

HUERFANO COUNTY WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLAN

May 13, 2013

Background

Following its creation by a landowner petition and District Court decree in 1971, for many years the HCWCD survived on a mill levy which produced less than \$16,000 in annual income. Nevertheless, it established an enterprise and developed a series of administrative plans to augment non-exempt depletions in the upper Huerfano River basin. In addition, it accumulated over \$66,000 in savings. In 2012, however, the district's mill levy was increased by the voters by 2.0 mills to 2.128 mills, generating approximately \$226,000 per year at current assessed valuations, and the District was authorized to incur multi-year obligations resulting in up to \$3,000,000 of borrowing.

Originally formed under the Water Conservancy Act, the District has broad powers and responsibilities - to acquire water rights and land as well as to construct and manage projects to conserve water and provide for its greatest beneficial use. Voter approval in 2012 authorized funding for water activities within Huerfano County, specifically "acquiring and developing water rights for use on the Cucharas and Huerfano Rivers...; acquiring and development of water storage facilities ... ; [and] protecting, preserving and defending water rights"

Goals

- ❖ Within the District's financial ability, to take an independent leadership role, as well as to undertake cooperative ventures with public and private entities, in the development of water resources reasonably necessary to protect the county's current development and to provide for future growth.
- ❖ Equitably address the needs and interest of both the Cucharas and the Huerfano river basins within the District.
- ❖ Keep native Huerfano County water in Huerfano County.

Objectives

- ❖ Further "de-Bruce" the District by removing limitations on revenues to allow the District to receive grants of state and local money to be used to further its purposes at no further cost to the taxpayers.
- ❖ Obtain temporary and permanent augmentation water and obtain, develop, and operate water facilities necessary to protect important out-of-priority depletions of water in the Cucharas and Huerfano river basins within Huerfano County.
- ❖ Foster educational and cooperative opportunities complementary to the District's Goals, Objectives and Strategic Plan.

- ❖ Develop an additional staff, but only if determined to be necessary, to facilitate accomplishment of the District’s goals and objectives.

Strategic Plan

As determined to be appropriate by the District’s board and consistent with the District’s purposes, goals, objectives, and financial abilities:

- ❖ In both the Cucharas and Huerfano river basins:
 - Commission appropriate studies, potentially including
 - A “Needs Assessment” study to determine, at a reconnaissance level, the existing and potential needs for water.
 - A “Storage Potential” study to determine the opportunities for the location and construction of effective storage sites and facilities.
 - Monitor water developments and with respect to Water Court activity oppose those applications which, in the judgment of the District Board, may jeopardize the public interest, not considering those lands excluded from the District.
- ❖ In the Cucharas River Basin:
 - Following completion of appropriate studies and investigations, identify further opportunities for water development and preservation, potentially including a blanket augmentation plan for out-of-priority depletions (*e.g.* pond evaporation) for which augmentation certificates would be sold at no less than market value and in an amount to recoup the capital cost and operational expense of the plan.
 - If practicable and consistent with the District’s goals and objectives, establish cooperative relations with, among others, Cucharas Sanitation and Water District, individual water rights holders, Town of La Veta, Maria Lake, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife, and City of Walsenburg.
 - Eventually, consider involvement in the projects that may be suggested as a result of the foregoing collaborations including, perhaps, the following potential projects:
 - White Creek Reservoir
 - Enlarged Horseshoe Reservoir (upstream third dam?)
 - Decommissioning or alternative use of Wahatoya and Daigre Reservoirs, and pipeline
 - Mill Lake rehabilitation
 - Mexican Ditch
 - Maria Reservoir (storage water right acquisition and transfer?)
 - New upper basin joint storage structure

❖ In the Huerfano River Basin:

- Until the District's permanent blanket augmentation plan is operational, continue to gain annual administrative approval of and continue to operate the District's existing Substitute Water Supply Plan and its existing Rule 14 Plan (as they necessarily may be revised in the future) to provide replacement water for out of priority depletions by Huerfano County Road and Bridge Department, Malachite Spring, CO61 Well, GWSD wells, and Houchin Well #3.
- By long-term lease or by outright purchase, acquire adequate supplies of reliable augmentation water to fund a blanket augmentation plan covering existing and reasonably foreseeable out-of-priority uses of water consistent with the District's goals and objectives.
- Adjudicate a permanent blanket augmentation plan for the foregoing purposes and meet past and current capital obligations, as well as operation and maintenance expenses, by selling augmentation certificates at no less than fair market value to those who need a permanent and reliable supply of augmentation water.
- Following completion of appropriate studies and investigations, identify further opportunities for water development and preservation. As part of that analysis consider involvement in the following potential projects:
 - Huerfano Valley softening pool (softening the call on a river)
 - McAuley Clay rehabilitation
 - Cuchara #5 rehabilitation and groundwater recovery
 - Reuse of transmountain return flows
- If practicable and consistent with the District's goals and objectives, establish cooperative relations with, among others, Two Rivers Water and Farming Company, Wolf Springs Ranch, Welton Ditch, and Lindsay Case.