

South Platte Task Force Meeting

The first meeting of the special South Platte River Basin Task Force, appointed by Gov. Bill Ritter to seek possible solutions for water users in the South Platte River basin in northeastern Colorado, will be held on June 29th at the Union Colony Civic Center in Greeley.

The public and the media are encouraged to attend. The Task Force will hear public testimony and comment between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Gov. Ritter created the Task Force, with 23 voting members, after visiting Wiggins earlier this year to hear first-hand about the water crisis along the South Platte. This crisis was precipitated by, among other factors, the 2002 drought, which was one of the worst droughts in Colorado's history and had dramatic effects on water users in the South Platte River Basin. These effects included increased scrutiny of water court cases by other water users, increased water rights administration in the non-irrigation season because of reservoir calls, and increased cost and decreased availability of augmentation water. Those effects are among the many factors that have made it more difficult for some junior ground water users to be able to pump water.

The State of Colorado looks forward to revisiting these issues in order to determine whether there are any further solutions that the State can implement or help implement in order to bring relief to junior water users, without adversely impacting senior water right holders. The mission of the South Platte River Basin Task Force is to bring together a broad range of stakeholders to review the existing situation, identify the issues, and explore potential solutions.

The June 29th meeting in Greeley will start at 9:30 a.m. with a briefing by attorneys Jim Lochhead and Anne Castle, and Assistant State Engineer Dick Wolfe. All three are non-voting members of the Task Force.

The public is invited to provide comment and information to the Task Force between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. Because of time constraints, interested individuals and groups with shared concerns are encouraged to designate a representative to comment on their behalf. This will hopefully allow each person who wishes to present to the Task Force more time to speak.

A second Task Force meeting, which will be devoted entirely to public comment, will be held on July 16th, from 9 am to 5 pm, location TBA.

To sign up to speak either as a representative or an individual prior to June 29th, please contact Russ Zigler at 303-866-3556 or email Russ at Russ.Zigler@state.co.us. Please contact Russ before Noon on June 28th. Sign up sheets will also be available at the meeting. Written comments can be mailed to Russ at Executive Director's Office, 1313 Sherman, 7th Floor, Denver CO 80203 or emailed to Russ.Zigler@state.co.us.

The task force will make a final report to Gov. Ritter, legislative leaders and the chair of the legislature's Interim Committee on Water Resources by Sept. 30.

For additional information contact:

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