

C o l o r a d o

Department of Natural Resources News

Executive Director's Office 1313 Sherman St., Room 718, Denver, CO 80203 (303) 866-3311

Dear Friend:

Happy New Year! The Colorado Department of Natural Resources is looking forward to a productive year in the areas of wildlife, parks, state lands, forestry, water, oil and gas, mining and minerals, and other related areas. For those of you who are receiving your first newsletter, its purpose is to inform you, a key leader in your community, of the issues surrounding natural resources. Your feedback, comments or suggestions are welcome.

Greg E. Walcher
Executive Director, DNR

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Endangered Species Director Named

Tom Blickensderfer has been appointed Director of the Department of Natural Resources' endangered species program. Tom, a retired Colorado State Senator, will chair and coordinate a multi-department management team including members from Natural Resources, Agriculture, Transportation, Wildlife and Public Health and Environment Departments. He will research and develop policy concerning endangered species and habitat issues, which is critical to Colorado's effort to recover species.

Platte River Cooperative Agreement Extended

Governor Owens recently agreed to extend the Platte River Cooperative Agreement for endangered species along the central Platte River for an additional two-and-a-half years (with an additional six months if necessary). This Cooperative Agreement ensures that water providers in Wyoming, Nebraska and Colorado can continue to provide drinking water, irrigation and power supplies while improving the habitat for the endangered least tern, piping plover, pallid sturgeon and whooping crane.

The extension will: (1) allow the States to independently review scientific assumptions relied upon by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; (2) provide additional time for Wyoming and Nebraska to develop plans to mitigate for future depletions; (3) allow Colorado to complete its plan to mitigate for future depletions in the North Platte basin; and (4) provide time for the federal government to work with the States on how to offset federal depletions including those from the management of U.S. Forest Service lands.

Colorado River Alternates Named

Governor Owens recently named Mr. Scott Balcomb, of Balcomb and Green, and Mr. Rod Kuharich, Director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, as alternates to Greg Walcher on Colorado River negotiations with the seven basin states. California recently entered into an historic agreement to limit her use of Colorado River water to her entitled share of 4.4 million acre feet. That's a reduction of 800,000 acre feet for California, over the next 15 years!

Colorado's Expertise on Boundary River Management Sought by Central Asian Republics

Recently, the State Engineer and Director of the Division of Water Resources, Hal Simpson and his staff, internationally recognized water experts, hosted a delegation from several Asian Republics. Colorado shared its expertise in water resource engineering, method of water allocation, and administration of interstate river compacts. The cabinet-level officials came from former republics of the Soviet Union—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The concern is an issue of massive water diversions for agriculture use causing inequitably distributed streamflows among neighboring countries. The streamflows and resultant conflicts could lead to an international conflict so, hopefully, Water Resources helped them find a balance between the Republics' need to grow food and establishing principles of fairness and sustainability.

Governor Owens Proposes Better Staffing for State Parks

The number one priority in the Department of Natural Resources' FY 2001-02 budget is a request for 43.8 new FTE for Colorado State Parks. This request also ranks as one of Governor Owens' top budget priorities: "...to take care of our state parks, to ensure that they are clean, safe and welcoming to all citizens."

In 1999, Colorado State Parks, taking into account the Joint Budget Committee's expressed desire for long-term planning, initiated a study by KPMG to provide an objective third party review of State Parks staffing. Colorado State Parks annually hosts over 10 million visitors and the numbers are climbing, up 52% in the past 20 years KPMG found that Colorado State Parks is significantly understaffed when

compared to other park systems and the private sector. These inappropriate staffing levels present risks in the State Parks system including: loss of natural resource quality and value, inadequate public safety, abnormal asset depreciation, improper management, and inconsistent provision of services.

Colorado State Parks will use the new positions to greatly improve customer service and management of the park system. Nearly all of the new employees will be working on the ground, in the park as tourist assistants, resource technicians and park rangers.

The cost of this initiative will be \$1.231 million. State Parks has committed to funding this proposal through internal budget reallocation using cash funds and not state tax dollars.

Predator Management Advisory Committee Recommends Management Experiment

The Predator Management Advisory Committee has completed its work and delivered a report to the Wildlife commission. The Committee was tasked with reviewing DOW's predator management plans and recommending revisions if appropriate. The members' guiding principle was that any management program must be based on sound science in order to be defensible and sustainable. The Committee found that the Division of Wildlife's management plans for bears and lions have adequate mechanisms in place to properly manage populations.

