



Facts About HB 1278

In 2012 the Colorado Legislature passed HB 1278—a study of the interaction of the South Platte alluvial aquifer by the Colorado Water Institute (CWI) at Colorado State University (CSU). By December 31, 2013, CWI shall prepare and present to the general assembly a final report.

The Study is intended to:

1. Evaluate whether current laws and rules that guide water administration in the South Platte River Basin achieve the dual goals of protecting senior water rights and maximizing the beneficial use of both surface water and groundwater within the Basin.
2. Identify and delineate areas within the Basin adversely impacted by high groundwater levels and to conduct a feasibility-level evaluation of the causes of high groundwater levels in the affected area.
3. Provide information to use as a base for implementation of measures to mitigate adverse impacts in areas experiencing high groundwater levels.
4. Provide information to the General Assembly, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), and the State Engineer to facilitate the long-term sustainable use of the South Platte water supplies.

In addition, CWI shall evaluate and report its findings and conclusions regarding:

5. to what extent augmentation plans are preventing injury to other water rights holders or potentially causing over-augmentation of well depletions;
6. whether additional usage of the alluvial aquifers could be permitted in a manner consistent with protecting senior surface water rights; and
7. whether, and to what extent, the use of water in the basin could be improved or maximized by affording the state engineer additional authority to administer water rights while ensuring protection of senior surface water rights.

Study Tasks:

- Task 1. Data collection, organization and display
- Task 2. Groundwater mapping
- Task 3. Evaluation of existing groundwater level analysis conducted by USGS
- Task 4. Stakeholder involvement and public education

Project Team:

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Independent Scientific Panel:

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