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Reclamation Signs Record of Decision for Windy Gap Firming Project in North Central Colorado

BILLINGS, Mont. – Today, the Bureau of Reclamation’s Great Plains Regional Director Michael J. Ryan signed the Record of Decision, contract and associated documents, for the Windy Gap Firming Project, located southwest of Loveland, Colo.

“The Windy Gap Firming Project is an exceptional example of the federal government working with our partners to get big things done,” said Ryan. “This project represents an immense effort from a diverse group of stakeholders who pulled together and created a workable project that provides benefits to the people of Colorado and the nation.”

The signing of the ROD culminates a years-long effort by multiple water providers to increase the reliability of, or “firm,” the Windy Gap Project water supply, increasing reliable annual yield from zero to approximately 26,000 acre-feet.

“This is an important milestone for the Windy Gap Participants who have worked tirelessly over many years to make today a reality,” said Eric Wilkinson, General Manager for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. “Today the development and construction of the Windy Gap Firming Project is one very significant step closer to reality. Thanks go out to all those who negotiated in good faith over the last several years to develop a number of agreements that form the foundation for the documents being signed today.”

The project potentially entails construction of a 90,000 acre-foot water storage reservoir, Chimney Hollow, south of Flatiron Reservoir on the East Slope, to provide more reliable water deliveries to Colorado’s Front Range communities and industry. The construction of Chimney Hollow Reservoir will also provide additional recreational opportunities that would be developed and managed by Larimer County.

“The process outcome is what all future water projects should be based on,” the Grand County Commissioners said in a statement. “We believe that consultation with Grand County during the 2014 contract negotiations is an indication of Reclamation’s commitment to open decision-making on matters involving operations of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project.”

Reclamation, along with Northern Water Conservancy District and Northern Water’s Municipal Subdistrict, have negotiated a contract allowing the Subdistrict to use excess, or unused, capacity



in Reclamation's Colorado-Big Thompson Project for Windy Gap Project water. New connections between Chimney Hollow Reservoir and C-BT Project facilities would allow water delivery to participants using existing C-BT infrastructure. Colorado-Big Thompson Project water would also be "prepositioned" in the Subdistrict's Chimney Hollow Reservoir to help improve the reliability of Windy Gap Project water deliveries. Total allowable C-BT Project storage or yield would not change.

The estimated total construction cost for Chimney Hollow Reservoir and associated facilities is \$223 million (in 2005 dollars) for the dam, reservoir, appurtenances and conveyance facilities. It is estimated that Chimney Hollow could be operational in five to seven years.

To view the Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement and other associated documents, please visit: http://www.usbr.gov/gp/eca/nepa/windy_gap.html.

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