

Water is not only Colorado's most precious natural resource but also its most at risk. Ensuring that there will be enough water to meet soaring demand — amid wide-ranging, competing needs across our arid state — requires continuous, comprehensive, long-range planning. It means constantly enhancing our efforts to conserve the water we have; upgrading our ability to store our water as a reliable source, and securing additional sources to provide for our needs in the future. Looking after those priorities is a big challenge that takes a commitment by all of us.

No one understands it better than the many agricultural, residential and other stakeholders throughout the rural communities of the Central Colorado Water Conservancy District. The citizens of our water conservancy district — Coloradans who are close to the land and who put our water to work in a very real way — know they cannot take this vital resource for granted.

That is why the leadership of Central is now carefully considering some important next steps to make sure our water keeps flowing. Central's Board of Directors, through its Groundwater Management Subdistrict, has decided to place a bond-approval question before voters this November.

We have reached out to our stakeholders through a survey as well as a series of community meetings to gauge public awareness about our water issues and to seek input on our plans for securing water rights and building storage for our region. From that outreach, we received 472 responses, with 66 percent of respondents saying Central's ongoing work to acquire water rights and storage should be a high priority for the district. More than 80 percent were very or somewhat concerned that our region is not prepared for a drought, and 72 percent said Central's highest priority should be to help protect family farms and the region's ag economy.

On the specific question of the proposed election, 74 percent said they would support the GMS bond question, with 12 percent saying no and another 14 percent unsure.

The Board has now decided to ask voters for approval of a \$48.7 million bond—with an estimated tax impact of \$1.91 per month for a \$250,000 "market" value home—to allow Central to:

- Construct 5,000 acre-feet of additional reservoir storage in the Fort Lupton and Greeley-Kersey areas. This improvement to our infrastructure would increase the district's storage capacity 25 percent.
- Construct the Robert W. Walker Recharge Project at the Weld and Morgan county lines. It will divert water from the South Platte River to groundwater recharge basins to help safeguard against devastating drought. Importantly, bond proceeds that would finance this \$15 million project would leverage \$1.5 million in state and federal funds already awarded toward the effort.
- Purchase senior water rights as they become available, including water currently being leased by the district, to keep that water in our communities for use by local farms and businesses for years to come.

We all know how crucial it is that our farmers and ranchers have a reliable supply of water, even in times of drought. It is our lifeblood. More than \$1.5 billion of agricultural products are produced in Weld County alone, and thousands of jobs are tied to the ag economy, and depend on it, in the eight communities served by our district in Adams, Morgan and Weld counties. We cannot afford to put those jobs in jeopardy.

These projects are pivotal to our regional economy and are integral to the district's core mission. Ever since the district was established in 1965, it has been charged with providing our region's water supply and maintaining and adding storage to fuel the prosperity of our communities and protect against future drought.

Without these measures, the outlook is troubling. The Colorado Water Plan estimates that 267,000 acres of irrigated farm ground downstream of Denver will dry up by 2050 amid projected growth. Farms and ranches are at risk in all three of our district's counties if additional water storage is not developed and if additional water rights are not secured.

When it comes to our water, we truly are all in this together. We are all a part of the Central Colorado Water Conservancy District. Thank you for your help to ensure that our region is better prepared for drought and ensuring the long-term success of our family farms and ag economy.