



COLORADO

[Colorado Tries to Set Straight Flood Plain Confusion](#)

A flood plain mitigation plan proposed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board is causing a lot of confusion between what the plan proposes and what several northern Colorado government officials heard. Greeley Tribune; 4/28/10

[In This Political Battle, a River Runs Through It](#)

In a clash that some lawmakers have dubbed "Row v. Wade," rafters and anglers are squaring off over rights to prized Colorado waterways. The debate has spilled into the state legislature and inspired at least 24 citizen-sponsored ballot initiatives. The core question: Do paddlers have an absolute right to float down any river in the state, even rivers that run through private property reserved for fly-fishing? Over the years, rafters have accused ornery landowners of stringing barbed wire across rivers to topple them. Landowners, in turn, accuse renegade rafters of making crude gestures as they float by and shouting what, in this context, amounts to an obscenity: "No one can own a river!" Wall Street Journal; 4/8/10

[Governor Hopes to Settle Rafting Rift](#)

A bill that pits river rafters against private property owners has run aground, but Gov. Bill Ritter said Monday that efforts are afoot to move the controversy downstream before it crowds the November ballot. Ritter has met with rafting interests and landowners hoping to broker a compromise "so this doesn't become some kind of ballot Armageddon." Since the Senate amended HB1188 last month, it has been a fixture on the House calendar with no action. The original bill sought to clarify that licensed river outfitters have the right to float through rivers that cross private land. In that form, it passed the House. But in the Senate, amendments extended the courtesy to all river users, and ultimately tabled the question. Pueblo Chieftain; 4/13/10

[Denver Water Announces New CEO/Manager](#)

The Denver Board of Water Commissioners has selected Jim Lochhead to be the next CEO/Manager of Denver Water. Lochhead currently is a lead shareholder at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP, where he has negotiated many complex transactions regarding water and other natural resources in the Rocky Mountain West. He has a bachelor's degree in environmental biology and a law degree from the University of Colorado. Lochhead began his career practicing water law in Glenwood Springs in the early 1980s. He served as the executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources under Gov. Roy Romer from 1994 to 1998. Denver Water; 4/12/10

[Ground Water Well Rights Bill Finalized](#)

Gov. Bill Ritter has signed SB 52, which makes it clear that a final permit for ground water wells in a designated ground water basin is final. Under the bill, the Ground Water Commission, which manages the eight designated basins along the Eastern Plains and the Front Range, could revise a basin's boundaries to remove previously-included areas only if the area does not include wells for which final permits have been issued. The bill includes an exception for current legal cases winding through the courts, a nod to the 2006 Gallegos v. Colorado Ground Water Commission case where the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that a surface water rights holder who has senior water rights can challenge the permit of a ground water well in a designated basin if the senior water rights holder can prove their surface water rights are being affected. Sterling Journal-Advocate; 4/9/10

[Colorado Anglers Hooked on Preserving Access to Big Thompson River](#)

More than three decades have passed since a rain-swollen Big Thompson River wiped out homes and lives in a flood that ranks as one of the state's worst natural disasters. It also produced a turf fight over a hodgepodge of parcels left behind by the July 31, 1976, flood, pitting local property owners against anglers who want access to some of the best rainbow trout habitats in the state. After a year of dickering, a truce has been reached over one chunk of land near Drake, with both sides saying they got close to what they wanted. The deal allows anglers — as well as other members of the public — access to an 800-foot stretch of the Big Thompson near the Hayden subdivision. The public will be able to use both sides of the river without trespassing on private property. Under the new deal, property owners will gain more land — although none of the parcels could be described as enormous. Denver Post; 4/11/10

[Defunct Uranium Mine Contaminating Groundwater Near Reservoir](#)

A defunct uranium mine in Jefferson County is contaminating groundwater near a reservoir, but government regulators and mine executives have yet to settle on a plan for cleanup. Uranium concentrations in groundwater 30 feet beneath the brim of the Schwartzwalder Mine exceed the human health standard for uranium by more than 1,000 times, according to state records reviewed Thursday. Unhealthy concentrations also were detected in Ralston Creek, which eventually enters Denver Water's Ralston Reservoir. The reservoir supplies water to Denver and Arvada. Denver Water managers say no uranium contamination has entered the drinking-water supply. Denver Post; 4/16/10

[Container Tax Could be Headed to the Ballot](#)

Voters could be asked in November to decide if the state should put a new tax on nonalcoholic beverage containers to fund water programs and projects. The plan would generate about \$110 million annually, with another \$4 million for stores and distributors collecting the fees, according to an estimate by the Colorado Legislative Council. Pueblo Chieftain; 4/27/10

[Coloradoans Still Value Environment](#)

