

**FOR RELEASE:** Dec. 4, 2012

**CONTACTS:**

Lurline Underbrink-Curran, Grand County Manager  
970-725-3100, [lcurran@co.grand.co.us](mailto:lcurran@co.grand.co.us)

Jeff Drager, project manager, Northern Water  
970-622-2333, [jdrager@northernwater.org](mailto:jdrager@northernwater.org)

Mely Whiting, Legal Counsel, Trout Unlimited  
720-470-4758, [mwhiting@tu.org](mailto:mwhiting@tu.org)

## **Windy Gap Firming Gains Grand County Commission's Approval** *Permit, related agreements come out of collaboration to benefit Colorado River*

**HOT SULPHUR SPRINGS** – The Grand County Board of County Commissioners, after extensive public hearings, testimony and deliberation, approved a permit and related agreements for the Windy Gap Firming Project. Today's approval marks a major step forward in the permitting process for the Northern Water Municipal Subdistrict's proposal to build Chimney Hollow Reservoir west of Carter Lake near Loveland.

Chimney Hollow Reservoir will provide dedicated storage to improve the reliability of the Windy Gap Project, which diverts Colorado River water from Windy Gap Reservoir and moves it through Colorado-Big Thompson Project facilities for delivery to Northeastern Colorado. The Municipal Subdistrict is coordinating the firming project's permitting on behalf of 13 municipal entities.

By granting the permit, the Board of Commissioners established mitigation measures to offset impacts of the Windy Gap Firming Project in Grand County. Commissioners also secured environmental benefits to address current river conditions, and they provided a process that keeps the Municipal Subdistrict committed to working to improve and stabilize the Colorado River. The Municipal Subdistrict's Board of Directors is expected to formally accept the permit on Thursday.

"Grand County has secured protections for water quantity and quality in the Colorado River that never would have happened without the project and this permit," said Grand County Commission Chair Nancy Stuart.

The permit requires implementation of several other agreements that address additional Grand County and West Slope concerns, including the clarity in Grand Lake. The permit secures Northern Water's support for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to address the lake's clarity, an important issue for residents and visitors alike.

Grand County also gains access to up to 4,500 acre feet of Windy Gap water stored in Lake Granby for release to benefit aquatic life in the Colorado River, based on an agreement between Grand County, the Municipal Subdistrict, the Middle Park Water Conservancy District, the Colorado River District and the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments. This is in addition to more than 5,400 acre feet of water

that will be released each year to help endangered fish while also increasing flows in the Colorado River between Grand County and Grand Junction.

The permit advances another agreement, drafted in cooperation with Trout Unlimited and the Upper Colorado River Alliance of landowners, that addresses the potential construction of a bypass through or around Windy Gap Reservoir in order to improve river habitats. The Municipal Subdistrict committed \$2 million toward construction as well as ongoing maintenance of facilities for a bypass that will be built if studies show it would benefit habitat conditions in the Colorado River.

“The permit and bypass agreement are the product of good faith negotiation and compromise,” said Mely Whiting, legal counsel for Trout Unlimited. “The subdistrict and project participants are to be commended for their efforts to address our concerns and do the right thing for the river.”

When he voted to approve the county permit conditions, Grand County Commissioner James Newberry said, “It is one thing to know the right thing to do, but it is entirely another to have the guts and conviction to make it happen. We just did that for the future of Grand County.”

Jeff Drager, Northern Water’s project manager, said, “The permit conditions, along with the benefits they will provide to the Colorado River, demonstrate a great deal of dedication and commitment from the 13 firming project participants to address Grand County’s concerns.”

The participants – 10 cities, two rural water districts and a power provider – are relying upon the proposed Chimney Hollow Reservoir to help meet their growing needs. The municipal water providers are expected to serve about 825,000 residents by 2050. The firming project will increase their supplies and add flexibility to their operations.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is expected to issue a final decision on the firming project in 2013.

###