

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southwest Basin Roundtable (Roundtable) is unique for the complexity of hydrography, political entities, water compacts and treaties, and distinct communities that it encompasses. The Roundtable provides a forum for water discussions pertaining to nine distinct sub-basins, including the San Juan, the Piedra, the Pine, the Animas (including the Florida River), the La Plata, the Mancos, McElmo Creek, the Dolores rivers and the San Miguel River, eight of which flow out of Colorado.

Many communities, agricultural producers, and natural systems depend on the water produced by these sub-basins. The Southwest Basin is home to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe, the only two Indian Reservations in Colorado. Neighboring these tribal lands are 10 counties including Archuleta, La Plata, San Juan, Montezuma, Dolores, San Miguel and portions of Mineral, Hinsdale, Montrose, and Mesa. These tribal areas and counties represent distinct communities and landscapes, with their own specific and unique social, economic and environmental values, challenges and opportunities.

The Southwest Basin is a region of diverse natural systems, agricultural heritage, outstanding beauty, and extensive recreational opportunities. The area supports many water-dependent species of wildlife, including warm and cold water fish species addressed by three different multi-state conservation agreements, and four terrestrial species that are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act. Many towns within the area rely heavily on tourism and the recreational industry as a primary economic driver. Agriculture and the open spaces it maintains contribute to the culture, economy and quality of life of the Southwest Basin. Municipal and industrial activities round out the economic and social values and help support the diverse and vibrant communities of the region.

The Roundtable has developed this Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) based on the best available information and current conditions. The Roundtable plans to employ and maintain the BIP as a living document to be reviewed and updated periodically as conditions evolve and new information becomes available. The Roundtable takes a balanced and cooperative approach to include and address all water supply needs. While acknowledging that they sometimes represent competing demands and conflicting interests, the Roundtable treats agricultural, municipal, industrial, environmental and recreational needs equally, and is open to new projects and processes that can help address the Southwest Basin's goals.

Through its consensus-based discussions, the Roundtable has developed agreement around several salient aspects of both Southwest Basin-wide and state-wide water supply. Highlights of these agreements include conditions under which the Roundtable can consider a new trans-mountain diversion project, goals for statewide municipal water conservation measures, and the Basin's outstanding data needs.

The Roundtable is concerned about any new trans-mountain diversion (TMD). A new TMD would increase the risk of a Colorado River Compact call, as well as the risk of contingency measures to address serious conditions such as the inability to generate power from Lake Powell or levels of Lake Mead dropping below Las Vegas's municipal water supply intake. An increase in such risks jeopardizes the Southwest Basin's ability to develop water supplies to meet needs in the Southwest Basin and puts additional pressure on the Basin's agriculture to meet downstream water needs for compact compliance and/or obligations. Therefore, the Roundtable agrees on eight factors to be addressed prior to considering a new TMD.

The Roundtable supports the idea that on a statewide basis we all need to be more efficient with our water use and achieve high conservation. Recognizing that municipal demand is one of the driving forces behind agricultural dry-up and that outdoor urban irrigation is one of the highest consumptive uses of municipal water. The Roundtable agrees that before it will consider a new TMD, outdoor irrigation by water providers using agricultural buy-up and dry-up and/or pursuing a TMD should meet the higher goal of 70/30 ratio of inside to outside use of municipal water by the year 2030.

In development of Colorado's Water Plan and the Southwest BIP, the Roundtable has discussed water supply "gaps" that exist for various uses throughout the State. In evaluating those needs for southwestern Colorado, it is important that future uses and needs for the Western Slope be recognized and preserved. The Roundtable also acknowledges that uses in other parts of the state, especially demands on the Front Range, may develop sooner than those in southwestern Colorado, and that, prior to consideration of any TMD, an allocation for future uses shall be recognized for development in the San Juan and Dolores River basins.

In Colorado, the authority to establish water policies of the state, determine the beneficial uses of the water resources, and administer water rights pursuant to the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation fall under the jurisdiction of state government. It is recognized that there is a significant amount of land administered by the federal government in Colorado, which creates the potential for conflicts between state and federal laws and policies. Congress and Federal agencies have a long standing deference to state water allocation systems, and Colorado continues to promote state-federal cooperation to avoid contentious water rights issues. Federal policies and actions could affect existing and future water supplies and planning efforts in southwestern Colorado.

Therefore, the Roundtable supports Colorado's system of water rights administration and allocation and the full recognition of tribal rights under the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement. The Roundtable also encourages and supports creative solutions sought through collaborative efforts, negotiated settlements, and strengthening the use of State-Federal MOUs, to limit conflicts between state, tribal and federal policies, laws and land management plans. Maintaining opportunities that allow for management solutions that provide for multiple beneficial

uses and are protective of environmental and recreational values are critical for the planning and strategic development of the water resources in the State of Colorado.

With respect to the Southwest Basin's Environmental and Recreational values and water needs, the Roundtable recognizes that there are significant gaps in the data and understanding regarding the flows and other conditions necessary to sustain these values. The Roundtable also recognizes that the tools currently available to help maintain those conditions are limited. The Roundtable has identified two methods that it hopes can help address and bridge this need for additional information and tools. These are:

1. Evaluation of environmental and or recreation gaps is planned to be conducted for improvement of non-consumptive resources and/or in collaborative efforts with development of consumptive IPPs. The evaluations may be conducted by a subgroup of the Roundtable or by individuals, groups, or organizations with input from the Roundtable. The evaluation may utilize methodologies such as the southwest attribute map, flow evaluation tool, R2 Cross, and any other tools that may be available.
2. Where environmental and/or recreational gaps are identified, a collaborative effort will be initiated to develop innovative tools to protect water identified as necessary to address these gaps.

The Roundtable has adopted 21 goals and 30 measureable outcomes to meet identified gaps and water supply needs. Since SWSI 2010, the Roundtable success rate for completing IPPs is 44%. A total of 55 projects were completed since the drafting of the SWSI 2010 list. Through the BIP outreach process over 80 new projects were added to the list. The list totals about 160 IPPs for all sub-basins. Of these 160, about 50% of the IPPs are for needs such as agricultural, municipal and industrial while the remaining 50% of the IPPs are for environmental and recreational needs.

At the end of 2014, the Roundtable had granted \$1,906,626 from the Southwest Basin account and \$5,162,859 from the statewide account; for a total of \$7,069,485 granted to projects and processes aimed at meeting water needs within the Southwest Basin (See Appendix A – Final WRSA Annual Report).