

August 13, 2024



Summit County Commits \$1 Million for Shoshone Permanency: United Effort Reaches \$55 Million to Secure Western Slope Water Rights

SUMMIT COUNTY, Colo. — On Aug. 13, the Summit County commissioners committed \$1 million to support the Colorado River District’s effort to purchase and permanently protect the water rights associated with the Shoshone Hydroelectric Power Plant, a critical resource for Colorado’s Western Slope. This pledge brings the total from five main-stem counties to \$8 million, contributing to a broader \$55 million from the State of Colorado and local sources toward the \$99 million purchase price, highlighting a unified effort to protect this vital water asset.

Summit County Commissioner Nina Waters expressed her commitment to the project, stating, “Water is the lifeblood of our communities, and the Shoshone water rights are essential to preserving the future of the Western Slope. Summit County is proud to stand with our neighboring counties in this effort to ensure that these rights are protected for generations to come.”

Kathy Chandler-Henry, Eagle County Commissioner and Colorado River District Board President added, “Colorado’s Western Slope is energized, and the excitement and momentum to achieve Shoshone Permanency is at an all-time high. With five counties unified toward a common goal, we call on Colorado’s congressional delegation and Governor Polis to stand with us and support our efforts to secure federal funding.”

Located in Glenwood Canyon, the Shoshone hydroelectric plant’s senior nonconsumptive water rights are among the oldest and most influential on the Colorado River and are crucial for managing water flows and providing important ecosystem benefits. The collaboration between local partners, the Colorado River District, environmental and recreation interests, and the State of Colorado underscores the critical importance of this resource to the region.

Andy Mueller, general manager of the Colorado River District, emphasized the significance of this united front, commenting, “The commitment from Summit County and our other partners is a powerful statement of solidarity and foresight. The \$8 million raised by our mainstem counties is not just a financial investment; it’s an investment in the future of the Western Slope’s water security. These investments provide a strong demonstration of local partnerships and collaboration as we look toward securing federal funding.”

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Last December, the Colorado River District, on behalf of a growing coalition of West Slope water entities and local governments, signed a purchase and sale agreement with Xcel Energy to secure and protect the Shoshone water rights.

Since then, over 20 West Slope water entities and local governments, including Summit County, have contributed \$15.25 million in local funding. Alongside the \$20 million allocated by the state through the Colorado Water Conservation Board Projects Bill (HB24-1435) and \$20 million from the Colorado River District's Community Funding Partnership program, \$55.25 million has been secured to date. The Colorado River District now turns its sights on an open federal funding opportunity released by the Bureau of Reclamation and authorized through the Inflation Reduction Act.

The Shoshone Water Right Preservation Coalition, representing a broad alliance, is actively collaborating with local, state, and federal partners to secure the remaining funds needed for the \$99 million purchase. Simultaneously, the Colorado River District is negotiating an instream flow agreement with the state to ensure the continued flow of water, regardless of the operational status of the Shoshone Hydroelectric Plant in Glenwood Canyon.

A durable solution and multi-generational investment, Shoshone permanency will provide priceless benefits for water users on both sides of the divide. More information about the Shoshone Water Right Preservation Campaign & Coalition can be found at keepshoshoneflowing.org.

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