Money may be scarce in this recession, but Coloradans still like to climb fourteeners; they still visit national parks; and they still value a clean environment. That's the conclusion of a CSU study of the impacts of the faltering economy on Coloradans' environmental values. The Fort Collins Coloradoan; 4/25/10

[Water Sale Impacts Choke Rural Communities](#)

The cumulative impacts of water sales to cities from farms are greater than traditional economic models show, a new study on rural "tipping points" claims. A draft report by Honey Creek Resources looked at what happened to Crowley County after water transfers in the 1970s and 1980s decreased irrigated crop land to 7,000 acres from 42,000 acres in order to find a "tipping point" that caused local businesses to close. Pueblo Chieftain; 4/25/10

WESTERN U.S.

[Kansas Water Policy's Drift](#)

Josh Svaty placed a plan for groundbreaking reform of Kansas water law into the stream of legislative business at the Capitol. As secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture and a former House member, Svaty assumed establishment of a 15th distinct beneficial use of a water right — conservation — would be embraced by folks who no longer wanted to pump water simply to avoid a competitor's claim of abandonment. For years, some farmers and ranchers have needlessly diverted water from rivers and streams to comply with a mandate that holders of a Kansas water right actively make use of the privilege. The idea from Svaty was to grant, for the first time in Kansas, legal status to conservation and put an end to the "use it or lose it" philosophy. "This is a pretty big shift," Svaty said. "It's time that we progress toward a system of management that allows producers wanting to conserve to have that opportunity." Topeka Capital-Journal; 4/10/10

[Iconic Status Can't Spare Grand Canyon From Myriad Threats](#)

From the rim, the Grand Canyon, 15 miles wide at its most expansive and a mile deep, looks like one of the wildest, most timeless places on earth. Ponderosa pines and juniper trees girdle its plateaus, giving way to canyon walls of ancient sandstone, shale and granite, chiseled over millennia by the Colorado River below, wending through the canyon's depths along the same general course it has followed for thousands of years. But a closer look reveals a canyon ecosystem that has been deeply altered by human forces. And today, the park is facing an unprecedented convergence of threats, the long-term effects of which are largely unknown. New York Times; 4/19/10

[Harvesting Oregon's Bumper Crop — Rain](#)

Rainwater is abundant in the Portland area during the winter and spring, but summer is another story. Just when homeowners and farmers need water the most, Mother Nature gets skimpy. That's one reason Clair Klock is pushing an ancient practice: rainwater harvesting. "Why are we using chlorinated, treated water for watering our plants and yards and flushing our toilets, when we could get 70 percent of the water from rain captured from the roof?" wonders Klock, senior resource conservationist for the Clackamas County Soil and Water Conservation District. Whether it's a 55-gallon rain barrel in the back yard or a 5,000-gallon tank on the farm, "the principles are the same," Klock says. "The rain is captured from the roof with downspouts." A typical 1,000-square-foot roof in the Portland area can capture 30,000 gallons of rainwater a year, he says. With more people moving into the Portland area, and agriculture a major industry in the Willamette Valley, the amount of available ground water is diminishing. Portland Tribune; 4/15/10

NATIONAL

[Oberstar Introduces America's Commitment to Clean Water Act](#)

Congressman Jim Oberstar today introduced a bill that would restore the authority of the Clean Water Act after the law was "handcuffed" by U.S. Supreme Court decisions. America's Commitment to Clean Water Act (H.R. 5088) will reverse two decisions the high court made in 2001 and 2006 that have thrown the nation's clean water programs into turmoil. The rulings cut back on the authority of the Clean Water Act to regulate lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands across the U.S and created confusion and uncertainty for communities, developers, and agricultural interests. They also placed at risk the nation's ability to restore, protect, and maintain water quality and the water-related environment. Oberstar Web site; 4/21/10

['Controlled Burn' Considered for Gulf Oil Spill](#)

With a vast oil slick now within only 20 miles of the ecologically fragile Louisiana coastline, Coast Guard officials said they were considering a "controlled burn" of the petroleum on the surface of the Gulf of Mexico. New York Times, 4/27/10

[A Containable Accident, Then Suddenly a Crisis](#)

Suddenly, everything changed. For days, as an oil spill spread in the Gulf of Mexico, BP assured the government the plume was manageable, not catastrophic. Federal authorities were content to let the company handle the mess while keeping an eye on the operation. But then government scientists realized the leak was five times larger than they had been led to believe. The pivot point had come Wednesday night, at a news conference at an oil research center in the tiny community of Robert, La. Associated Press, 4/30/10

[Invasive Saltcedar and Russian Olive Trees Consume Similar Amounts of Water as Native Cottonwoods and Willows, Wildlife Effects Mixed](#)

In a U.S. Geological Survey report requested by Congress and released on April 29th, scientists conducted a review of the scientific literature to assess the existing state of the science on the distribution and spread, water consumption, and control methods for saltcedar (also called tamarisk) and Russian olive. They also assessed the considerations related to wildlife use and the challenges associated with revegetation and restoration following control efforts. U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey; 4/29/10 The full report, [USGS Scientific Investigations Report 2009-5247](#), is available online along with [USGS Fact Sheet 2009-3110](#) that summarizes the findings.

