



Above: On April 21, the Donala Water and Sanitation District board celebrated the retirement of Office Assistant Ginnette Ritz (left). Donala Office Manager Betsy Bray and General Manager Kip Petersen listed her many contributions to Donala constituents, co-workers, and the board. Ritz is a life-long local resident who has served this community her entire career working in turn for the Colorado Springs Police Department, Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, and Donala. *Photo by Jim Kendrick.*

“State of the Arkansas River.” Witte also announced a core mission change in state water rights policy that eliminates the former automatic state defense, by filing objections, as a party in all state water rights cases, including party status in all cases regarding water rights not owned by the state. The state engineer’s intent now is to expedite water court cases through the review process.

Witte announced more state enforcement involvement regarding impaired water rights due to illegal water diversions and theft by rapidly proliferating marijuana grows throughout the state, particularly in the Arkansas River basin.

In addition, Peter Barkman of the Colorado Geological Survey announced that the state will be re-initiating its terminated program for disseminating results of geologic and soil surveys to water users to better optimize state water use.

The Pikes Peak Regional

Water Authority discussed state legislative results to date on April 6. Petersen noted that the state rain barrel bill was approved by the Legislature. House Bill 16-1283, which would require water utilities providing over 2,000 acre-feet of water per year to conduct annual water distribution efficiency audits to determine annual system losses, was killed this year, but will be re-introduced again by Western Slope interests in 2017. Utilities like Donala, which has a 98 percent efficiency—the limit of current technology, would not receive an exemption from this costly audit review. Members of the authority are considering having engineering consultant Forsgren and Associates prepare a 15-year look-back report on water conservation successes by authority members in self-defense and also to help effective participation during negotiations for state funding under the pending initiation of a state water plan, which

includes a “flex” goal of 400,000 acre-feet of additional water savings per year.

Petersen said he will be part of an Arkansas River Basin Water Forum panel (April 27-28) that will discuss the future of alluvial aquifer storage of water. He will discuss Donala’s results in successfully injecting 40 acre-feet of water into Donala Well 2A, and then recovering the same 40 acre-feet of water from the Arapahoe aquifer from Well 2A. He also plans to discuss up to 600,000 acre-foot storage potential within the Upper Black Squirrel groundwater basin that was demonstrated by the Colorado Geological Survey in 2008. This basin extends from Peyton south to the El Paso County border with Pueblo County,

The district’s April 13 sod, soils, and sprinkles seminar presented by Water Returns and attended by 29 Donala residents was a success, and the seminar will be presented again in the fall.

April 15 Pueblo Reservoir spill canceled

Petersen reported that Donala’s previously forecast loss of space available storage in the Pueblo Reservoir on April 15 for its renewable surface water from Willow Creek Ranch in Leadville had been canceled by the federal Bureau of Reclamation. Donala has been solely using its renewable surface water in the reservoir for many months to supply all of its customers. As shown at http://www.usbr.gov/gp-bin/arc050_form.pl?PUER (click the submit button), Pueblo Reservoir storage peaked on March 10, 2016 and has been steadily declining ever since to about 77 percent of capacity, well below the mandatory spillage threshold. The Pueblo Reservoir Flood Control Pool was empty as this article was written.

Donala’s plans to use groundwater from its wells again this summer during the peak irrigation season remain in place, but on hold until irrigation demand is high enough to justify turning on the wells and groundwater treatment plants. Donala has about 140 acre-feet of renewable surface water stored in the reservoir at this time.

The average amount of Donala’s Willow Creek Ranch renewable surface water being drawn from Donala’s renewable surface water storage in the Pueblo Reservoir during non-irrigation season is about 30 acre-feet per month. An acre-foot is 325,851 gallons. Snow melt runoff this year had been forecast to be so high that the reservoir was expected to be entirely filled by April 15 due to much higher than average El Niño. As a result, water stored in the reservoir using lowest priority storage rights such as Donala’s, would be “spilled” back into the Arkansas River. Donala’s annual “if and when available” water storage contracts with the federal Bureau of Reclamation have the lowest priority, so some or all of the remaining Donala water in this reservoir had been expected

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