

USDA declares Gilpin and 62 other counties as drought disaster areas

Water and you: Part 1 of 5

by Don Ireland

"When the well is dry, we know the worth of water." – Benjamin Franklin, 1746

Despite snowfall measuring several feet locally last month, Gilpin County and 62 other Colorado Counties were declared disaster areas by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in March because of the overall statewide drought occurring in 2020 and 2021. Farmers in the impacted counties can apply for emergency loans until November. Only Custer County, in the south-central part of the state, wasn't on the list.

The total snowpack for Colorado's mountains, as of March 19, was at 92 percent of average, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a division of the USDA. Last year, Colorado rainfall was listed at 12.2 inches, about six inches below the annual average. The below-normal rainfall contributed to the current drought conditions in the state, which is ranked as the 8th driest state in the nation.

Droughts are nothing new to the Centennial state. The last one occurred in 2001. Heavy snowfall in April 2013 caused Front Range



DON IRELAND

No Name, Colorado, located off I-70 in the western part of the state, was spared from last summer's wildfires. However, concerns over water flows from the Colorado River is an important topic in the West.

water providers to cancel anticipated drought restrictions. Six other drought periods occurred statewide from 1890-1996. To view current drought conditions in Gilpin and surrounding areas, visit: drought.gov and climate.gov. For information on snowpack, go to: nrsc.usda.gov and conduct a search for snowpack.

There are many state and federal agencies tracking droughts, precipitation and weather. In addition to the USDA, federal government agencies dealing with water-related issues, including Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Bureau of Land Management (EPA), to name a few.

The State of Colorado has multiple agencies, including the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and the Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE), that deal with water-related matters. CDPHE handles statewide water quality management, monitors rivers, lakes and streams, wastewater treatment, groundwater, pollution management and other regu-

lations. CWCB was formed nearly 80 years ago to provide policy direction on water issues. As the state's most comprehensive water information resource, the agency maintains expertise in a wide range of program and provides technical information regarding the utilization of Colorado's waters. The CWCB represents each major water basin, including Denver and other state agencies, in a joint effort to use water wisely and protect water for future generations.

Nearly six years ago, the CWCB created the Colorado Water Plan

after receiving input from many groups and individuals throughout the state. The nearly 500-page document can be downloaded or read online at: cowaterplan.colorado.gov.

There's also the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Water Quality, Division of Wildlife, and Division of Water Resources. The state also is one of the few nationally that has a judicial water court to handle water-related matters. The Water Court has seven districts, one for each of the seven main river basins: South Platte, Arkansas, Rio Grande, Gunnison, Colorado, White River and San Juan. Gilpin County is part of the South Platte River Basin District.

In addition, there are several other organizations that work on water-related issues, including Water Education Colorado, Colorado WaterWise, Colorado Water Congress, Colorado Water Trust and Water for People, to name a few. Colorado State University operates it, and Colorado Water Center and Metropolitan State University sponsors its One World One Water Center (OWOW).

Water originating in Colorado's mountains is the prime source of water for 20 million people in the West. The largest river, the Colorado River, has a basin that includes Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona and California. The Colorado River Compact, signed in 1922, governs water allocations for the seven states and manages water storage from the Colorado River in Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The water also supplies the Hoover Dam outside of Las Vegas, which generates electricity for parts of California, Nevada and New Mexico.

In addition to the drought, Colorado and other western states are tackling the issues of climate change, diminishing water resources, increasing populations and politics. Those and other water topics will be discussed in upcoming installments of this series.

About the author

Don Ireland has appeared in two Eco documentaries involving water conservation. He has spoken to hundreds across the state on the subjects of saving water and appropriate planting in Colorado. In addition to contributing stories and drone photos to the *Weekly Register-Call*, he writes stories for the *Colorado WaterWise Magazine*.



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Drought in the Rio Grande River in Southern Colorado is negatively impacting water supplies in neighboring New Mexico.

People have fought over Colorado water for centuries

Water and you: Part 2 of 5

by Don Ireland

The old adage, “whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over,” is frequently attributed to Mark Twain. If the American author and humorist actually uttered those words, historians cannot find written evidence of it in his writings and novels.

Still, fighting over water is nothing new in Colorado and the west.

