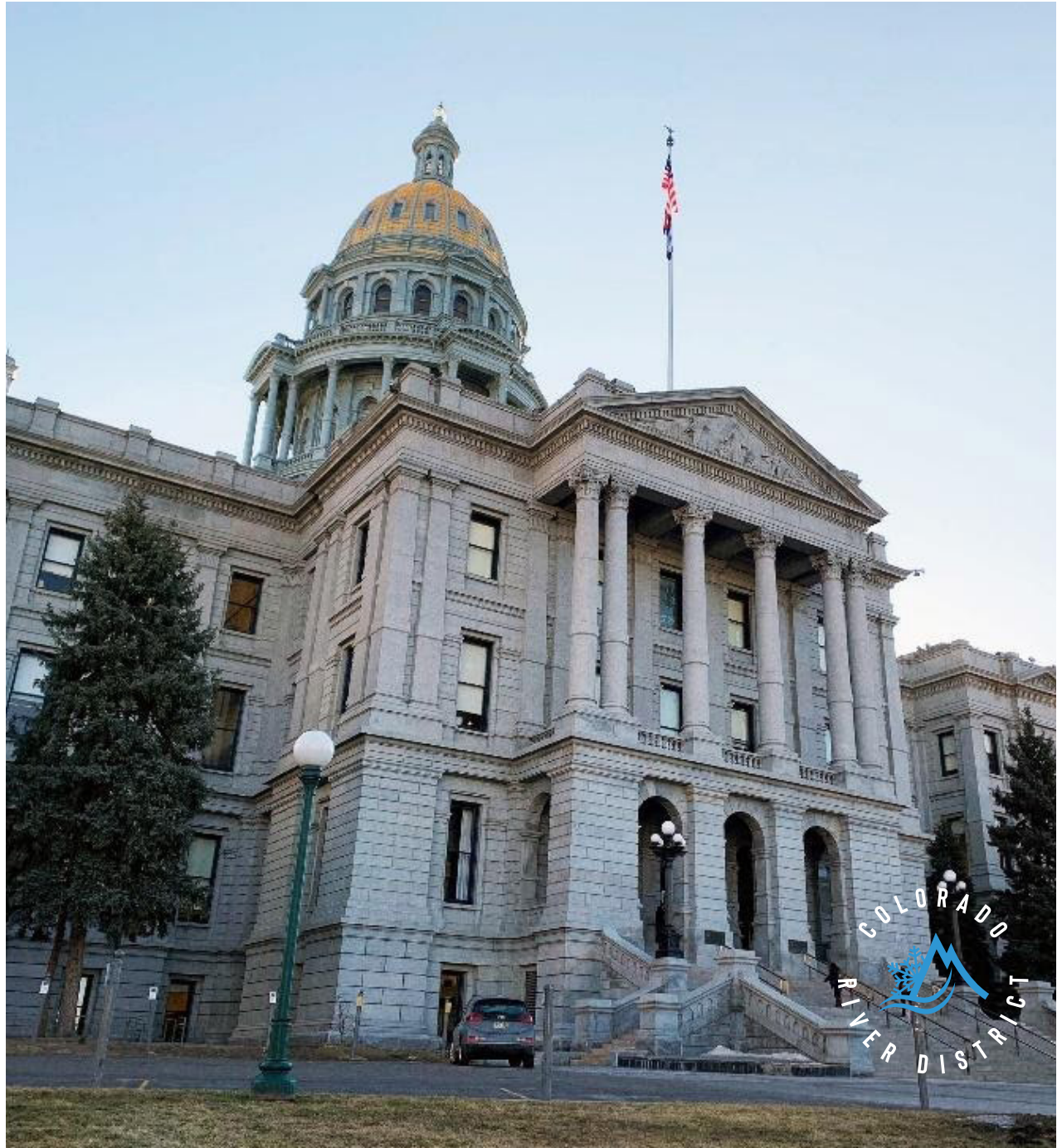
A REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

Colorado's General Assembly kicked-off on Wednesday, January 8, marking the beginning of the state's annual, 120-day legislative calendar.

River District staff works to maintain a regular presence at the Colorado State Capitol throughout the legislative session. In cooperation with our Board of Directors, River District staff works to inform and advise legislators on water issues and policy matters that intersect with the interests of our constituents on the West Slope.

During the 2020 session, legislators are expected to consider a number of bills that could impact water users in the District, including bills to protect historic stock watering uses for West Slope ranchers, study new technologies to improve water management, expand the state's instream flow loan program, and require the state to solicit public comment before moving forward with a demand management program.

The Board of Directors will consider a number of these legislative issues at their January quarterly meeting. To learn more about specific bills and important issues on our radar for the 2020 General Assembly, [click here](#) to see a copy of the Board's State Legislative Affairs memo.



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