The Division's Coyote Management Plan was also subjected to intense scrutiny. The Committee was specifically interested in determining the impact that coyotes and other predators have on prey populations. It became clear early on in the process that data regarding predator impacts on other wildlife is very limited. That being the case, the committee recommended that the

Division engage in a carefully controlled study to determine whether or not predator control is possible, effective, and economical, and if it has any affect on the populations of other wildlife.

The Wildlife Commission accepted the Committee's recommendations and instructed Division staff to draft a plan for review at their January meeting. Contrary to what some newspapers have reported, the plan will not include an aerial gunning component and no control efforts will be instituted on National Conservation Areas in the units proposed for study.

Division Plans to Streamline Licensing System

The Colorado Outdoor Recreation Information System, or CORIS, provides a database of nearly 2.2 million hunters and anglers who purchase Colorado recreational licenses. Last year, Division managers began a complicated effort to upgrade CORIS to what's called a point-of-sale system. Such a system will allow for the collection of customer information, will validate the sale of licenses, and then print licenses on demand at DOW licensing agent locations across the state.

Stakeholders, including Division managers, license agents, hunters and anglers, and guides and outfitters, along with business consultants, spent much of the past year analyzing the agency's existing business procedures and identifying needs associated with the Division's future licensing processes. Through this effort, the DOW decided to focus on four main goals: 1) deliver more efficient and timely service to customers, 2) become more responsive and ready to adapt to changing business environments and expand services, 3) improve business processes for agents, as well as interactions with them, and 4) leverage DOW resources to use funds wisely.

Many of the details of this total licensing project (TLP) remain to be worked out. One alternative, for example, could employ a system comparable to the credit card verification systems common in most retail outlets to provide the kind of e-business solutions needed for the agency's future licensing processes. The expectation is that whatever technology is used, TLP will provide for electronic processing, rather than paper-based, manual licensing. That will reduce costs for license agents since they will no longer have to maintain an inventory of licenses. Under the new system, license agents may also be able to sell leftover hunting licenses, making acquiring those licenses more convenient for hunters. Many licenses will even be available over the Internet through home computers.

Also under a new licensing system, field officers will be able to retrieve up-to-the-minute information to help them better manage game and habitat. Biologists will be able to get harvest information and other user-based survey data much sooner. And hunters and anglers will have even easier access to information about their dealings with the Division. The new system should also allow wildlife policy makers to act with fewer restrictions due to technological limitations.

Present plans call for the release of a request for proposals to potential vendors in June 2001 with full implementation of the new system, including the purchase of licenses through the Internet, by March, 2003.

Balancing the Rights of Landowners, Environment, and Oil and Gas Operators Legislation Drafted

After months of development, the DNR oil and gas legislative package is ready to be introduced in the upcoming legislative session. The goal of this package is to strike a balance between landowners and oil and gas companies without infringing on the private property rights of either. Passage of

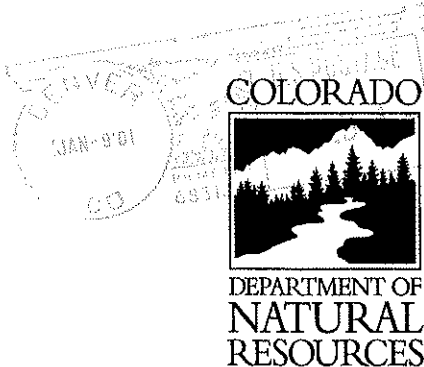
the three bills comprising the legislative package will be one of the Department's top priorities in the coming months. The first bill, sponsored by Representative Mark Larson (R-Cortez) and Senator Jim Dyer (D-Durango), will provide fair compensation to landowners for the impacts of oil and gas drilling on their property. The second bill, sponsored by Representative Gregg Rippey (R-Rifle) and Senator Jim Dyer (D-Durango), will facilitate the flow of information between surface owners and mineral owners, thereby reducing the potential for conflicts. The third bill, sponsored by Representative Shawn Mitchell (R-Broomfield) and Senator Jim Dyer (D-Durango), will encourage the recording of mineral rights in county records by providing that mineral rights that have been abandoned for 20 years may be reclaimed by surface owners.

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