Around 1870, a group of people from the New York area decided to forego city life and trekked across the country to settle in Greeley, CO. The city was named for famous newspaper publisher Horace Greeley, who coined the iconic saying, “Go West, young man.” The new community’s population was considered religious and prohibited alcohol.

Shortly after they began their new frontier lives, the pioneers learned about Colorado’s harsh winters and frequently dry summers. A lack of water became apparent.

Ditches were built from the north to supply water to Greeley residents. However, in 1874, a conflict arose between Greeley residents and upstream farmers from the Fort Collins area over who owned the water in the regional streams, according to Judge Gregory J. Hobbs, Jr. and Michael Welsh in their recent book, “Confluence: the story of Greeley water.”

On a hot summer night, July 15, 1874, people from both sides met in a heated session at a schoolhouse near Windsor. Some brought firearms in a meeting that led to a pivotal point in state history. Rather than exchange gunfire to resolve their dispute, the parties resolved to work together. The result, the doctrine of prior appropriation – western water law – was born and has become a tradition in Colorado, according to the authors.

A century ago, a similar conflict arose from several states desiring water from the Colorado River. In 1922, the Colorado River Compact was signed, addressing water concerns and allocations from “upper basin states,” Wyoming, Utah,

Colorado and New Mexico, and “lower basin states,” including Arizona, Nevada and California.

Even today, arguing over water rights continues. The cities of Colorado Springs and Aurora, which purchased large farms in western Colorado during the early 1950s, recently announced plans to build a reservoir on that land to serve their residents’ needs. However, the plan is being scrutinized from Western Slope residents and organizations.

Other water-related news stories have been common. They include:

- Last year, the two largest wildfires in Colorado history burned hundreds of thousands of acres in the northern and western parts of the state. The impact of those fires on watersheds is being studied because it may affect the quality of water supplies from Northern Colorado and throughout the Front Range. With trees and vegetation destroyed, melting snowpack can lead to soil erosion and, without functional roots in the burn areas, water may not be collected and stored below the ground surface.

About 80 percent of the state’s population lives along the Interstate 25 corridor but the majority of water used by those communities originate on the western slope – in the form of melting snowpack - and are transported through the Continental Divide via hundreds of miles of pipes from rivers, dams and reservoirs.

- Droughts and water issues have captured national headlines regularly, including the Flint, Michigan water crisis in 2014 and the prolonged California drought from 2011-19.

- Westminster residents packed the parking lot at their municipal building this past August, protesting a series of water-rate hikes that have taken place in the community in recent years. Brighton voters recalled their town mayor in December 2019, claiming he knew about \$70 million in water rate overcharges and firing the city manager to cover up what allegedly happened.

A Michigan State University study has suggested one in three American families may be unable

to pay their monthly water bill by 2023 because of increasing prices. In other areas, “water inequity” is a concern because lower-income residents struggle to pay for water.

Scholars and authors contend future wars will be fought over water as populations grow and the amount of drinking water is limited. Economists and Wall Street investors have contended for years that water will be a highly-valued and profitable commodity in the decades to come, the same as oil was during the last 100 years.

The importance of the Moffat Tunnel for Front Range water supplies and how Coloradoans use water will be discussed in upcoming installments of this series.

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Clear Creek is a primary source of water for Black Hawk. The Clear Creek area near Idaho Springs lures thousands to Colorado’s mountains each spring. During winter, snow attracts skiers to Colorado’s mountain towns. Fishing, boating and other water-related activities provide an outdoor playground to residents/visitors and millions of dollars to the state economy.

Gilpin's Moffat Tunnel crucial in Front Range expansion

Water and you: Part 3 of 5

by Don Ireland

"Here is a land where life is written in water." – inscribed in the Colorado state capital

It'd be a safe bet to presume thousands of Denver and the Front Range residents don't realize that a Gilpin County engineering marvel is the reason they have water for their homes, schools and businesses.

The Moffat Tunnel, located along Gilpin County Road 16 a few miles west of Rollinsville, plays an integral role in water supply for Denver and nearby communities. Without it, the Denver metro region might never had grown and flourished the way it has in recent decades.

