



COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT

PROTECTING WESTERN COLORADO WATER SINCE 1937

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Shoshone Preservation Moves Forward with \$20 Million Commitment from the State

CWCB votes in favor of 2024 Projects Bill appropriations for the Shoshone permanency project.

Denver, Colorado — On Monday, January 29, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) voted unanimously to appropriate \$20 million in the 2024 Projects Bill for Shoshone Water Right Preservation. The funding commitment represents another key milestone in the campaign to permanently protect the historic, non-consumptive Shoshone water rights on the upper Colorado River for future generations, an outcome long-sought by 20 Western Slope water entities and local governments.

“On behalf of the Colorado River District, our Coalition Partners, and the many that have worked tirelessly on this issue for decades, we’re grateful to the CWCB for voting to appropriate \$20 million in the 2024 Projects Bill for Shoshone Water Right Permanency,” said Andy Mueller, Colorado River District General Manager.

“We also greatly appreciate the hard work and dedication of CWCB staff in this effort and their positive recommendation of funding to the board. We consider the state an integral partner in protecting Shoshone’s flows in perpetuity, and the \$20 million funding milestone brings this generational investment in Colorado water security one step closer to the finish line. We look forward to continued partnership with the state as the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Coalition moves forward.”

“The CWCB Board considered this funding application very carefully,” said Lauren Ris, CWCB Director. “This is a significant step towards maintaining historic flows on the Colorado River. As an agency, we will continue to do our due diligence in this process, with the hope that these efforts can benefit the environment and give West Slope water users more certainty.”

Prior to Monday’s vote, 18 people – each of whom joined in-person or virtually on behalf of local governments, water providers, NGOs, and other entities – signed up to testify in favor of the \$20 million Shoshone investment.

“On behalf of Grand County, we can’t emphasize enough how important this water right is,” said Merritt Linke, Grand County Commissioner. “All of our economies, including agriculture and tourism, depend on the Shoshone water right. To permanently protect that water right is to protect our businesses, our communities, and our Grand County way of life.”

“The value of water security cannot be overstated,” said Grand Valley Water Users Association General Manager Tina Bergonzini during public comment. “With agriculture being the number one industry in the Grand Valley, there’s a lot riding on our commercial growers. Knowing that river flows are adequate for our native species, for recreation, and for municipal supplies gives agricultural diverters the peace of mind to sign on that line and take out that loan and sow for another season.”

The Shoshone permanency effort now moves forward to fulfill the closing conditions of the Purchase & Sale Agreement signed by the Colorado River District and Xcel Energy on December 19, 2023. Next steps will include securing additional, diversely-sourced funding to meet the final \$98.5 million purchase price and partnering with the state to protect the historic flow regime by adding an alternate use of instream flow to the existing, non-consumptive rights.

More information about the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Campaign & Coalition can be found at: www.KeepShoshoneFlowing.org.

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