



SHOSHONE

WATER RIGHT PRESERVATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

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Historic Agreement Reached to Advance Colorado Water Security

Shoshone Water Right Preservation Campaign kicks-off with Purchase & Sale Agreement to permanently protect flows in the Upper Colorado River.

Glenwood Springs, CO — This afternoon, Xcel Energy and the Colorado River District signed a Purchase & Sale Agreement (PSA) to transfer ownership of the historic Shoshone water rights to the River District for \$98.5 million. The agreement marks a first step towards permanent protection of the most senior, non-consumptive water right on the Colorado River, a project with a 20-year history of support from 20 western Colorado governments and water entities.

“This announcement is a critical first step in preserving the water rights that flow through our Shoshone Hydro Plant turbines on the Colorado River,” said Robert Kenney, president of Xcel Energy – Colorado. “This is an important agreement for the 1.6 million electric customers and communities we serve statewide by allowing us to continue generating clean electricity as part of our commitment to be good stewards of the Colorado River and all who rely on it.”

Leadership from Xcel Energy and the River District celebrated this milestone alongside a broad base of Shoshone Water Right Preservation campaign partners at the Hotel Colorado. Remarks from county commissioners, local and state elected officials, as well as environmental and recreation-based interests followed the official signing of the agreement.

“On behalf of the Colorado River District and the headwaters communities in Eagle County, we thank Xcel Energy for being a committed partner to the West Slope, our economy, and our environment,” said Colorado River District Board President and Eagle County Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry.

With the PSA signed, the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Coalition – a diverse and growing partnership of stakeholders – now begins a multi-year effort to secure funding for the purchase and to add an ‘instream flow’ benefit to the historic Shoshone water rights in water court. With its command of 1,408 cfs (or up to 1.02-million-acre feet of water per year) on the Colorado mainstem and benefits both upstream and downstream of Glenwood Canyon, Coalition members see Shoshone permanency as a generational investment in water security for Colorado's environment, economy, and communities across the state.

“We now look forward to working alongside the State of Colorado, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Colorado water users, all of whom will be integral partners in this effort’s success,” Commissioner Chandler-Henry added.

Central to the statewide benefit of the Shoshone water right is the vital role it plays in Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance. Over 1,250 Colorado water projects on both sides of the divide rely on the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program to maintain ESA compliance and continued operation. In dry years, Shoshone calls between 41,000 and 86,000-acre-feet (AF) of water downstream from the Shoshone Hydropower Plant, bolstering needed cold-water flows in the Grand Valley’s 15-Mile Reach – critical habitat for Colorado’s four native fish listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The consistent flow regime also helps sustain local agricultural producers and Colorado’s \$11.9 billion agricultural economy through increased flows and higher water quality. It also provides water quality benefits for West Slope communities that rely on the Colorado River for drinking water, and drives the state’s \$14.6 billion water-based recreation economy along the Colorado River.

“Protection of Shoshone’s flows presents a unique opportunity to protect the long-term viability of the Colorado River and the communities across the state that depend on it, many of which I represent,” said state Senator Dylan Roberts (SD-8). “There is still a lot of work to be done, but today is incredibly exciting. Taking action on behalf of current and future water users is absolutely worth it and should be a top priority.”

"Agriculture, recreation, and the environment all benefit from Shoshone’s flows. But it’s important to remember that the drinking water supplies for many of the communities in my district come directly from the Colorado River,” said State Representative Elizabeth Velasco (HD-57). “Towns like New Castle, Silt, Rifle, and others all benefit from the flows that Shoshone provides. Higher, consistent stream flows provide clean drinking water for thousands of people in my district and reduce the cost of water treatment for rural communities."

“Colorado has an opportunity with Shoshone permanency to take durable, decisive action on water security for the sake of our productive agriculture and our hard-working farmers and ranchers here in the Grand Valley,” stated Mesa County Commissioner Bobbie Daniel.

After today’s official kickoff, the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Campaign moves forward with in-depth public engagement planned across Colorado. Both West Slope and Front Range residents are encouraged to stay tuned in the coming year as local events are announced. Learn more at www.KeepShoshoneFlowing.org.

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