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C-BT WATER AVAILABILITY INCREASES BY 10 PERCENT **Factors include dry-year forecast, below-average reservoirs, water users' needs**

BERTHOUD – Citing the need to balance drought-generated water demands with the importance of maintaining future reservoir supplies, the Northern Water Board of Directors voted today increase the Colorado-Big Thompson Project quota allocation to 60 percent.

The approval increased available C-BT water supplies by 10 percent, or 31,000 acre feet, from the initial quota set in November. Directors based their decision on a trifecta of below-average conditions: snowpack, precipitation and available water supplies within the C-BT Project. All three impact available water supplies for the coming year.

The board considered input from many farmers and municipal water providers, demonstrating the complex balance directors face when setting the quota. C-BT supplements other sources of water for more than 30 cities and towns, 120 agricultural irrigation companies, various industries and other water users within Northern Water's 1.6 million acres.

Directors also considered streamflow forecasts, which are estimated to be two-thirds or less than average. Snowpack in watersheds integral to C-BT inflow is significantly below average for this time of year, at 76 percent in the Upper Colorado River Basin and 71 percent in South Platte River tributaries. To add to that, the year's precipitation within Northern Water's boundaries is sitting at 80 percent of the historical average. And storage in C-BT reservoirs is 27 percent below normal.

Directors said they approved the 10 percent increase because it offers additional supplies and flexibility for all types of water users, but will still help keep water in reservoirs for next year.

Although many farmers and ranchers asked for higher quotas than municipal water providers, this year's quota decision comes to a simple formula, said Director Jerry Winters from Weld County.

"It's not as much of an agricultural versus municipal issue, it's a situation where we don't have any water. If I spend my money and I'm broke that's not good financial management. It's the same with water," Winters said.

Director Bill Emslie from Larimer County also stressed that prudent quota-setting includes a range of considerations.

"This is a decision that needs to have balance between demand and availability, as well as a consideration of the facts," Emslie said. "We are all in this together, and we need to find middle ground."

Directors have the option to increase the 2013 quota in subsequent meetings.

To learn more about C-BT quota and see historical decisions from 1957 to now, visit www.northernwater.org and click on "Allottee Info" then "C-BT Quota" in the tab bars.

About Northern Water

Northern Water is a public agency created in 1937 to contract with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to build the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, which collects water on the West Slope and delivers it to the East Slope through a 13-mile tunnel that runs underneath Rocky Mountain National Park. Northern Water's boundaries encompass portions of eight counties, 640,000 irrigated acres and a population of about 860,000 people. For more information, visit www.northernwater.org.

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