



Providing a Voice for Northeast Colorado

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER BASIN WELLS

AWN – 2006 -16

WHEREAS, in 2006, two events have worked to cause an emergency situation for farmers in the South Platte River Basin in Weld County, Morgan County, Adams County, those being below average snowfall since January and below average precipitation in Weld County this Spring, and the refusal by the Colorado State Engineer in May, 2006, to allow 449 alluvial wells to continue to withdraw water for irrigation, and

WHEREAS, under Colorado Water Law, the alluvial wells must provide water to the South Platte River in the form of senior water rights to replace the water they consume, and

WHEREAS, in very dry years, the wells must replace more water than in average years; however, in the same dry years, it becomes much more difficult to obtain replacement supplies, and well owners who cannot meet the replacement obligations are forbidden from pumping, and

WHEREAS, as a result, no water was available for diversion by well owners, who rely upon the opportunity to store water during the runoff for later release during the irrigation season as replacement water, and the unexpected extremely dry conditions experienced in Spring, 2006 are the principal factor in the State Engineer's decision to curtail well pumping, and

WHEREAS, the 449 affected wells serve over 25,000 acres of productive farm land, with many of the farms being irrigated principally or exclusively by well water, or being irrigated by well water as a supplement at those times when surface water ditches produce less than is needed to support a crop, and

WHEREAS, the result is that production from the affected farms will be negligible, inputs already invested will be lost, and many farm owners and operators will be unable to meet existing obligations, with significant numbers of bankruptcies and foreclosures being anticipated, and

WHEREAS, the economic impact for the region will be significant and will affect schools, cities, special districts and Main Street business, and

WHEREAS, we live in a high desert area where the norm is low yearly rainfall, and

WHEREAS, the situation in 2006 is not an isolated one and will continue to happen in succeeding years, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Directors of Progressive 15

- Call for all parties to come together in cooperation to forestall a region wide economic downturn
- Encourage the Governor and State Engineer to look at developing a plan to determine earlier the possibility of wells being shut down before substantial investments of time and money have been made by the agriculture community
- Encourage a streamlining of the process to get the augmentation plans through the court system
- Reaffirm their support of the Colorado 64 Water Principles
- Support partnerships that work to address the water issues of the State of Colorado

Adopted this 17th day of August 2006