



"Voice of the Western Slope"

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A coalition of counties, communities, businesses & individuals

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Club 20 Archives

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Content:

The first statewide, grass roots convention on water in Colorado will be held September 29 in Denver as a direct result of cooperative efforts begun by Club 20 more than two years ago.

The convention, like the steering committee that two weeks ago elected Club 20 President John Vanderhoof as its chairman, will consist of delegations from organized labor, business, municipalities, water organizations, counties, farm and livestock organizations, construction industry, homebuilders, natural resource organizations, and others.

"The convention represents a launching pad to enable Coloradans to utilize much needed water that the state has been entitled to for many years," Vanderhoof said.

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At the steering committee meeting that importance was stated and restated several times in several ways. Noel Hobbs, treasurer of Water for Colorado, a front range-based organization that developed the convention jointly with Club 20, said, "We have delays in getting our projects on line, but nothing delays growth."

Roland C. Fischer, secretary-engineer of the Colorado River Water Conservation District, said the advancement of water projects is the only way Colorado's critically important agricultural industry can be protected.

Si Berthelson, Meeker rancher and Colorado representative to the Upper Colorado River Commission said Colorado must become as aggressive as other basin states: "Utah's intention is to use their share and as much of Colorado's as they can get."

He concurred with former U.S. Senator Gordon Allot, who with former Congressman Wayne Aspinall will be honorary chairman of the convention. Allot said his greatest concern remains Arizona and California: "Once there is a population base to absorb the water, no genius of a lawyer or supreme court will ever bring it back up the river to us."

They were referring to the estimated one million acre-feet of water that Colorado is entitled to under the Colorado River Compact. However, since water storage projects that capture that water for use by Coloradans have not been constructed, the lower basin states have not only been using it but are establishing an economy based on use of that water.

Bill Raley of Norwood, former president of the Colorado Water Congress and board member of Southwestern Colorado Water Conservancy District, emphasized the development of trust in the effort. Raley said he had been raised in an air of animosity that started at the next headgate. "Provincialism in Colorado is more intense and deeply ingrained because of the mountains and valleys," Raley said.

Vanderhoof said more details on the convention would be issued as they are developed by the executive committee that includes Berthelson, Fischer, Vanderhoof and east slopers representing both regional and statewide groups.

"The convention represents an opportunity for the citizens of this state to establish a water policy and demonstrate support of it to the elected officials. It is an opportunity that may serve Colorado long and well," Vanderhoof said.