



SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2020 State Legislative Update: [January 27, 2020](#)

The Colorado General Assembly convened on Wednesday, January 8, 2020. Below is a summary of water-related legislation introduced thus far. **Bills introduced since the last SWCD board teleconference (January 15, 2020) are highlighted in yellow.**

The Colorado Water Congress (CWC) State Affairs Committee met on Monday, January 27, 2020. **Positions taken on bills since the last SWCD board teleconference (January 15, 2020) are in red text.** There was discussion of a draft bill regarding a public real property index.

SB20-008 **Enhance Penalties Water Quality Criminal Violations**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Action postponed, and bill slated for discussion on 2/3.**
Sponsors: Senate (Winter), House (Jackson/Hooton)
Committee of Reference: Agriculture & Natural Resources
Title: Concerning the enhancement of penalties for criminal violations of water quality laws.

Summary: Current law specifies that a person who commits criminal pollution of state waters that is committed:

- With criminal negligence or recklessly is subject to a maximum daily fine of \$12,500; and
- Knowingly or intentionally is subject to a maximum daily fine of \$25,000.

Section 1 of the bill makes a:

- Criminally negligent or reckless violation a **misdemeanor and increases the penalty to \$25,000, imprisonment of up to one year, or both;** and
- **Knowing or intentional violation a class 5 felony and increases the penalty to \$50,000, imprisonment of up to 3 years, or both.**

Current law specifies that a person who knowingly makes any false representation in a required record or who knowingly renders inaccurate any required water quality monitoring device or method is guilty of a misdemeanor and is subject to a fine of not more than \$10,000, imprisonment in the county jail for not more than 6 months, or both.

Section 2 makes these violations a **class 5 felony** and specifies that if 2 separate offenses occur in 2 separate occurrences during a period of 2 years, the maximum fine and imprisonment for the second offense are double the default amounts.

Comments:

SB20-024 **Require Public Input on Water Demand Management Program**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Monitor.**
Sponsors: Senate (Coram/Donovan), House (Arndt/Catlin)
Committee of Reference: Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: Concerning the inclusion of public input in the development of a state water resources demand management program.

Summary: **Water Resources Review Committee.**
The bill requires the CWCB and the water resources review committee to involve the public and provide opportunities for public comment, **using procedures similar to those used for initial adoption of the state water plan**, before adopting any final or significantly amended water resources demand management program as part of the Colorado upper basin states' drought contingency plan.

Comments:

SB20-025 **Conservancy District Boards Art and Beautification Projects**

SWCD Position: Discussion

CWC Position: **Applicable to Conservancy Districts, not Water Conservancy Districts, so pulled from SA mtg agenda by chair.**

Sponsors: Senate (Garcia), House (Buentello/Esgar)

Committee of Reference: Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: Concerning authorization of the board of directors of a conservancy district to participate in certain projects within the district, and, in connection therewith, authorizing such a board to consider such participation a current expense of the district.

Summary: Current law authorizes the board of directors of a conservancy district (board) to participate in the development of parks and recreational facilities within the district. The bill permits a board to consider such participation a current expense of the district.

The bill also **authorizes a board to participate in artistic and beautification projects** that improve the aesthetic appearance of waterways within the district and to consider such participation a current expense of the district.

Comments:

SB20-048 **Study Strengthening Water Anti-Speculation Law**

SWCD Position: Discussion

CWC Position: **No position taken, CWC will continue to monitor the bill's progress.**

Sponsors: Senate (Donovan/Coram), House (Roberts/Catlin)

Committee of Reference: Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: Concerning a study to consider the strengthening of the prohibition on speculative appropriations of water

Summary: **Water Resources Review Committee.**
Current law specifies that an appropriation of water cannot be based on speculation, as evidenced by either of the following:

- The applicant does not have either a legally vested interest or a reasonable expectation of procuring such an interest in the lands or facilities to be served by the appropriation, unless the appropriator is a governmental agency or an agent in fact for the persons proposed to be benefited by the appropriation; or
- The applicant does not have a specific plan and intent to divert, store, or otherwise capture, possess, and control a specific quantity of water for specific beneficial uses.

The bill requires the executive director of the department of natural resources to **convene a work group** to explore ways to strengthen current anti-speculation law and to report to the water resources review committee by August 15, 2021, regarding any recommended changes.

Comments:

[SIR20-003](#) Water Projects Eligibility Lists

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Support.**
Sponsors: Senate (Donovan), House (Roberts)
Committee of Reference: Agriculture & Natural Resources
Title: Concerning approval of water project revolving fund eligibility lists administered by the Colorado water resources and power development authority.