A little more than a century ago, industrialist David H. Moffat Jr. wanted to build railroads that crossed the Continental Divide. According to the Colorado Business Hall of Fame, Moffat was one of Denver's most important financiers and industrialists in late 19th and early 20th century Colorado. He served as president, treasurer and as a board member of railroads, banks, and city government posts. By the time of his death, Moffat had claims to over

one hundred Colorado mines and nine railroads.

Considered a visionary of his time, Moffat spent an estimated \$14 million to build the railroad to Rollins Pass, according to Denver Water. He died in 1911, but the work continued until its completion in 1928. According to history, 28 workers died during the construction project.

In 1936, the 6.2-mile tunnel was partially lined and water from the Western Slope began to flow through it. Denver Water purchased the water tunnel in 1996 to safeguard water supplies for future generations. Water flowing through the Moffat Tunnel ends up at the Gross Reservoir, located in Boulder County near the Gilpin County border. Boulder residents have raised legal challenges to Denver Water's proposed expansion to the Gross Reservoir. However, an April 1, a Federal Court decision dismissed those objections. It is unknown if additional challenges will delay the project, originally anticipated for completion in 2025.

Moffat, for whom Moffat County in northwestern Colorado was named, once said he conceived the plan as a way to boost trade and commerce for the city and the West. "I had no ideas of greatness when I undertook the building of the Moffat Road. I wanted to do it

for the good of the state and nothing more." In 1979, the Moffat Tunnel was designated as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Denver Water's collection system encompasses about 4,000 square miles, or 2.5 million acres, and extends into more than eight counties, including Park, Grand, Jefferson, Summit, Teller, Douglas, Clear Creek, and Gilpin counties.

Regardless of where Coloradoans get their water, it is essential in every corner of the state. According to Colorado State University's Water Center, here is how water is utilized:

- 86.7 percent is used in agriculture, for livestock, and to irrigate crops. More than \$5 billion in revenues are generated annually because of Colorado's agriculture.
- 6.7 percent goes to municipalities. This includes water districts and suppliers, which deliver water to homes for indoors and outside use.
- 1.1 percent is utilized by industry.
- The remaining 5.5 percent remains in streams for environmental and recreational use.

Colorado's water professional community and governments are concerned about climate warming,

droughts, and increasing population. The state's estimated population was 5.8 million in 2020, a 14.5 percent increase since the 2010 Census. The Colorado Water Plan, released in 2015, estimates the state's population could rise to 9 million by 2050. That could result in a shortfall of water for millions of people in the state.

The plan also addresses ways to avert that potential water crisis by reducing overall future needs through cost-effective efficiency measures. They include:

- Integrating water efficiency planning and projects into overall water resource management.
 - Promoting a water efficiency ethic throughout Colorado.
 - Exploring additional water reuse options.
 - Further integrating land use and water planning.
 - Seeking creative options for improving agricultural irrigation conservation and efficiency.
- In 2019, the state legislature approved a new law, requiring certain appliances, plumbing fixtures, and other products sold for residential or commercial use to meet energy efficiency and water efficiency standards.

Throughout many Colorado neighborhoods, residents use as much of 50 percent of their water to use on their lawns. Kentucky Blue Grass, a non-native turf, is

commonly used in lawns and has been considered "normal" by thousands who've moved here from eastern states. Blue Grass requires significant and frequent watering to stay emerald green throughout spring, summer and fall.

Many water suppliers along the Front Range have initiated financial incentives to persuade homeowners to replace their Blue Grass lawns with native grasses and xeriscape plants, which use less water. Some water providers now require high-tech meters at homes that measure indoor and outdoor consumption separately – charging lower rates for typical consumption (cooking, bathing and laundry) and substantially higher rates for outdoor usage.

In the next installment of this series, typical water usage in a home and America's addiction to bottled water will be discussed.

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The east side of the Moffat Tunnel, located in mid-Gilpin County west of Rollinsville at the end of Tollard Road.

DON IRELAND

Water habits of the wise and foolish

Water and you: Part 4 of 5

by Don Ireland

"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water." – W.H. Auden, poet (1957)

Most fifth graders know that about 71 percent of the Earth is covered by water and up to 60 percent of the human body also is water. What many people don't realize is that only about 2.5 percent of the planet's water is fresh-water, suitable for drinking. The rest is ocean-based, mostly saltwater.

