

February - March 2007

# WaterNews

 DENVER WATER

## Water Commissioners Look to Future

**W**hether you have kids inching toward college or dream of a vacation home in the Tetons, planning is the key to success. We take comfort in the sense that our future needs are secure. Since the city's founding, Denver Water has approached its mission with a long-term vision. While we serve today's needs, an eye on the future ensures the quality of life for our children and their grandchildren. Denver's Board of Water Commissioners takes preparing for the future seriously. They continually explore options that will provide water for a major urban center for many generations to come.

In 1997, the Board published an Integrated Resource Plan to guide Denver's water future. The document was "right on" in its view of what must be done. It is still relevant ten years later, but forecasting is like driving: You must adjust as new vistas and obstacles appear. Recently, the Board decided to supplement those guidelines by considering new circumstances and uncertainties.

The historic drought of 2002 showed us that our planning paid off. With your help, we met that challenge with minimal harm. But the drought also revealed a vulnerability in our system on the north side of the city: Too large a proportion of our water is drawn from the south part of the system, the headwaters of the South Platte and Blue rivers.

Fires in our watershed have required unanticipated efforts to protect the water supply. And events beyond our borders have changed the horizon as well. We must face the possibility of terrorist attacks, cyber-vandalism, and pandemics with intelligent emergency planning. Global climate change will have an unknown impact on both forecasting future supply and demand, and on our lives.

These developments and many others underscore the uncertainty of water supply. Denver Water must provide for a quarter of Colorado's total population. Responsible stewardship means planning for the future, a horizon hazed with questions.

The Board is evaluating ways to reduce uncertainty and meet the challenges ahead. Our success depends on conservation, reuse and new supply. Conservation reduces water demand and allows us to put more water in "reserve." The Recycled Water System, which treats wastewater so that it can be re-used for irrigation and industrial purposes, will give us 17,000 acre feet of new water supply -- the equivalent of a small reservoir. And the water supply shortage and imbalance on the north side will be solved, adding 18,000 acre feet of supply and a more balanced, reliable delivery system.



Denver's first Board of Water Commissioners, meeting in August, 1918, planned for the water needs of a city that had doubled its population in twenty years... again.

From left: John C. Skinner, Finlay L. MacFarland, Charles H. Reynolds, Frank L. Woodward, and Benjamin A. Sweet.

The Board also will examine the implications of other major water issues for the State as a whole. Responsible planning requires that we consider what role, if any, Denver Water will play in finding solutions that benefit those beyond our current service area.

Good planning anticipates more than the needs of the day. Denver Water's history has been guided with foresight, insight and responsible leadership. That heritage is a legacy we respect and strive to continue.

For the complete text of the Board's Supplement to the Integrated Resource Statement, go to our website, [denverwater.org](http://denverwater.org), or call 303.628.6045 and one will be mailed to you.

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**[www.denverwater.org](http://www.denverwater.org)**

**Denver Water Commissioners**

Denise Maes, President      Tom Gougeon, 1st Vice President  
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### INSIDE:

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- ❄ New Denver Water DVD
- ❄ Gravel Pit Storage
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# GRAVEL PITS: *They're Not Just for Rocks Any More*

As *Water News* goes to press, Denver is still digging out from the holiday storms. It's natural to wonder how all this snow affects our water supply for the coming year. Unfortunately, the water thawing on our lawns is downstream from our storage facilities, so the only benefit we get is a bit of free landscape irrigation. Most of this water will either evaporate or disappear into the sewer system.

Denver's water needs increase every year. We need an effective way to take advantage of the fact that the water from Dillon Reservoir is re-usable. In a few years, we will have a way of catching that water, as well as excess storm runoff, thanks to a series of "mini-reservoirs" coming together north of the city along the South Platte. These reservoirs are being constructed out of sand and gravel pits downstream from Denver, and we can capture wastewater effluent in them as it is released into the river.