Summary: Pursuant to C.R.S. 37-95-107.8 (4)(b), this bill codifies additions, modifications, or deletions to the Drinking Water Project Eligibility List and Water Pollution Control Project Eligibility List, as developed by the Water Quality Control Commission.

Comments:

[HB20-1037](#) Augmentation of Instream Flows

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Support conditioned upon forthcoming amendment.**
Sponsors: House (Arndt), Senate (Coram)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning the CWCB's authority to augment stream flows with acquired water rights that have been previously decreed for augmentation use.

Summary: The bill authorizes the CWCB to augment stream flows to preserve or improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree by use of an acquired water right that has been previously quantified and changed to include augmentation use, without a further change of the water right being required.

Comments:

[HB20-1042](#) PFAS Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Manufacturer Notice Requirements

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Monitor**
Sponsors: House (Valdez, McKean), Senate (Moreno/Tate)
Committee of Reference: Transportation & Local Government
Title: Concerning a modification of the notice requirements for manufacturers of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances.
Summary: **Statutory Revision Committee.**

House Bill 19-1279, enacted in 2019, requires manufacturers of class B firefighting foam that contains intentionally added polyfluoroalkyl substances to notify, in writing, sellers of their products about the state's new regulations of these products "no less than one year prior to the effective date of section 25-5-1303", which is impossible because the notice requirements

did not exist prior to the bill's effective date on August 2, 2019. The bill **addresses this error** by modifying the effective date of the required notice to prior to August 2, 2020.

Comments:

[HB20-1069](#) Add Water Well Inspectors Identify High-Risk Wells

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Support**
Sponsors: House (Saine/Titone), Senate (Sonnenberg/Coram)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning the inspection of water wells.
Summary: **Water Resources Review Committee.**

The bill requires the state engineer to employ a minimum of 4 water well inspectors in the state's water well inspection program.

The bill requires the state board of water well construction and pump installation contractors, on or before November 1, 2020, to promulgate rules for identifying high-risk water wells that should be prioritized for inspection. Thereafter, the state engineer shall use the rules to identify high-risk water wells and shall prioritize the inspection of high-risk water wells.

The bill clarifies that money in the well inspection cash fund shall be appropriated to and expended by the state engineer only for the well inspection program.

Comments:

[HB20-1072](#) Study Emerging Technologies for Water Management

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Support**
Sponsors: House (Arndt/Saine), Senate (Sonnenberg/Bridges)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning a requirement that the university of Colorado study potential uses of emerging technologies to more effectively manage Colorado's water supply, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation, conditioned on the receipt of matching funds from gifts, grants, and donations.
Summary: **Water Resources Review Committee.**

The bill declares that new technologies, such as blockchain, telemetry, improved sensors, and advanced aerial observation platforms, can improve monitoring, management, conservation, and trading of water and enhance confidence in the reliability of data underlying water rights transactions. To advance the potential use of these new technologies, the bill:

- Authorizes and directs the University of Colorado, in collaboration with the Colorado Water Institute at Colorado State University, to conduct feasibility studies and pilot deployments of these new technologies to improve water management in Colorado; and
- Appropriates \$40,000 from the general fund, contingent on the university of Colorado's receipt of a matching \$40,000 in gifts, grants, and donations, for the purpose of funding the studies and pilot programs.

Comments:

[HB20-1094](#) **Repeal Fee Cap On-site Wastewater Treatment System**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Support.**
Sponsors: House (Catlin/Arndt), Senate (Ginal/Coram)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning a repeal of the dollar limitation on the fee that a local board of health may set for on-site wastewater treatment system permits.

Summary: Current law requires that a local board of health set the permit fee for on-site wastewater treatment system permits in an amount to recover the actual indirect and direct costs associated with the permit and sets a \$1,000 cap on the fee. The bill repeals the dollar limitation on the fee.

Comments:

[HB20-1095](#) **Local Governments Water Elements in Master Plans**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: **Postpone action.**
Sponsors: House (Arndt), Senate (Bridges)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning the authority of a local government's master plan to include policies to implement state water plan goals as a condition of development approvals.

Summary: The bill authorizes a local government master plan to include goals specified in the state water plan and to include policies that condition development approvals on implementation of those goals.

Comments:

[HB20-1097](#) **Connected Municipal Use No Change If Already Quantified**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: Discussion
Sponsors: House (Young, Arndt)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning the ability to use water that has been adjudicated for municipal use in an interconnected treated municipal water supply system if the historical consumptive use of the water right has already been quantified in a previous change of the water right.

