



2009 GUIDELINES ON WATER

Background

1. The Grand Valley is unique and magnificent, yet delicate. On the average, the Valley receives about eight inches of moisture each year. Cycles of drought are common throughout Colorado and western Colorado's history. As Mesa County's population continues to grow, ever-increasing demands on available water resources will occur.
2. Water resources represent a vital asset to the citizens of Mesa County, western Colorado and the state of Colorado. Water is an essential component of the economic, social and environmental quality of life we enjoy.
3. The preservation and protection of private ownership and the right to use water, its conservation, and its wise use are necessary to preserve the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of western Colorado and the entire state.
4. Seventy percent of the state's water supply is found in western Colorado. As western Colorado continues to grow, maintaining sufficient water supplies for current and future use is of crucial importance. Furthermore, industries in western Colorado such as agriculture, small businesses, tourism and natural resource development require steady, reliable, and high quality water supplies.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Local water conservation efforts, such as:
 - Promotion and application of xeriphytic landscaping.
 - Reducing water use to the reasonable extent possible without adversely affecting the aesthetic and social qualities that a well-landscaped environment provides to the local community.
 - Structuring water rates that incorporate block rates (the more water used, the more money paid) per unit.
 - To the extent possible, putting water to use in the most efficient manner, without removing water from the use to which it was originally appropriated.
2. The concept of comprehensive watershed management as well as realistic and cost-effective programs designed to control further pollution or contamination of Colorado water supported by water quality standards that are based on factual information and supportive data.

3. Local and State planning processes that incorporate the concerns, comments and needs of irrigation and domestic water providers when responding to the Agency Review Process.
4. Projects and initiatives, including adequate local, state, federal and private sector funding needed to manage and/or eradicate the tamarisk.
5. Programs and educational information promoting conservation, use and storage of water for Colorado's current and future needs.
6. Monitoring the "Colorado Water For The 21st Century Act," which calls for negotiation of Interbasin Compacts and equitable division of the state's water. This includes but is not limited to:
 - The repair and improvement of existing water storage and transmission facilities/infrastructure as needed statewide.
 - Water storage projects strategically located throughout the state as well as enlarging existing reservoirs when the water levels are low and opportunities are presented.
 - The principle of "no material injury" to existing water rights by projects that remove water from its basin of origin.
 - Mitigation in the form of compensatory storage and a financial commitment to address the economic impacts of removing water from its basin of origin to the satisfaction of the water users of that basin.
 - Using statewide resources that incorporate cooperation, collaboration and partnerships when addressing statewide water issue.
 - The expanded and effective use of the Colorado Water Conservation Board resources along with that of the Colorado Water and Power Development Authority.
7. Preservation of Colorado's water entitlements under interstate compacts and the protection of the state's prior appropriation doctrine.
8. Having the State of Colorado and appropriate entities participation in providing the necessary water and financial support for the endangered fish recovery programs.
9. The concept that no local entity should be forced to relinquish water sources for endangered species without adequate mitigation and compensation.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. Increasing dependence on potable water supplies for outdoor use and irrigation when untreated water could be used for such purposes.
2. Mandatory requirements by public or private entities for high water consumption turf culture.
3. The continued depletion of western Colorado's water resources without mitigation, unless it is determined to be satisfactory to the water users in the donor basin of origin.

4. Any water policy actions that would diminish local government planning powers. (e.g. 1041 powers)
5. Any federal action that would impair, diminish or divest any water right determined under the Constitution and laws of the state of Colorado.
6. Any federal actions contrary to Colorado Water Law.
7. Any water projects incorporating transfers of western Colorado water that diminish the quality of water in western Colorado.