[EPA Launches Online Map Tracking Enforcement Actions in Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched an online map that shows the locations of federal air and water enforcement actions in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The map is part of EPA's increased focus on enforcement of federal pollution laws in the Chesapeake Bay

region, including a new strategy of targeting geographic areas and pollution sources contributing the greatest amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to streams, creeks, rivers and the bay. Improving water quality is one of EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson's top priorities. EPA Press Release; 4/28/10.

[American Industry's Thirst for Water: First Study of Its Kind in 30 Years](#)

How many gallons of water does it take to produce \$1 worth of sugar, dog and cat food, or milk? The answers appear in the first comprehensive study in 30 years documenting American industry's thirst for this precious resource. The study, which could lead to better ways to conserve water, is in ACS' Environmental Science & Technology, a semi-monthly journal. Chris Hendrickson and colleagues note in the new study that industry (including agriculture) long has been recognized as the biggest consumer of water in the United States. However, estimates of water consumption on an industry-by-industry basis are incomplete and outdated, with the last figures from the U.S. Census Bureau dating to 1982. Science Daily; 4/12/10

[Panel Explores Impact of Marcellus Drilling on Water Supplies](#)

Environmental, industry and elected leaders said Wednesday in Indiana that while the Marcellus shale formation and its vast reserve of natural gas holds great economic benefits for Pennsylvania, the gas should not be captured at the cost of the state's water supplies and other natural resources. Rep. Dave Reed, R-Indiana, hosted a public hearing of the House Republican Policy Committee to hear testimony from experts on how to safely use and treat the millions of gallons of water needed to drill each well into the Marcellus formation. Reed told the audience at the Oak Place Community Center that legislators are looking for suggestions on how to protect Pennsylvania's water supplies as Marcellus drilling ramps up. Indiana Gazette; 4/8/10

[New York Moves to Classify and Control Invasive Species](#)

Zebra mussels, Sirex wood wasps and Eurasian milfoil, snakehead fish and giant hogweed - these are among the non-native species invading New York state. Now state officials are proposing a system that could help control invasive species, one of the state's fastest growing environmental threats. For the first time, the state of New York would classify non-native plants and animals to help prevent the spread of these invasives through waterways, forests and farmlands. The new proposal comes from the state Invasive Species Council, a group of nine state agencies co-led by the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Agriculture and Markets. Ecofactory; 4/14/10

[Water Debate: Public vs. Private?](#)

If Homer Glen residents are wondering what breaking ties with Illinois American Water would mean, it might help to look 2,000 miles west. Nearly two years ago, the tiny community of Felton, Calif., used the power of eminent domain to take its water system from California American Water and started running it through a public water district. With Homer Glen now looking to do something similar through a partnership with a few other Will County towns, Illinois American has peppered mailboxes with mailings singling out Felton as an example of public control gone wrong. Sun Times Media; 4/16/10

[South Dakota Increases Drinking Water Supply with GE](#)

The Mid-Dakota Rural Water System faced a major challenge when it decided to increase the water treatment capacity at its plant north of Pierre, S.D. Due to the poor soil conditions at the site, expanding the operations with conventional treatment technology was not feasible. The water district turned to GE's ZeeWeed* advanced filtration technology for a solution. The ZeeWeed immersed membrane technology was used to retrofit the existing filter cells at the plant. Under the contract, GE will supply four trains of ZeeWeed-1000 immersed membranes, which is expected to increase the water treatment plant's drinking water capacity from 9 million gallons per day (MGD) to 13.5 MGD. Water and Wastewater.com; 4/15/10

[America's Thirstiest Cities](#)

California has the unfortunate distinction of holding four spots on Forbes' list of the Top 10 Thirstiest Cities, the American cities most likely to face dire water shortages in the next decade. Among these cities (of 750,000 population or more), the greater Los Angeles metroplex takes first place, followed by San Diego. Bakersfield comes in fifth, while Sacramento, despite being on a river, ranks eighth. The list was compiled with the help of Bert Sperling, who created his Sperling Drought Index by combining a variety of data and indices from the National Climatic Data Center. The rankings are based on long-term indicators like aquifer levels, precipitation patterns and historic balance of supply and demand. Forbes.com; 4/23/10