Summary: Current law limits the place of use of water subject to a changed water right that has been decreed for use in a treated domestic or municipal water supply system to only that system. The bill authorizes the use of that water in an interconnected treated domestic or municipal water supply system if:

- The water is attributable to a water right for which the historical consumptive use has previously been quantified, diverted from a point of diversion that has already been

decreed for that water right, and delivered from the decreed treated system to the interconnected treated system without the water being returned to the natural stream; and

- The owner of the water right has given written notice to the division engineer that identifies the proposed accounting for the use of the water right and the division engineer has approved the accounting.

The owner of the water right must give notice to all persons on the substitute water supply plan notification list for the applicable water division. The division engineer will review any comments received on the proposed accounting and make a determination whether the accounting is adequate. This determination may be appealed to the water judge. Other than the place of use, all of the terms and conditions of the previous change of water right decree continue to apply to the water right. A claim to any return flows from the use of the water right in the interconnected treated domestic or municipal water supply system must be approved by the water judge.

Comments:

HB20-1119 **State Government Regulation of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: Discussion
Sponsors: House (Exum/Landgraf), Senate (Hisey/Lee)
Committee of Reference: Natural Resources & Environment
Title: Concerning the authority of the state government to regulate perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

Summary: The bill addresses the authority of the state government to regulate perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Section 1 of the bill addresses when PFAS may be used for firefighting foam system testing both in general and in certain aircraft hangars.

Section 2 grants the department of public health and environment the power to adopt and enforce standards and regulations that require public drinking water systems to sample drinking water supply sources and finished drinking water for PFAS.

Section 3 clarifies that the water quality control commission may set standards related to PFAS in surface water and groundwater and may require wastewater systems to collect PFAS data relevant to the commission setting PFAS standards.

Section 4 requires the solid and hazardous waste commission to promulgate rules for a certificate of registration for any facility or fire department that possesses PFAS in firefighting agents or firefighting equipment and for standards for the capture and disposal of PFAS in firefighting agents or firefighting equipment.

Comments:

HB20-1138 **Public Real Property Index**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: Action tabled for 2/3.

Sponsors: House (Coleman/Larson), Senate (Bridges/Gardner)
Committee of Reference: Transportation & Local Government Appropriations

Title: Concerning supplementing the centralized inventory of state-owned real property maintained by the office of the state architect to include all publicly owned real property.

Summary: Not later than December 31, 2020, the bill requires each state agency, state institution of higher education, and political subdivision of the state to submit to the office of the state architect (office) a list of all usable real property owned by or under the control of the agency, institution, or political subdivision of the state. This list must include, if applicable:

- The address where the real property is located;
- The size of the real property;
- How the real property is zoned;
- Contact information for the state agency, institution, or political subdivision of the state that owns or controls the real property;
- The plan, if one is available, for the use, development, or sale of the real property; and
- A description that includes the condition of the real property and a measurement of total area of the real property that is vacant, unused, or underdeveloped.

Not later than December 31 of each subsequent year, each state agency, state institution, and political subdivision of the state must submit to the office any updates to the information the agency, institution, or political subdivision of the state originally submitted to the office about the usable real property the agency, institution, or political subdivision of the state owns or controls.

Beginning July 1, 2021, whenever any state agency, state institution of higher education, or political subdivision of the state plans to offer any usable real property for sale, or otherwise plans to solicit any offer to purchase real property, the agency, institution, or political subdivision of the state shall notify the office.

Not later than July 1, 2021, the office must establish and maintain a current database that includes the information listed above. This database must be available free of charge to the public on the office's website.

Comments:

HB20-1143 Environmental Justice and Projects Increase Environmental Fines

SWCD Position: Discussion

CWC Position: Discussion

Sponsors: House (Exum/Landgraf), Senate (Hisey/Lee)

Committee of Reference: Natural Resources & Environment

Title: Concerning additional public health protections regarding alleged environmental violations, and, in connection therewith, raising the maximum fines for air quality and water quality violations and allocating the fines to environmental mitigation projects.

Summary: Current state law sets the maximum civil fine for most air quality violations at \$15,000 per day and most water quality violations at \$10,000 per day, but federal law allows the federal environmental protection agency to assess a maximum daily fine per violation of \$47,357 for these violations.

Sections 2 and 4 of the bill raise the maximum fine to \$47,357 per day and direct the air quality control commission and the water quality control commission in the department of public health and environment (department) to annually adjust the maximum fine based on changes in the consumer price index.

Current law allocates all water quality fines to the water quality improvement fund; **section 4** authorizes the use of money in that fund to pay for projects addressing impacts to environmental justice communities. Section 4 also extends the repeal date for the water quality improvement fund to September 1, 2025.

