

Testify February 20-2012

Dear Mr. Chairman, members of the committee and Representative Fischer.

I want to thank you for allowing me to speak to you about the problem of high water tables along the South Platte River.

I am Bob Winter retired farmer from the Windsor area for over 30 years. I live at 39828 Hilltop Circle, Ault, Colorado 80610. I have farmed with surface water and well water and raised sugar beets, malt barley for Coors, pinto beans, shell corn, silage corn, onions, carrots, alfalfa, and other crops that can be raised in Weld County.

As you have heard the water table is the highest on record.

We keep hearing of people having water in their basements causing thousands of dollars in damage. This is happening in places that haven't had a problem for as long as these residents have lived there, some in excess of 30 and 40 years. Many have had to dig dewatering wells around their houses to keep the water out of their basements. Some are pumping over 1,000 gallons per day to keep the water out of their basement. Yet there are some who want years of study before anything can be done.

There is an urgency folks. The water at these levels will deteriorate the foundations of houses and structures and people will lose their homes. Much of the water is pumped away from the houses and into the streets and down storm drains of no beneficial use to anyone. Farmers have fields that are flooded and crops that have rotted before harvest. This again is of no beneficial use to anyone. Time is of the essence.

Instead of these people having to dig dewatering wells and pump it into a gutter in town or in a rural community, the answer is to allow some pumping of irrigation wells to lower the aquifer and put the water to beneficial use, growing crops. I believe artificial recharge for augmentation is causing many of the high water conditions along with some wells being shut off and curtailment of others. This is why the study is needed for the State Engineer to make management decisions based on real time data and not on a theory. Colorado Farm Bureau supports allowing flexibility to the State Engineer to determine the best course of action to alleviate problems in different segments of the River.

I believe artificial recharge for augmentation is responsible for the high water table conditions, which is being created from over augmentation. If we were not over augmenting then the levels of the aquifer would reach a point of equilibrium. There is a point where all can work together. The system worked well from the 1900's till the 1960's when the river became over appropriated for the natural stream flow.

Colorado has grown some since that time. Demand for water continues to grow.

You may ask, with all of this demand, how is it that we ignore over ten million acre feet of storage below ground, where there are no evaporation losses. Ten million acre feet is EIGHT times more water than all of the storage in the front range from Denver to the state line near Julesberg. Colorado has delivered over one million acre feet to our dear friends in Nebraska, over and above the compact requirements during the last two years.

The economic impact of wells being shut off or partially curtailed has had a huge impact on local economies in rural communities. I am sending you a very conservative estimate of the economic loss to these communities. As you look through these and add the income that is lost to these farming communities in the hundreds of millions of dollars. If add in the multiplier of 7 times the money is used and taxed in each community, the numbers become even larger, which I did not do. These dollars will generate money for business that have been forced to close. These dollars will generate taxes for schools, and other services needed in rural communities. These dollars will also contribute to the economy of the State of Colorado through taxes.

You have an opportunity to take action NOW to allow pumping of irrigation wells that have currently been curtailed or shut off completely. This bill also includes the provision to monitor the aquifer, through the study, to keep from damaging senior water rights.

It seems wrong to me to allow our most valuable asset, water, to be delivered to Nebraska, when we could improve the tax base of rural communities which will also improve the taxes collected by the state of Colorado and most important, improve the economies of our rural communities.

God gave us these resources to manage, time is of the essence, now is the time to approve this legislation that will benefit everyone in the state of Colorado.

I am a retired volunteer fireman and if I saw someone in a burning building, I or any fireman would exhaust every effort to help save that person. We are in a crisis mode with these high water tables. Something needs to be done right now.

Please approve this legislation HB 1278 and help the citizens of Colorado.

Thank You for your time, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

Bob Winter