

UPPER GUNNISON RIVER WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT MISSION AND VALUES

Mission Statement.

To be an active leader in issues affecting the water resources of the Upper Gunnison River Basin.

This mission statement reflects the following values held by the District's Board of Directors.

Values Statements.

The Board opposes any new transfers of water from the Gunnison River and its tributaries upstream of Blue Mesa Dam to other basins because such transfers would interfere with existing beneficial uses of water, damage economic stability, and reduce environmental quality within the District.

The Board supports wise land use policies by local governments to protect the water resources of the basin.

The Board regards irrigation, flood control, municipal and industrial uses, ecological needs, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic values to be important matters for the District and the public it serves and advocates achieving a balance among competing uses of water within the District to minimize conflict among them.

The Board is committed to managing and funding effective monitoring, protection and restoration programs in order to maintain high water quality standards as a necessary part of a healthy economy and environment in the District.

The Board accepts the preponderance of scientific evidence indicating that warmer temperatures are already having effects in the District on quantity and timing of precipitation, evaporative losses, forest health and timing of spring peak runoff, and other effects that will increase in the future; it is therefore necessary to adapt the Board's planning assumptions to such changed conditions.

The Board strongly supports irrigated agriculture in the District for its economic and environmental contributions to the community and for the cultural and social values of farming and ranching.

The Board believes that the District must participate in statewide processes to address challenges like climate change, drought, population pressure, water shortages, and projects and programs to address those challenges; and in those statewide processes, the District must be a strong and consistent voice guarding against inequitable and unmitigated damage to Western Slope interests.

The Board recognizes the need for collaborative efforts with partners to develop positions regarding legislation that has a nexus with water.

The Board recognizes that effective water management requires attention to the health and viability of the entire watershed and the groundwater moving through the land and interacting with the surface waters.

GOALS, ACTION ITEMS, ONGOING TASKS FOR 2019

Introduction

Goals are numbered for identification, but all goals have equal priority unless specifically noted otherwise. The means to accomplish the Board's goals are divided into two categories: Action Items and Ongoing Tasks. Action Items are specific activities that are intended to be completed, or to have substantial progress accomplished, within the year for which they are identified. Ongoing Tasks are activities that the District staff is engaged in on a continuing basis from year to year. The Action Items and Ongoing Tasks have been assigned a priority as follows: Priority 1 - Imperative in achieving the principles outlined in the Mission Statement; Priority 2 - Strongly supports achievement of the Mission Statement principles, but not imperative to the mission; Priority 3 - Supports achievement of the Mission Statement, but to be done as time and budget allow.

Action Item to Accomplish all Goals.

The Watershed Management Planning Project is a means to accomplish most of the goals enumerated below. The mission of the Watershed Management Planning Project is to help protect existing water uses and watershed health in the Upper Gunnison Basin in the face of pressure from increased water demands and permanent reductions in water supply.

Goal 1 Protect Upper Gunnison Basin water resources, and local uses of those resources, from new or expanded transmountain diversions, or other statewide plans or projects that would impinge on those water resources and uses.

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 1.

- a) Pursue the water banking concept aggressively with relevant other state and regional organizations. [Priority 1]
- b) Continue to actively monitor the implementation of Colorado's Water Plan and express questions or concerns to the Gunnison Basin Roundtable. [Priority 2]
- c) Continue to monitor implementation of the 2012 Record of Decision for the Aspinall Unit Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement and activities related to the 2009 Final Gunnison River Basin Programmatic Biological Opinion. [Priority 3]
- d) Provide support for the Water for the 21st Century Act process; in particular, the implementation of the Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan and other Roundtables' implementation plans. [Priority 1]
- e) Continue to monitor the use of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative Report (SWASI) findings by state and local entities, Basin Roundtables and the Interbasin Compact Committee, and the development of the 2016 update to SWASI. [Priority 2]

- f) Continue to participate in legislative and regulatory activities, including those of the Colorado Water Congress. [Priority 1]
- g) Continue to actively oppose any new transbasin diversion or expansion of any existing transbasin diversion from the Gunnison River Basin. [Priority 1]
- h) Continue to actively participate in the activities of the Executive Committee of the Colorado Water Congress Colorado River Project. [Priority 3]

Action Item to Accomplish Goal 1

- a) Continue to Actively participate in efforts to develop Risk Management Study related to additional development of Colorado River water from the Colorado River system. [Priority 1]

Goal 2

Protect existing and future decreed water uses within the Upper Gunnison River Basin from calls from senior water rights whose points of diversion are located downstream of Blue Mesa Reservoir.