How does that benefit us? It enables us to store



Jessica Barbier, Denver Water's project engineer for Cat Reservoir, has been working on the gravel pit projects for many years. She is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and Virginia Tech with a Masters in Civil Engineering.

more water through a "water exchange." Water law is a complicated business, but a simple way to look at it, we are not always entitled to store the water flowing into our reservoirs, unless we can trade an equal amount to someone downstream, a farmer for example, who has a right to it. We are also allowed by law to reuse Dillon Reservoir water. So if we can catch that water after it passes through wastewater treatment, we can use it to satisfy downstream rights. We can exchange that water for water that would otherwise have to be released for them from our upstream storage. Every gallon reused is one gallon we can store in reservoirs for later use.

The mini-reservoirs will also allow us to capture river water when excess is available, say, from a big storm or a Chatfield spill. When complete, this string of reservoirs north of town will be capable of storing 30,000 acre feet of exchange water, freeing enough mountain water for 60,000 households.

## Xeriscape Programs: Time's a-Wastin'

**Landscape Seminars Began January 13th.** This year's seminar program, *Loving Low Water*, is co-sponsored and hosted by Denver Botanic Gardens. The series began in January with a gardening expo. For details on remaining seminars, go to [DenverBotanicGardens.org](http://DenverBotanicGardens.org) or [DenverWater.org](http://DenverWater.org). Register for the series or for individual seminars by calling Denver Botanic Gardens at 720.865.3580. Seminars are held at Denver Botanic Gardens, 1005 York Street.

**Xeriscape Clinics Are Filling Up.** Denver Water offers one-to-one consultations for homeowners wanting personalized assistance with their Xeriscape plans. A clinic is a two-hour, private meeting with a landscape designer who will use your drawings and pictures of your yard to help you develop a plan for moving from idea to design, and from design to completion. Clinics cost \$85.00 for residents of Denver Water's service area, \$170.00 for those outside the service area. Clinics are held on Saturdays in February, March, and April. You must register in advance and do a bit of preparation, so call 303.628.6330 to reserve your preferred date. All clinics will be held at Denver Water (1600 W. 12th Avenue), in the Administration Building.

## Coming Soon, to a DVD near You!!!

Denver Water's new informative DVD, *Denver Water: The Legacy Continues*, is now available for the asking. A year in the making, it stars – You guessed it! – water.

The DVD presents an informative look at who Denver Water is, what we do, and why we do it. The main program is 17 minutes of history, contemporary issues, and thoughts on Denver's future in a region where the scarcity of water is a part of life. Also included are simple water-saving tips that can help us all protect the environment, save unnecessary expense, and ensure that Denver has plenty of safe, clean water for generations to come.

The DVD includes three additional short videos with special interests in mind. One explains the need for efficient water use and how to achieve it. Another details Denver Water's efforts to plan for our future needs, and a third is an entertaining film for kids and the young at heart. It includes an excellent animated view of the water treatment process. As the manager of the project, Denver Water's Stacey Renouf, said, "We wanted this to appeal to all ages. The new video has something for everyone interested in learning more about Denver's fascinating water system."

As a bonus, the DVD has one other feature: footage from the Denver Water archives, dating from the 1930s and 1950s. The vintage films carry an interesting message. They show that most of the concerns we face today have always been with us and, we can assume, always will be. In the 30s, customers were balancing the desire for green lawns against the risks of waste. Like us, they worried about rates and supply. Like them, we are adjusting our expectations to the semi-arid conditions of the High Plains. Planning for the needs of coming generations was as important in the 50s as it was at the very beginnings of our community. If we plan well, future generations will face the same issues armed with the lessons of the past. They will have the skills and confidence to cope with the realities of climate, and they too will enjoy the Colorado lifestyle we all hope to preserve.

Denver Water is pleased to help DPS teach our children about water, where ours comes from, and the challenges that geography and climate present. Copies of the DVD will be distributed to sixth-grade science teachers in our service area, as well as to other local agencies. To order, call 303.628.6058