



Providing a Voice for Northeast Colorado

WATER
AWN-2002-13

WHEREAS, drought is a naturally occurring part of the climatic cycle, and Colorado has unique topography and geography that contribute to variations in annual precipitation from seven to over 50 inches within areas as close as 200 miles; and

WHEREAS, The past four years of drought, culminating in the record-setting parched conditions of 2002, have touched every region of the State of Colorado and will have far reaching economic, social and political impacts for all Colorado residents for years to come; and

WHEREAS, In the 130 years since adoption of our constitution, Colorado has grown significantly, both in population and in expanded uses for water; and

WHEREAS, Colorado's constitution provides for the diversion of water from where it flows to where it is needed and to change the historical use of water from one beneficial use to another, the volume of undeveloped water in Colorado has diminished tremendously; and

WHEREAS, more water stored within the state will increase the recreational, agricultural, business and environmental uses for the citizens of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, a healthy agriculture industry depends on the availability of irrigation water, and the removal of such water from a local agricultural community can have severe and irreversible social, economic and environmental impacts; and

WHEREAS, respect for private property rights is a fundamental tenet of our democracy; and

WHEREAS, despite the statewide importance of managing our finite water resource, we must recognize that this is a complex issue of which many key decision-makers are uninformed; and

WHEREAS, There should be an ongoing effort to educate all Coloradoans, particularly those decision-makers who will most influence any water policy, on the importance of water and the need to manage it for this and future generations; and

WHEREAS, Water or more notably the lack of water has become a crisis in the State of Colorado, every crisis offers opportunity: opportunity for cooperation, opportunity for education, understanding and the opportunity to unify opponents. These solutions, however, must benefit all regions.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Progressive 15 endorses the following statements of principle:

1. All Colorado water users must share in solving Colorado's water resource problems.
2. The State of Colorado should provide assistance, when requested for local water supply planning and assist in the implementation of consensus-based water resource solutions that respect local authorities and private property and water rights.
3. We support the development of more storage of water to help municipalities and industry meet their growing water demands, and to reduce the reliance to transfer water from agriculture to municipalities and industry.
4. We support the right of farmers and ranchers to sell their water.
5. We support leasing, rather than sale of water to industry and municipalities so the water can revert to agricultural use, if conditions in the future warrant.
6. In the event that agricultural water is sold, the free market must be allowed to work in the pricing of the water. We recommend that any entity taking water from agricultural lands for other purposes be held responsible for maintaining the previous tax base and for maintaining the proper stewardship of the land and the remaining water rights in the area, including re-vegetation and weed control.
7. It is in the interest of all the residents of the State of Colorado to ensure that a proper balance exists between the development of water for beneficial consumptive uses and the preservation of the flows necessary to support recreational and environmental needs.
8. The State of Colorado must increase its efforts to fully explore flexible, market based approaches to water supply management, including Interruptible Water Contracts, Water Banking, In-State Water Leasing and ground water recharge management.
9. Economic, and social impacts of future water projects and water transfers must be minimized; unavoidable impacts must be fully mitigated including both the immediate and long-term impacts attributable to water transfers.
10. Future water supply solutions must benefit both the area of origin and the area of use.
11. To support water conservation measures that don't impair return flows or rights of other legally held water rights and the careful management of the State's water resources.

12. Colorado must begin improvement programs to existing water storage facilities and construction of new water storage facilities.
13. There must be an ongoing effort to educate all Coloradoans on the importance of water, the need to conserve, manage, and plan for the needs of this and future generations.

ADOPTED this 21st day of September 2002