

Adopted October 20, 2021

Multi-Benefit Water Projects

Introduction:

Consistent with its mission to lead in the protection, conservation, use, and development of the water resources of the Colorado River basin, the Colorado River Water Conservation District (Colorado River District) works to protect the viability of the Colorado River and its tributaries for the benefit of all beneficial consumptive and non- consumptive uses within the District's boundaries.

Since its creation in 1937, water needs within the River District and the priorities of water users within the District have been, and will continue to be, refined, and prioritized. Today, there is widespread recognition throughout the District that our water resources will be critically important to our future. This truth was made evident by the strong, bipartisan support shown throughout the Colorado River District for Ballot Measure 7A in November of 2020.

As western Colorado's water supply is increasingly impacted by new demands and a changing climate, the River District recognizes that it must prioritize multi-benefit water projects that serve to protect our region's water security, which is directly tied to thriving rural economies, vibrant communities, productive agriculture, a strong environment, and a robust recreation industry.

Colorado River Water Conservation District Policy Statements:

As the Colorado River District looks to invest its own resources in water projects on the West Slope, and simultaneously advocates for outside resources to protect the District's water interests, the Board and staff of the District will prioritize multi-purpose projects that address one or more of the following five categories:

- (I) Productive agriculture projects which could include but are not limited to multiple-use storage projects that addresses regional priorities; developing innovative and functional water leasing; suitable agriculture efficiency and conservation approaches; technical assistance and technological innovation; and dedicated resources for increasing community literacy about irrigated agriculture and supporting agricultural market growth.
- (II) Infrastructure projects that serve to update aging infrastructure while incentivizing new storage and delivery projects to collaboratively address multiple needs, such as improved flows to meet demands, stream and watershed health, and habitat quality; multi-purpose projects and storage methods that are supported in the Colorado Water Plan and Basin Implementation Plans;
- (III) Healthy rivers projects that support and sustain fish and wildlife, healthy aquifer conditions as they connect to healthy streams, economically important water-based recreation, wetland habitat, fish passage construction for new or updated water diversion structures, stream restoration projects, and environmental and recreational enhancements for new or revised water supply projects;

- (IV) Watershed health and water quality projects that include projects identified in collaborative and science-based watershed management plans that reduce the risk from and increase resilience to fires and/or floods, rehabilitate streams, or make landscapes resilient to climate change, including, but not limited to science-based mechanical forest treatments and prescribed fire, projects that address drinking water quality for under-resourced communities, and projects that address pollutants such as selenium, salts, and others, as well as mine remediation activities; and

- (V) Conservation and efficiency projects that include supporting agricultural water infrastructure that increases reliability and efficiency while avoiding adverse impacts to water users; municipal and industrial projects that promote efficiency, water conservation, green infrastructure, and outdoor landscaping to reduce consumptive use; increase leak detection for infrastructure repair and replacement; assisting communities with water-smart community development and water conservation programs; and targeting smaller, fast-growing, and communities with older infrastructure with strategic, incentive-based investments.