Action Items to Accomplish Goal 2.

Develop a strategy for protection of present perfected rights to the beneficial use of waters within the Upper Gunnison Basin that could be impacted by a physical shortage of water in the Colorado River system. [Priority 1]

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 2.

- a) Prepare and submit Aspinall Subordination Agreement Annual Report. [Priority 1]
- b) Continue to identify ways to improve administration spreadsheet reliability. [Priority 2]
- c) Continue to participate in and monitor activities relating to the Colorado River Compact of 1922 and the Upper Colorado River Basin Compact of 1948, particularly any State of Colorado proposed actions in response to intrastate shortage allocations and the seven state shortage criteria. [Priority 1]
- d) Watch for opportunities to acquire senior water rights. [Priority 3]

Goal 3

Maintain, and where possible, improve and develop the water supply that is physically available in individual sub-basins in the District.

Action Items to Accomplish Goal 3.

- a) Develop and prioritize an inventory of irrigation infrastructure needs in the sub-basins of the District as reflected in the Watershed Management Plan, including strategies to address future water shortages. [Priority 1]

- b) Include in the inventory opportunities for mini-hydropower and water supply projects with local individuals and entities. [Priority 2]
- c) Cooperate with others in continuing and improving snowpack measuring and monitoring devices and weather stations in the basin. [Priority 1]
- d) Coordinate with the Bureau of Reclamation, requesting improvement to Taylor River Basin snowmelt runoff forecasting tools to facilitate maximizing the beneficial use of the District's water rights. [Priority 1]
- e) Seek out and evaluate water projects and partnerships. [Priority 1]
- f) Pursue partnership in water storage opportunities with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. [Priority 1]
- g) Investigate groundwater hydrology for enhancing water supplies. [Priority 2]
- h) Assist the seven municipal water providers in the District as requested in development of water conservation plans. [Priority2]
- i) Assist constituents in improving water supply and making the existing supply more reliable and efficient by making funding for such activities available through the District Grant Program. [Priority 1]

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 3.

- a) Coordinate with the District's Upper Gunnison River Water Activity Enterprise in conducting activities in pursuit of this goal. [Priority 2]
- b) Coordinate and cooperate equally with Hinsdale County and the Town of Lake City in the sale of Lake San Cristobal water through the Lake San Cristobal Water Activity Enterprise. [Priority 2]
- c) Coordinate the Taylor Local Users Group process and work with the other partners to the 1975 Taylor Park Reservoir Operation and Storage Exchange Agreement to increase data collection to promote and develop more accurate forecasting tools, communicate issues in a timelier manner, and manage releases of Taylor Park Reservoir. [Priority 1]
- d) Coordinate and annually assess the Gunnison County cloud seeding program. [Priority1]
- e) Contribute financially to the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory weather stations to the extent that the stations can produce information useful to the District in accomplishing its goals. [Priority 1]
- f) Participate financially, in cooperation with other sponsors, in the Dust on Snowpack Research to the extent that the study can produce information useful to the District in

accomplishing its goals. [Priority 1] Wait on changes until Jeff comes to talk about dust on snow.

g) Develop and adopt policies relating to administration and utilization of the RICD water right. [Priority 2]

Goal 4 Protect existing water supplies for in-channel and flatwater recreational purpose and improve public awareness of public access concerns.

Action Item to Accomplish Goal 4

Work with all stakeholders to create maps and other tools (including signage) to identify existing public access areas.

Ongoing Task to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 4.

Continue to support the Gunnison River Festival as an effort to promote the use of the Recreational In-Channel Diversion (RICD) water right. [Priority 1]

Goal 5 Improve instream water supplies for environmental purposes in a manner that is consistent with the District's overall responsibilities.

