

Groundwater Administration and Sustainability in the Rio Grande Basin

Water Resources Review Committee

Alamosa, CO
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COLORADO
Division of Water Resources
Department of Natural Resources

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GROUNDWATER

- Approximately 6,000 large capacity wells
- Approximately 4,500 of those are active
- Vast majority are irrigation wells
- Water produced from both aquifers
- State Engineer attempted to promulgate Rules and Regulations in 1975. Attempt withdrawn in mid 1980's
- Currently developing new groundwater use rules in Division 3.

Why Groundwater Administration?

- Over-appropriation and over-use of water in the basin.
 - Basin Water Supply is Limited,
 - Injury to Senior Surface Water Rights,
 - Surface water and ground water resources are over-developed: there is more demand than sustainable (declining aquifers)
 - Ensure Compact Compliance

Scope of Rules

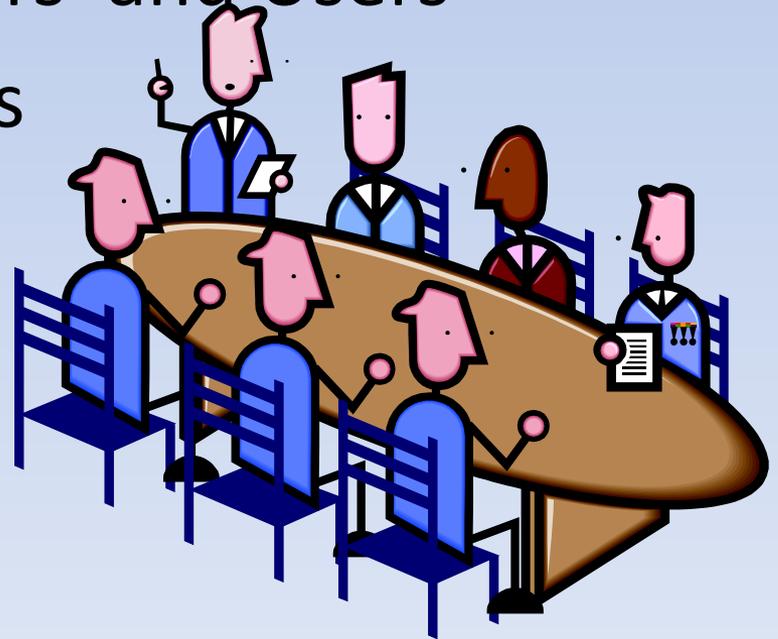
- Replace injurious depletions per 37-92-501 (4)(a) CRS
 - Maximum utilization
 - Sustainable aquifers
 - Aquifer fluctuations OK, artesian pressure limited
 - No expansion of use
 - Do not impact the Compact
- Establish an Irrigation Season
- Recognize Subdistricts(4)(c)

Options for Wells

- Replace Injurious Depletions
 - Augmentation Plans
 - Subdistricts
 - SWSPs (short term projects only)
- OR ...
 - Don't Pump

Why an Advisory Committee

- Local issues need local input
- Engineers, Administrators and Users
- Identify legal constraints
- Address concerns
- Education (both ways)



Rules Development

- RGDSS Model: **COMPLETED!**
- Response Functions: **COMPLETED!**
- Rules: **NEARLY COMPLETE**

Groundwater Use Rules

Rules are scheduled to be Promulgated within the coming month.

Timeline for Plans Once Rules are Effective (or when any objections are decided)

1. Subdistricts must file in court for approval of their subdistrict areas within one year
2. Groundwater Management Plan must be approved by State Engineer within one year of judicial approval of subdistrict
3. Annual Replacement Plan must be approved by State Engineer within one year of approval of Groundwater Management Plan
4. Augmentation plan applications must be filed in Water Court within two years then operate under SWSP until augmentation plan approved
5. Otherwise: Discontinue Non-Exempt Well Use



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