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CONFERENCE REPORT

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ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IN COLORADO

At the Colorado Bar Association, Taryn Hutchins-Cabibi, a Drought and Climate Change Technical Specialist with the Colorado Water Conservation Board ("CWCB"), discussed the potential impacts of climate change on water in Colorado and what the CWCB is doing to address these issues. In recent years, the CWCB has taken a more active role in understanding how climate change could influence Colorado's water resources. Focusing on long-term water supply planning, Hutchins-Cabibi gave a detailed overview of some of the CWCB's specific climate-related initiatives.

In 2008, the CWCB commissioned a report entitled *Climate Change in Colorado: A Synthesis to Support Water Resource Management and Adaptation* ("Synthesis Report"). The Synthesis Report summarizes climate change science in relation to Colorado's water supply and provides a basis for further study of climate change impacts on water resources. The Synthesis Report also examines how climate change could affect temperature and precipitation in Colorado. The Synthesis Report analyses climate models that project Colorado's climate will continue to warm, with summer temperatures increasing more than winter temperatures. This shift may have significant implications for water management, as temperature can greatly influence water availability. Although, as of 2008, only 27% of Colorado municipal water suppliers had considered climate change impacts on long term water supply planning, this figure is expected to increase.

Next, Hutchins-Cabibi discussed the ongoing Colorado River Water Availability Study ("CRWAS"). The CWCB is conducting the CRWAS as a multi-phase study. Phase one looked at how much water is available for new development in the Colorado River Basin under existing water use practices. Phase two will consider existing uses and how water demand may change in the future.

Hutchins-Cabibi then discussed the Colorado Drought Mitigation and Response Plan ("Drought Plan"). The CWCB revised the Drought Plan in 2010 in compliance with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements. The Drought Plan outlines how Colorado will respond to, and mitigate for, drought. The Drought Plan also includes a vulnerability assessment that quantitatively and qualitatively examines how various sectors (for example, tourism and agriculture) may be susceptible to drought impacts. As part of this vulnerability assessment, the

Plan also examines climate change and what drought could look like in the future, considering both duration and intensity of drought spells. The CWCB also developed a series of tools to aid local entities in developing their own drought management plans.

Next, Hutchins-Cabibi discussed the Joint Front Range Climate Change Vulnerability Study ("Front Range Study"). The CWCB is collaborating with multiple Front Range water providers and others to examine potential climate change effects on water supplies. Hutchins-Cabibi spoke about the benefits of a regional approach realized through communication, coordination, collaboration, resources, and scale, and also emphasized that pooled resources made the Front Range Study possible. One of the goals of the Front Range Study was to determine streamflow sensitivity to projected changes in temperature and precipitation. The results of the Front Range Study will be published by the Water Research Foundation soon.

Hutchins-Cabibi's final topic was the Colorado Climate Preparedness Project ("CCPP"), a statewide effort to assist Colorado in continuing to prepare itself for climate variability and change by providing a catalog of climate vulnerabilities in relation to current activities. The CCPP consists of (i) a report outlining research findings and recommendations; and (ii) a searchable database of active adaptation efforts already underway in Colorado, grouped into four sections: organizations, people, projects, and products. The CCPP focuses on five sectors that have been identified as particularly sensitive to the impacts of climate change and climate variability: water; wildlife, ecosystems, and forests; electricity; agriculture; and climate-sensitive tourism and outdoor recreation. It also focuses on what informational gaps need to be filled.

The Synthesis Report, a draft of phase one of the CRWAS, the Drought Plan, and the CCPP Final Report are publicly available on the CWCB's website. For more detailed information, please go to http://cwcb.state.co.us/.

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