



STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC INVITED TO COMMUNITY MEETINGS ABOUT THE SOUTH PLATTE WELLS ISSUE

Can thoughtful dialogue take precedent over polarized debate on a subject as contentious as the operation of alluvial wells in conjunction with surface water on the South Platte River? The Colorado Water Institute (CWI) at Colorado State University believes it can.

Directed by the Colorado Legislature in House Bill 12-1278 to study the issue, CWI will stage a series of community meetings in January to inform stakeholders and the public about its study and to encourage them to bring creative thinking to the issue.

Anyone interested in the issue can attend any of the meetings, regardless of where they live.

The meetings will be held:

January 8, 1:00—3:30 pm

Southwest Weld County Building, 4209 Weld County Rd 24, Longmont
(in conjunction with the South Platte Basin Roundtable Groundwater Committee)

January 14, 6:00—8:30 pm

Northeast Junior College Hays Student Center Ballroom, 100 College Avenue, Sterling

January 24, 6:00—8:30 pm

Valley High School, 1001 Birch Street, Gilcrest.

For more information about the community meetings, contact MaryLou Smith, Colorado Water Institute, Colorado State University 970-491-5899 or MaryLou.Smith@colostate.edu

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Fort Collins, (December 7, 2012) Can thoughtful dialogue take precedent over polarized debate on a subject as contentious as the operation of alluvial wells in conjunction with surface water on the South Platte River? The Colorado Water Institute (CWI) at Colorado State University believes it can.

Directed by the Colorado legislature in House Bill 12-1278 to study the issue, CWI will stage a series of community meetings in January to inform stakeholders and the public about its study and to encourage them to bring creative thinking to the issue. "Governor Hickenlooper recently touted Colorado as a state where the high altitude gives us the ability to tackle our problems through creative collaboration. We are going to take him up on the challenge," said Reagan Waskom, CWI director, the person responsible for the study.

Anyone interested in the issue can attend any of the meetings, regardless of where they live. The meetings will be held January 8, 1:00-3:30 pm, Southwest Weld County Building, 4209 Weld County Rd 24, Longmont; January 14, 6:00-8:30 pm, Hays Student Center Ballroom, Northeast Junior College, 100 College Avenue, Sterling; and January 24, 6:00-8:30 pm, Valley High School, 1001 Birch Street, Gilcrest.

Not since the 1968 study that preceded the landmark "Water Right Determination and Administration Act of 1969" has the legislature authorized such a comprehensive look at the impact of alluvial groundwater usage on the South Platte River", said Colorado Representative Randy Fischer, one of the sponsors of the bill authorizing the study. "Because of the critical roles that the South Platte river and its alluvial aquifer play in supporting the state's economy, it's time for the state to evaluate the relative success of augmentation plans authorized by the 1969 Act to meet the dual goals of protecting senior surface water diverters and maximizing the use of both groundwater and surface waters of the state."

Joe Frank and Robert Sakata, two state water leaders often seen to be on opposite sides of the issue, are hopeful the study can be an impetus for cooperation leading to collaborative solutions. Frank, general manager of the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District, has seen improvements for surface users at his end of the system as a result of augmentation. Sakata, who farms with his father near Brighton, has suffered from the requirements of well augmentation. The two have agreed to engage in a facilitated dialogue at the January meetings, in an experiment to see if those with different opinions can generate ideas for working through the conflict. The meetings will also provide objective background and information about the issues.

For more information about the community meetings and about the study, log onto the study website, <http://www.cwi.colostate.edu/southplatte/index.html>