

1962 report

Written by JAW

I N T R O D U C T I O N

TO: His Excellency, Stephen L. R. McNichols, Governor
State of Colorado

The following report of the State Engineer (Division of Water Resources) is herewith filed in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 147, Article 11, Section 14, Colorado Revised Statutes 1953, and covers the activities of this Department for the Calendar Year 1962, the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1962, and the Water or Hydrographic Year ending September 30, 1962.

Although printing of the report of the State Engineer is required by Statute, none has been printed since 1944, since no funds were appropriated for that purpose.

State Engineer

CHAPTER II

ADMINISTRATION - GENERAL

Following the fiscal record changes by the Department in 1961, further improvement in the record system was sought; and, as a consequence, the services of the State Data Processing Center were employed. While our experience with this new system is very limited, we feel that progress is being made and that we may look forward to a more accurate and comprehensive set of records, although the cost is more than originally anticipated.

Administration of the water rights and the laws appertaining thereto is the principal duty of the Department, as set forth in Chapter 147 of the Colorado Revised Statutes 1953. We are also bound by many Court decisions setting for th rulings on various cases which arise and often require judicial interpretation. The State Engineer, in many cases, is able to settle them without the cost and delay of court action, although the right of appeal to the courts from the decision of the State Engineer is always available. Considerable time is spent by the State Engineer and his legal advisors on the legal phases of water administration, and this time-consuming duty appears to be increasing.

All except two meetings of the Water Conservation Board were attended as were all meetings of the Missouri River Main Stem Reservoir Coordinating Committee. The Deputy State Engineer represented the State Engineer at some of the meetings referred to above. The State Engineer attended the National Rivers and Harbors Congress in Washington, D. C. as a delegate from Colorado, and we feel that the support which Colorado received from the

Projects Committee and others of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress aided materially in obtaining favorable action on the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project which had long been delayed by Congressional opposition.

The Annual Convention of the Association of Western State Engineers was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, and was well attended. There were many high ranking Federal Officials as well as other eminent-people who delivered very interesting addresses at the Convention. The State Engineer of Colorado was elected to serve as President of the Association for the ensuing year, this being only the second time in the 35-year history of the Association that Colorado has been so honored.

During the year, there were 214 claims to water processed for filing in the State Engineer's Office; also, 50 sets of Plans and Specifications for the construction of reservoir dams were examined and approved. A separate section on dams constitutes a part of this report.

There were 6466 ditches and reservoirs operating during the year which carried 9,134,102 acre feet of water to 3,523,878 acres of land.

The Department received and processed for filing 851 Livestock Water Tank Applications during the year, of which about one-third were fee exempt filed by the U. S. Forest Department.

Attention is again called to the inadequate fee of \$1.00 as set forth in the law, and we suggest that the fee be raised to at least \$10.00. The processing and filing of the Livestock Water Tank Applications, together with the necessary correspondence attendant thereto, requires considerable time of at least two

employees; and, as this activity shows no sign of abatement, we recommend that insofar as expedient the program be required to carry its own weight.

I also feel that the Department should be afforded ample funds to employ suitable personnel to properly discharge the duties and obligations incumbent upon the administration.

General descriptions of the Department and of the various Sections thereof are to be found in the Report of 1961, and it appears unnecessary to repeat them in this report.

The meetings of the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors were attended, the State Engineer being ex-officio Secretary of this Board. A separate report of their activities is to be found in the Roster printed by the Board each year.

CHAPTER III

WATER SUPPLY - SEASONAL AND CROP CONDITIONS

The year of 1962 was plagued with the usual number of complaints, although in general the water supply was quite adequate during the first half of the year, during which time storage water was a material factor. However, a very dry, late summer, fall, and winter followed, which will have a very detrimental effect on water supplies for 1963 unless above-normal precipitation occurs in the spring of 1963.

The precipitation at the Denver Weather Bureau Station during 1962 was only about 50% of normal, and there was very little "carry-over reservoir storage water." For the second consecutive year, there was very little water stored in John Martin Reservoir located on the Arkansas River, and the prospects for next year are no better.

Crop conditions in most parts of the state were quite favorable, despite the late year drought; but some areas suffered wind and hail damage. Fortunately, these were not extensive, and in general a good crop return was realized.

More detailed reports as to the various sections of the state may be found in the reports of the several Division Engineers which are included herewith and form a part of this report.

CHAPTER V

ADMINISTRATION OF INTERSTATE RIVER COMPACTS

Administration of the several interstate compacts with which this Department is charged proceeded in a normal though not encouraging manner. The not unusual questions arose on the LaPlata River (Colorado-New Mexico Compact) and the State Engineer was called upon to resolve the differences in conjunction with the State Engineer of New Mexico. An amicable settlement was reached after a tour of the area and an exchange of letters.

Some difficulty arose during the latter part of the irrigation season in obtaining proper distribution of the waters of Costilla Creek as set forth in the Costilla Creek Compact; and, as a consequence, some of the Colorado water users did not receive the water to which they were entitled. It is anticipated that it will be necessary to amend the Costilla Creek Compact in order to deliver the water to the proper water users. Such an amendment is being prepared for presentation to the Legislatures of New Mexico and Colorado.

Rio Grande Compact

Colorado was unable to meet its obligation to deliver waters of the Rio Grande to New Mexico and Texas, and the total deficit has now reached 712,400 acre feet as of December 13, 1962. A new plan to build a drainage pumping system in the "sump" area of the San Luis Valley in order to salvage water for delivery to the Rio Grande has been proposed, but there is strong opposition to this plan by the local residents as they are fearful that operation of such system would materially affect their water supply.

The report on the drainage system by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation indicates an annual salvage of about 100,000 acre feet of water which is being lost by transpiration and evaporation. For the past ten years, the Colorado deficit has averaged about 60,000 acre feet per annum. From the above figures, it appears that the recovery and delivery of the waters from the "sump" area would offset the annual Colorado deficit and afford some credit on the accrued indebtedness.

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The program will be completed by the Bureau and being continued...