

CHAPTER 194

WATER AND IRRIGATION

HOUSE BILL 25-1115

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) McCluskie and Soper, Bird, Boesenecker, Brown, Duran, Lindsay, Lukens, Martinez, Mauro, McCormick, Paschal, Ricks, Smith, Stewart K., Valdez;
also SENATOR(S) Roberts and Catlin, Amabile, Bridges, Cutter, Frizell, Jodeh, Kipp, Kirkmeyer, Michaelson Jenet, Pelton B., Rich, Simpson, Wallace, Weissman, Winter F.

AN ACT

CONCERNING THE COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD'S ADMINISTRATION OF A WATER SUPPLY MEASUREMENT PROGRAM, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

- SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly finds that:
- (a) Colorado's snowpack serves as a significant natural reservoir, holding winter precipitation until spring and summer when it is released as snow melt;
 - (b) Given the major role that snowpack plays in Colorado's water system, snowpack measurement is a critical tool for water managers statewide;
 - (c) Every year, water managers are challenged with balancing water supply needs and uncertainty regarding the flows into the water system, while relying on uncertain runoff forecasts. Experience shows that forecast reliability and the use of available water supplies can be optimized when snowpack and runoff can be accurately predicted.
 - (d) New technologies are emerging and currently available, including light detection and ranging (LiDAR) technology, that can collect highly accurate and timely data on snowpack from an airplane;
 - (e) Because such snow surveys require significant financial resources from multiple sources, current snowpack measurement protocols are generally

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

decentralized and are being done by a variety of water entities across the state and without a formal program through which to coordinate efforts;

(f) The Colorado water conservation board (CWCB) within the department of natural resources is governed by a 15-member board, representing each major water basin in the state;

(g) The CWCB is well positioned to lead the management of a statewide snowpack measurement and forecasting program to:

(I) Create a more streamlined process;

(II) Provide more transparent dissemination of data to water users statewide;

(III) Provide information to the division of water resources dam safety branch regarding risk management of dams; and

(IV) Strengthen the state's and water users' position for the procurement of contract measurement services;

(h) This centralized approach would not only improve the reliability of water supply forecasts, but also position Colorado to better adapt to climate change impacts on snowpack and water resources, including extreme events such as rapid runoff and floods, ultimately benefitting all water stakeholders across the state; and

(i) As a result, water managers statewide will also be better equipped to make informed decisions as they balance reservoir operations and streamflow.

(2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that the creation of a water supply measurement and forecasting program will assist the state in planning for population growth and environmental changes, while building resilience in the mitigation of severe floods.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 37-60-106, **amend** (1) introductory portion; and **add** (1)(v) as follows:

37-60-106. Duties of the board - legislative declaration. (1) ~~It is the duty of~~ The board ~~to~~ SHALL promote the conservation of the waters of the state of Colorado in order to secure the greatest utilization of such waters and the utmost prevention of floods. ~~and~~ In particular, and without limiting the general character of this section, the board has the power and it is its duty:

(v) TO ADMINISTER A WATER SUPPLY MEASUREMENT AND FORECASTING PROGRAM TO:

(I) COLLECT AND DISSEMINATE DATA ON SNOWPACK LEVELS;

(II) INVESTIGATE THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN SNOWPACK MEASUREMENT AND WATER SUPPLY FORECASTING; AND

(III) COLLECT OTHER DATA THAT THE BOARD DETERMINES WILL ASSIST IN

SNOWPACK MEASUREMENT, WATER SUPPLY FORECASTING, OR FLOOD HAZARD MAPPING.

SECTION 3. Appropriation. (1) For the 2025-26 state fiscal year, \$104,608 is appropriated to the department of natural resources. This appropriation is from the Colorado water conservation board construction fund created in section 37-60-121 (1)(a), C.R.S. To implement this act, the department may use this appropriation as follows:

(a) \$75,926 for use by the Colorado water conservation board for personal services, which amount is based on an assumption that the board will require an additional 0.9 FTE;

(b) \$12,722 for use by the board for operating expenses; and

(c) \$15,960 for the purchase of information technology services.

(2) For the 2025-26 state fiscal year, \$15,960 is appropriated to the office of the governor for use by the office of information technology. This appropriation is from reappropriated funds received from the department of natural resources under subsection (1)(c) of this section. To implement this act, the office may use this appropriation to provide information technology services for the department of natural resources.

SECTION 4. Act subject to petition - effective date. This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: May 15, 2025