While a person can live for more than a week without food, they typically can't last for more than three days without water. Throughout most of America, getting drinkable water is as simple as turning on a faucet – quite a difference from other countries, where people walk for miles daily to

secure water that may contain bacteria and other pathogens because it wasn't treated.

In Colorado with its higher elevations, people have higher daily water requirements than those living closer to sea level. It's common to see people walking around this region with their personal water bottle or a store-purchased bottle of water. Many hotels, restaurants and casinos provide complimentary plastic bottles of water to their patrons. Environmentalists, on the other hand, complain that discarded water bottles continue to pollute the nation's landscape and waterways.

A 2019 investigation by Consumer Reports reported Americans spent \$31 billion on bottled water the previous year. Many people drink bottled water because they believe it is safer. However, the investigation reported that nearly 64 percent of bottled water sold in the U.S is merely fil-

tered tap water. Consumer Reports noted that while bottled water sales totaled \$31 billion, it would take less money – \$24 billion – to fix and maintain the U.S. public water supply during the next 20 years.

(Noteworthy comparison: Many stores charge about \$2 for a 20-ounce bottle of water. The typical Denver Water household pays \$2.74 for 1,000 gallons during the winter months.)

Rising water bills have motivated many Americans to reconsider their water-use habits to cut costs and become more environmentally-conscious. Denver Water said water use by a typical household has fallen from 82 gallons a day in 2015 to about 50 gallons daily in 2019.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Water Research Association reported how an average person uses water daily in the state, plus how they could reduce their consumption:

- 24% - Toilets. Old toilets may use up to 5 gallons per flush while new, High-Efficiency Toilets (HETs) use 1.28 gallons or less per flush, depending on the model. Using less water also can help people reduce their municipal sewage bills.

- 20% - Faucets. Water in a sink can be reduced by using a water-saving aerator.

- 20% - Showers. Limiting time in the shower by a couple of minutes daily and using a lower-flow shower head reduces water consumption. Up to 700 gallons of water can be saved monthly by reducing showering by one or two minutes.

- 16% - Clothes washers. A front-loading, high-efficiency washing machine typically uses about one-third the water of an older, top-loading machine. Most washing machines bearing the EPA's WaterSense label use between 13 and 25 gallons per load while older washers can use up to 40 gallons at a time.

- 13% - Leaks. An unrepaired dripping faucet can waste thousands of

gallons a month. A toilet with a faulty flapper can lose even more.

- 3% - Baths.

- 2% - Dishwashers. Newer, high-tech models are designed to clean dishes using less water.

- 2% - Other.

Practical tips for saving water every day include: filling a glass of water and using it to shave or brush your teeth; operating the washing machine or dishwasher only when it is filled and not running the faucet for a couple of minutes prior to using it, hoping the water will get warmer or cooler. (Generally, running that water won't make a big difference on its temperature.)

In 2016, Colorado legislators approved a law that enables homeowners to have two rain barrels on their property. Up to 110 gallons can be collected at a time from gutter downspouts. They can be used to water trees, grass, flowers and shrubs, but not edibles. Information on rain barrels can be downloaded from the Gilpin County Extension service website: <https://gilpin.extension.colostate.edu/>

Many Colorado water providers and organizations have launched campaigns to educate residents about water and how to use it more efficiently. They offer programs to schools, hoping to help teach children the importance of using water wisely. Colorado WaterWise promotes resources and education to hundreds of water suppliers, water utilities, and professionals involved in water-related equipment and services around the state. Its longtime campaign slogan is "Colorado Water: Live Like You Love It!"

The Colorado Water Conservation Board and the One World One Water Center at Metropolitan State University created an 11-minute video, "Doing More with Less: The Challenge and Opportunity of Water Efficiency." It can be accessed free on YouTube and includes lots of beautiful Colorado scenery.

In the final installment of this series, we'll explore the subject of how Gilpin County, Black Hawk and Central City residents get their water.

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Just up the hill from Central City, the Masonic Hall (Nevada Lodge No. 4, chartered in 1860) and a few old homes remain in Nevadaville. Although a handful of residents still live there, the community is listed as one of the many Ghost Towns in the West. About 1,084 residents called Nevadaville home during the gold-mining heydays of the 1860-80s. According to locals, longtime Central City Mayor and businessman Bill Russell, Jr. delivered barrels of water in a horse-drawn wagon to Nevadaville residents many decades ago. Officials from neighboring towns like Central City and Black Hawk secured water rights and established municipal water lines for their residents a century ago. Nevadaville leaders, however, didn't do the same. A lack of available, potable (drinking) water is considered a key reason why so many towns across the West were eventually abandoned and faded into history, becoming ghost towns.

