



SB15-10

Concerning augmentation requirements for wells withdrawing water from the Dawson Aquifer

Summary:

- **Recommended by the Water Resources Review Committee**, SB 10 repeals the requirement that the Division of Water Resources (DWR) use a different groundwater modeling approach when calculating Dawson Aquifer augmentation amounts by July 1, 2015, and allows DWR to continue existing practices.
- The bill eliminates the requirement to develop a costly groundwater model and to construct numerous wells to gather data necessary to run the model.
- The consequences of not developing the model will be limited as the model would likely not be used. If used, the model would likely not yield significantly different results than current calculations.
- This legislation would not change the way DWR executes its work, but would eliminate the requirement to develop a costly groundwater model and to gather data.

Background:

Current law specifies that, beginning July 1, 2015, wells in the Dawson Aquifer will be required to use calculations based on actual aquifer conditions when determining the amounts necessary to replace stream depletions. To make these calculations, DWR would need to develop a new groundwater model, and gather new groundwater data, both of which would come at significant cost.

Currently, the DWR determines augmentation requirements associated with the withdrawal of non-tributary groundwater (groundwater in the Denver Basin that does not meet the "nontributary" standard) from the Dawson Aquifer by calculating actual out-of-priority depletions to the stream based on an assumption of certain ground water levels.

Because of the varying hydrogeologic conditions of the layered Denver Basin bedrock aquifers, the new groundwater model would only apply to a limited geographic area of the Dawson Aquifer. Importantly, in that limited area, a significant portion of Dawson Aquifer is already subject to augmentation requirements determined by the court. There will never be a need to do additional groundwater modeling for those already-adjudicated portions of the aquifer. For the other portions of the limited geographic area, there has been little or no water court or well permitting efforts in recent years that would employ the use of groundwater modeling. It is likely that a newly developed groundwater model would be used infrequently if at all.

Finally, in the event that the newly developed groundwater model is used, research of the hydrogeology for the limited geographic area suggests that the actual change in calculated stream depletions resulting from new modeling would be negligible in many locations, as the existing modeling approach already accounts for the "actual aquifer conditions" at the identified locations.

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