Action Item to Accomplish Goal 5

a) Collaborate with stakeholders within local watersheds to identify, inventory and prioritize environmental projects and programs for maintaining or improving the environmental quality of the Upper Gunnison Basin, including the probability of reduced flows due to natural or cultural impacts. [Priority 1]

b) Identify any additional reaches within the Basin for riparian or aquatic assessment. [Priority 2]

c) Continue support and management of the Wet Meadows project. [Priority 1]

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 5.

a) Coordinate with the Colorado Water Conservation Board and others on instream flow water rights within the Upper Gunnison Basin in support of environmental water use needs. [Priority 2]

b) Continue to work with others to adapt to diminishing water supplies due to climate change in order to enhance the riparian environment. [Priority 1]

c) Collaborate with irrigators to explore possible exception to water administration practice that requires stream dry up to place a call, with the objective of allowing an irrigator to leave water in the stream for habitat protection without detriment to water rights.

d) With appropriate stakeholder, explore cooperative, administrative, and statutory means to permit shepherding water, both locally to support item c) above and statewide to support demand management as part of contingency planning.

e) Continue partnerships with Gunnison County, the City of Gunnison and Western State Colorado University in improving the existing aquatic environment on lower Tomichi Creek. [Priority 2]

Goal 6

Protect Water Quality in a manner that is consistent with the District's overall responsibilities, including protecting and encouraging the beneficial use of water within the District.

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 6.

a) Inventory opportunities and facilitate solutions to address potential drinking water quality issues in the District. [Priority 2]

b) Contribute to and facilitate the USGS water quality monitoring program with multiple other local stakeholders. [Priority 1]

c) Provide facilitation for the cooperative effort among the District, and the Upper Gunnison water quality monitoring stakeholders to participate in the triennial review of basin water quality standards and other appropriate rulemakings. [Priority 1]

d) Support local watershed coalition activities, including current efforts in the Lake Fork headwaters and Coal Creek/Slate River. [Priority 1]

e) Get periodic updates from the coalitions on the remediation of the Superfund of the Standard Mine and Hinsdale County pre-Superfund action. [Priority 2]

f) Maintain communications with Gunnison County on the UMTRA Superfund project to protect groundwater users due to contamination of groundwater southwest of Gunnison. [Priority 3]

g) Continue to assist with funding streamflow gaging on Slate River, Coal Creek, Tomichi Creek, Lake Fork, and Ohio Creek, with the possibility of adding temperature sensors. [Priority 1]

h) Encourage use of the grant program for projects that improve the existing aquatic environment. [Priority 1]

Goal 7

Pursue education of and input from constituents within the District on the value of basin water resources, including development of an outreach program promoting the District and its activities.

Action Item to Accomplish Goal 7.

- a) Work with educators in the District to develop and sustain water education programs that will be more age appropriate. [Priority 1]
- b) Provide funding through mini-grants to develop and sustain local water education programs. [Priority 1]
- c) Create presentation based on materials in Appendix B of the Strategic Plan and have available on District website. [Priority 2]
- d) Develop and implement a social media and marketing strategy to raise awareness and increase participation in District events and planning processes [Priority 2]

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 7.

- a) Maintain the District website to keep the public advised of District activities and resources. [Priority 1]
- b) Maintain distribution of the brochure tied to the website and make sure the information is explained and easily accessed on the website. [Priority 1]
- c) Develop a more active relationship with local and regional media. [Priority 1]
- d) Participate in local events to create public awareness of the District. [Priority 3]
- e) Evaluate the internship program and make recommendations based on the findings. [Priority 1]

Goal 8

Serve as an active and collaborative leader, locally and regionally, in addressing current and future impacts of climate change on water resources and watershed health.

Ongoing Tasks to be Performed in Pursuit of Goal 8.

- a) Conduct a coordinated analysis of challenges facing the Upper Gunnison Basin from the already-changing regional climate in partnership with land management agencies, university faculty and stakeholder groups [Priority 1]
- b) Make information available to riparian landowners and communities establishing 1) the need for riparian repair and river-corridor enhancement, and 2) the availability of grant funds to do such work. [Priority 1]
- c) Provide funding for projects to demonstrate agricultural diversity while consuming less water without diminishing water quality. [Priority 1]

d) Continue to participate in local headwaters climate change research and activities. [Priority 2]

e) Coordinate with the counties, local municipalities and local power providers on climate change resolutions, solutions and programs to adapt to climate change within the District and the State. [Priority 2]

Goal 9 Annually update the Strategic Management Plan during the budget process.

Administrative Tasks. [Priority 1]

a) Continue to improve budget spreadsheets.

b) Continue to utilize technology to its greatest advantage in performing District activities and achieving District goals.

c) Continue to enhance data availability for both the public and District employees by expanding internet and intranet capabilities.

d) Continue to encourage employee development opportunities through funding commitments to training.

e) Provide administrative oversight and management for any Water Supply Reserve Fund projects that the District sponsors.

f) Develop an orientation program with senior staff and Education Committee for new board members. [Priority 1]