[Florida Citrus Growers Reject EPA Water Rules](#)

Plans by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up Florida's waterways set unattainable goals and would saddle the state's farm industry with billions of dollars of costs it cannot afford, Florida citrus growers said. Reuters; 4/24/10

[Study Finds Rising Temperatures in America's Streams and Rivers](#)

New research by a multi-institutional team of ecologists and hydrologists, including the University of Virginia's Michael Pace, shows that water temperatures are increasing in many streams and rivers throughout the United States – a trend that the researchers warn could eventually impact riparian ecosystems. The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, found statistically significant long-term warming in 20 major U.S. streams and rivers – including such prominent rivers as the Colorado, Potomac, Delaware and Hudson. Science Daily; 4/22/10

[Supreme Court to Consider Revisiting 1922 Great Lakes Water Diversion Case](#)

The Supreme Court is considering whether it will let Michigan and five other states proceed with a lawsuit that seeks to permanently separate the ecosystems of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin. Having already rejected two requests for preliminary action, the justices must now decide whether the nation's highest court is the right venue for the battle over the economic and environmental effects of Chicago's man-made waterways. The lawsuit, filed in December by Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox (R), has drawn heavy public attention because of its focus on invasive Asian carp, imported fish that spread up the Mississippi River and now swim freely within miles of Lake Michigan. New York Times; 4/22/10

[Calculating Water Use, Direct and Indirect](#)

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University have estimated this kind of direct and indirect water use — not for households, but for American industries. Their goal was to create a tool for better assessing the impact on water use of decisions made up and down the industrial supply chain, just as one might assess cost or carbon footprint. New York Times; 4/19/10

[FDA is Reviewing the Use of Antibacterial Products Containing Triclosan](#)

The antibacterial chemical found in liquid hand soaps, deodorant bar soaps, toothpastes and more may harm humans and the wildlife. Industry groups say they have provided volumes of information on the benefits and safety of the products. LA Times; 4/19/10

INTERNATIONAL

[UK Water Use 'Worsening Global Crisis'](#)

The amount of water used to produce food and goods imported by developed countries is worsening water shortages in the developing world, a report says. The report, focusing on the UK, says two-thirds of the water used to make UK imports is used outside its borders. The Engineering the Future alliance of professional engineering bodies says this is unsustainable, given population growth and climate change. It says countries such as the UK must help poorer nations curb water use. Forecasts suggest that when the world's population soars beyond 8bn in 20 years time, the global demand for food and energy will jump by 50%, with the need for fresh water rising by 30%. BBC News; 4/19/10

[Experts Call for Hike in Global Water Rates](#)

Major economies are pushing for substantial increases in the price of water around the world as concern mounts about dwindling supplies and rising population. Experts argue that as long as most countries provide huge subsidies for water it will not be possible to change the wasteful habits of consumers, farmers and industry, nor to raise the investment needed to repair old supply systems and build new ones. And price rises can be managed so that they do not penalize the poorest. UK Guardian; 4/21/10

[China Debates Whether Human Activity has Caused Drought](#)

Exactly what underlies China's worst drought in nearly a century is a matter of great debate. Is it Mother Nature or human failure? Beyond the official explanation of "abnormal weather," Chinese environmentalists are pointing to deforestation, pollution, dams, overbuilding and other man-made factors. Scientists are searching for clues about why rain hasn't come in some parts of the country. LA Times; 4/26/10

[Pakistan Installs Country's First Rainwater Harvesting System](#)

Pakistan's first urban rainwater harvesting system has been installed in the capital city Islamabad. Known as the Pilot Rainwater Harvesting Project, the initiative was developed in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program and the Pakistan Council of Research for Water Resources. Circle of Blue, 4/24/10

[Clean Rivers Could Make Coral Reefs Healthier](#)

A new study by Australian scientists indicates that cutting water pollution in rivers that drain into the ocean may provide a significant health benefit to large parts of the Great Barrier Reef. The researchers found that a fifth of the Great Barrier Reef suffers from low water quality, which reduces the diversity of corals living on the reef and favors a takeover by seaweeds. Minimizing agricultural runoff and other forms of river pollution could reduce seaweed coverage by 39% and raise coral diversity by up to 33% in the presently impaired portions of the Great Barrier Reef. The Conservation Maven, 4/22/2010

[Private Water Suppliers Poised to Grow as Demand Set to Surge](#)

Global Water Intelligence analysts expect the water supply market to grow about 20% in the next five years. Private companies are poised for a surge in demand to take over water supplies, despite widespread opposition to privatization of what is seen as a life-giving public service. The Guardian, 4/28/10

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