



Colorado Ag Water Alliance

“Committed to the preservation of irrigated agriculture through the wise use of Colorado’s water resources”

Colorado Ag Water Alliance – Water Principles

www.coagwater.org

Colorado’s Strategic Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) report executive summary states; “If Colorado’s water supply continues to develop according to current trends, i.e., the status quo, this will inevitably lead to a large transfer of water out of agriculture resulting in significant loss of agricultural lands and potential harm to the environment. Providing an adequate water supply for Colorado’s citizens, agriculture, and the environment will involve implementing a mix of local water projects and processes, conservation, reuse, agricultural transfers, and the development of new water supplies, all of which should be pursued concurrently.”¹

We, the membership of the Colorado Ag Water Alliance, also recognize inevitable losses to agricultural sectors - a cornerstone of the state’s economy, reduced ability to supply food, plant material and related positive environmental benefits, energy resources to a growing population, and serious economic losses to communities in rural Colorado, should the status quo continue.

In recognition of these perspectives, we offer the following water principles for reference and consideration:

- Make full and efficient use of existing surface and ground water supplies and reusable return flows while developing new water storage projects and expanding existing infrastructure.
- Develop solutions/approaches to reverse the heightened legal, regulatory and political challenges that suppress projects that would increase water availability for all Colorado beneficial users.
- Prioritize the development of new water supply systems, including those opportunities originating beyond state boundaries, to provide for Colorado’s needs beyond the foreseeable future.
- Encourage development of cooperative and innovative approaches that maximize the beneficial use of Colorado’s water resources for the present and future without compromising property rights and the State’s established Prior Appropriation Doctrine.

¹ <http://cwcbweblink.state.co.us/weblink/0/doc/144066/Electronic.aspx?searchid=2c16c041-d0b2-4ec5-ac42-8b95aa0c04e3>

- Colorado's water principles must include increasing overall water availability to all of the state's water users in order to enhance business development, maintain quality of life, maintain and recruit jobs, and promote innovation.
- While conservation is a responsible water use practice in municipal and industrial use, it should be recognized that water conservation in some agricultural uses may reduce return flows within the watershed potentially important to downstream water users; may reduce water delivery to downstream water users; and/or may cause environmental impacts.
- Recognize that agriculture water, through use and reuse, provides for exponential benefits to the entire ecosystem beyond abundant and safe food production. Removing or reducing agriculture water uses will limit stream flows, affect downstream water availability, restrict wildlife habitats, reduce nutrient cleansing, and reduce critical food and energy production. Colorado water principles must acknowledge and embrace this fundamental contribution by agriculture to the state and its ecosystem.