Unlikely companions: Gambling and water mutual benefit

Water and you: Part 5 of 5

by Don Ireland

“If your water system fails, life in paradise is over.” – Gilpin County Guide (2016)

At face value, water and gambling might not appear to have much in common - except in Colorado, where there is a growing connection between the two.

In the early 1990s, Colorado voters approved legalized gambling that ultimately and financially revived the former mountain mining communities of Black Hawk, Central City, and Cripple Creek. Two years ago, state voters decided to allow sports betting in the three gaming towns, with most of the proceeds going to fund the state water plan. Sports betting got off to a slow start last spring, amid a pandemic in which most sports were postponed or cancelled.

As the dark cloud of the pandemic began to lift and sports teams returned to action in 2021, will Colorado’s hope for a brighter water future become golden because of sports betting? Time will tell.

The time was November 1991 when Colorado voters approved limited legalized gambling for the three mountain towns. That approval motivated Central City and Black Hawk leaders to quickly figure out ways to have sufficient water for the forthcoming casino and their visitors.

A few decades later, 2013, Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper directed his cabinet and state agencies to create a Colorado Water Plan for the rapidly-growing Centennial State. The plan looked at the current water supply for its 5 million residents and addressed potential future needs. More than 30,000 people provided input to the plan, originally released in 2015 and scheduled for periodic updates. Among the findings: the need to fund billions of dollars for water-infrastructure projects before 2050, when the state’s projected population could reach 9 million people and a water shortfall could potentially impact more than a million residents.

In November 2019, Colorado voters approved sports betting in the three casino towns. Sports betting, launched in May 2020, carries a 10 percent tax. Most of the revenue will go toward the state water plan, which has been characterized as “chronically underfunded.” During the first 10 months of sports betting, an estimated \$4.49 million in taxes was collected. In the past two months, four major online sports betting operators - BetMGM, DraftKings, FanDuel, and PointsBet - launched a campaign connecting sports betting and its benefit to water projects, “Colorado Water Wins!” Many Black Hawk and Central City casinos have sports betting areas and also offer online betting apps for Colorado residents.

When it comes to water, Black Hawk’s situation is truly unique.



DON IRELAND

The North Clear Creek Sanitation District plant along Hwy 119, south of Black Hawk, treats sewage from Central City and Black Hawk. Once purified, the water is released into North Clear Creek, which eventually flows to Golden, Denver and Beyond.

The community only has about 100 residents. However, the city can get up to 20,000 visitors daily, who frequent more than a dozen casinos and may lodge overnight at more than 1,400 casino hotel rooms. “We need to have enough water to supply our residents, casinos, and hotels,” said Black Hawk City Manager Stephen Cole.

To handle its needs, Black Hawk has developed an extensive municipal water system, purchased water rights, obtained additional water storage space, and is eyeing poten-

tial plans to accommodate future needs. Black Hawk Water Department Manager Jim Ford said the city pulls water from Clear Creek at its Hidden Valley facility near Idaho Springs and also from North Clear Creek, including several wells. Water is treated at the Hidden Valley plant and at a second facility on Dory Hill Road, up the hill from the Ameristar Casino.

As the state’s largest gaming town, Black Hawk has a million-gallon, underground water storage tank on Miner’s Mesa and a

350,000-gallon storage tank at the Dory Hill plant. The city also stores water at Georgetown Lake. Recently, the city leased additional water-storage space at the lake. Ford said Black Hawk continues to seek additional water resources for potential future needs.

Ford said having an ample, safe water supply is essential. “We’re always concerned about it.” Black Hawk, the same as other Colorado municipalities, tests its water supplies regularly and reports them to the state. The water department also checks its lines for potential leaks to avoid losing water.

Because the casinos, hotels and businesses use the most water and pay for it, Black Hawk citizens receive a “fringe benefit” considered rare in Colorado – they don’t pay for water service to their homes. “Our water system is in really good shape,” according to Ford. “The water quality here is very good.”