Current law allocates all air quality fines to the general fund; **section 3** allocates them to the newly created community impact cash fund. Section 3 also:

- Specifies that the department is to use money in the community impact cash fund for environmental mitigation projects (EMPs);
- Defines an EMP as a project that avoids, minimizes, or mitigates the adverse effects of a violation or alleged violation of the air quality or water quality laws;
- Creates the environmental justice advisory board to recommend EMPs in response to violations or alleged violations that affect environmental justice communities; and
- Creates an environmental justice ombudsperson position within the department, who serves as chief staff to the advisory board and advocates for environmental justice communities.

Section 3 also requires the department to post proposed EMPs on the department's website in a format that allows the public to submit comments on the proposed EMP, not approve an EMP until at least 45 days after the EMP has been posted on its website, and include a description of all approved EMPs in its departmental SMART Act presentations.

Section 1 sunsets the advisory board on September 1, 2025.

Comments:

[HB20-1157](#)

Loaned Water for Instream Flows to Improve Environment

SWCD Position: Discussion

CWC Position: Discussion

Sponsors: House (Roberts/Will), Senate (Donovan)

Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture

Title: Concerning the Colorado water conservation board's authority to use water that a water right owner voluntarily loans to the board for instream flow purposes.

Summary: Under current law, the Colorado water conservation board (board), subject to procedural requirements established to prevent injury to water rights and decreed conditional water rights, may use loaned water for instream flows if the loaned water is used for preserving the natural environment of a stream reach that is subject to a decreed instream flow water right held by the board.

The bill expands the number of years within a 10-year period that a renewable loan may be exercised from 3 years to 5 years, but for no more than 3 consecutive years, and allows a loan to be renewed for up to 2 additional 10-year periods. The bill limits the duration that an expedited loan may be exercised for up to one year and prohibits an applicant from seeking

additional expedited loans regarding a water right following an approved expedited loan of that water right.

The bill also expands the board's ability to use loaned water for instream flows to improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree pursuant to a decreed instream flow water right held by the board.

In considering whether to accept a proposed loan, the board must evaluate the proposed loan based on biological and scientific evidence presented, including a biological analysis performed by the division of parks and wildlife.

The state engineer will review a proposed loan and must consider any comments filed by parties notified of the application in determining whether the loaned water will not cause injury to other vested or conditionally decreed water rights. The filing fee is increased from \$100 to \$300.

The board is required to promulgate rules regarding the necessary steps for reviewing and accepting a loan for instream flow use to improve the natural environment to a reasonable degree.

The state engineer's decision to approve or deny a proposed loan may be appealed to a water judge, who is required to hear and determine the matter on an expedited basis using the procedures and standards established for matters rereferred to the water judge by a water referee.

Comments:

HB20-1159 **State Engineer Confirm Existing Use Instream Flow**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: Discussion
Sponsors: House (Roberts/Catlin), Senate (Donovan/Coram)
Committee of Reference: Rural Affairs & Agriculture
Title: Concerning the authority of the state engineer to confirm the extent of uses of water in existence on the date of an instream flow appropriation.

Summary: Current law specifies that the Colorado water conservation board's appropriation of water for instream flow purposes is subject to existing uses and exchanges of water. The bill directs the state engineer, in administering current law, to confirm a claim of an existing use or exchange if the use or exchange has not previously been confirmed by court order or decree. The person making the claim may also seek confirmation by the water judge.

Comments:

HB20-1164 **Housing Authority Exemptions from Water Fees**

SWCD Position: Discussion
CWC Position: Discussion
Sponsors: House (Rich/Becker), Senate (Zenzinger)
Committee of Reference: Transportation & Local Government
Title: Concerning the exemption of a housing authority from certain fees imposed by a water conservancy district.

Summary: The bill specifies that housing authorities are exempt from tap fees and development impact fees imposed by a water conservancy district.

Comments:

Monitoring legislation is integral to keeping a finger on the pulse of dynamic water policy in the state. On behalf of its diverse constituents in southwestern Colorado, the Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD) tracks state water legislation closely, specifically through participation in the Colorado Water Congress State Affairs Committee. Beth Van Vurst, SWCD General Counsel, and Frank Kugel, SWCD Executive Director, participate in the State Affairs Committee meetings weekly during the legislative session (January-May) and ensure southwestern Colorado is considered as the State legislature enacts new laws affecting water management.

SWCD staff provides this written summary of water-related legislation, updated throughout the session via email to interested stakeholders and public. To be added to the list, please contact lauras@swwcd.org. We hope that you find the updates beneficial and informative.