Central City’s 725 residents may not get free water at home, but they claim different bragging rights: when you get a glass of water in Central City, the water you drink hasn’t been touched by another person’s lips before. That’s because Central City pulls water directly from streams at the top of the mountain watershed, more than 10 miles west of the community. Water is processed at the city’s water treatment plant on Bald Mountain Road before entering the municipal system.



DON IRELAND

Black Hawk’s water treatment plant, near the Central City Parkway at I-70, draws water from Clear Creek. The water is treated and piped uphill for seven miles to a storage tank at Miner’s Mesa.

Buddy Schmalz, who served for eight years as a Gilpin County Commissioner after being Central City's mayor for six years, calls the community water "pure and outstanding." That same special, first-run water is used to make craft beers by Schmalz, the brew master for Dostal Alley. The Central City casino, restaurant and brewery, operated by Schmalz' family, has won numerous Great American Beer Festival awards for its craft beers over the years.

As gambling goes, Central City is tiny compared to its neighbor down the hill. There are six casinos, including nearly 150 hotel rooms. The town has many empty buildings along Main Street and Lawrence Street, many of which were casinos during the booming, early years of gaming.

Central City Manager Daniel Miera said the community draws water from three mountain streams, the largest being Miner's Gulch. "All three are high up in the mountains," he said. The collected water goes to the Central City Water Treatment Plant. Central City follows state water-quality standards, but according to Miera, not much treatment is required for the incoming water. "It's very minimal." Central City regularly gets

water samples from various places throughout its municipal system, including tap water from faucets.

Some of Central City's water reserve is held in two local reservoirs. The community also has two underground water-storage facilities: one holds 750,000 gallons and the other, 500,000 gallons. Miera said Central City currently has an adequate water supply, but continues to look for more, hoping to satisfy future needs.

Gilpin County residents who want fresh water can purchase it in bulk from Central City's water supply station near the KOA Campground. Those who visit the station bring their own bottles, jugs or containers and pay before accessing water - reminiscent of a soda-vending machine.

The majority of Gilpin County residents outside Central City and Black Hawk use wells to get water. Wells also supply water for Gilpin's Community Center, Sheriff's Department, Justice Center, and offices in the mid-county. According to Schmalz, water disputes have occurred over the years throughout the county and between neighbors.

According to Gilpin County's guide for residents, available online, most potable (drinkable)



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The Central City Water Treatment Plant on Bald Mountain Road feeds the community's municipal system, which serves homes, businesses and casinos.



DON IRELAND

Central City sells its municipal water to Gilpin County residents via a bulk water-dispensing machine near the KOA campground. Registered users swipe a credit card on the unit and fill containers they bring with the same water the city delivers to homes, businesses and casinos.

water is the responsibility of a homeowner, who must obtain a state permit before drilling. Maintaining a well and checking its quality regularly also is the owner's responsibility. Since 1972, most new wells for homes (on less than 35 acres) are for household use only. Watering lawns, flowers and gardens is prohibited, as is washing cars. Using water for livestock or wild animals also is considered taboo. According to the guide, "Living in Gilpin County means checking the potability of your well's water regularly. If your water system fails, life in paradise is over."

Many years ago, Central City spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on water-rights attorneys during disputes with Black Hawk over water-related issues, according to Schmalz. These days, most of the water spats have gone away. As Miera noted, "We may not always agree on everything, but we work well together."

In fact, Black Hawk and Central City have joint stakes in the North Clear Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant on Hwy 119, south of Black Hawk. The facility is operated by the Black Hawk-Central City Sanitation District. Once water is dumped into a sink, flushed down a sewer, or emptied from a bathtub anywhere in Black Hawk or

Central City, it is considered wastewater (sewage). Municipal sewer lines flowing downhill from the two towns are collected by the plant, where impurities and waste materials are removed. That water is treated according to state standards and released into North Clear Creek. That water eventually unites with Clear Creek, traveling to Golden, Denver, and beyond.

As scientists and climatologists continue to forecast continued droughts and more potential wildfires in Colorado and the West for the immediate future, it's a solid bet that water news will continue to generate regular media reports on local, state and national levels. It's a bet, however, you can't make at a casino in Black Hawk or Central City.

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