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PRESS RELEASE

Date: 6/19/12

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WELD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEET WITH COLORADO GOVERNOR, LEARN WELLS WON'T BE TURNED ON TO HELP FARMERS

WELD COUNTY, CO – At an 8:00 a.m. meeting this morning, the Weld County Commissioners met with Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper regarding the disaster emergency declared by Weld County last week. Specifically, the meeting addressed the Board's request for allowance of the temporary pumping of wells to provide relief to area farmers facing the loss of their crops. That request was denied by the Governor, basing his decision upon an informal opinion stated in a memorandum from the Office of the Attorney General.

"The Board of County Commissioners appreciates the time the Governor and his staff spent on reviewing and studying this request," said Commissioner Chairman Sean Conway. "However, we do not agree with the opinions stated in the Attorney General's Office memorandum. The Commissioners were never looking to overturn prior appropriation doctrine or overturn water law but rather to find a solution to what we believe will be an agricultural and economic disaster not just for Weld County, not just for northern Colorado, but for the entire state."

"We understand the Governor is in a difficult position," said Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer. "We thank the Governor and John Stulp for the time they took to look into this situation."

The Governor and other staff members are scheduled to have meetings today with stakeholders and will continue to explore other possible solutions for area farmers, but the timing may be too late to save this year's crops.

"I think the Governor's office is trying to find some way to get more water, but what they will find is that there isn't any," said Conway. "There is only one place where we know there is water, and that is in the aquifer."

During the meeting, County Attorney Bruce Barker provided additional information to the Governor's team regarding a state statute giving the Governor some discretion to provide aid to farmers. C.R.S. 37-92-301 addresses the Administration and Distribution of Waters and, in the County's opinion, allows the Governor to temporarily allow the pumping of some wells in Weld County without violating Water Court decrees.

The Governor's staff said they would take a closer look at the statute.

"We think the Governor wants to help," said Commissioner Douglas Rademacher. "It's a tough spot to be in for both the Governor and for the farmers."

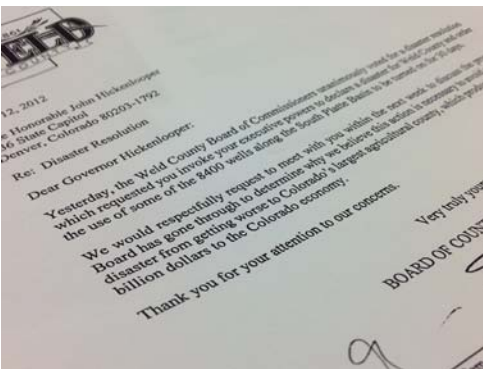
"Pray for rain for the farmers," said Conway. "That is really all we are left with now."

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TIMELINE:



Thursday, June 7, 2012, Commissioners Conway, Kirkmeyer and Rademacher attended a community meeting at Fritztler’s Farm and heard the frustrations of area farmers facing the loss of their crops due to drought conditions while the rising groundwater table is flooding basements and damaging personal property.



Monday, June 11, 2012, the Board of County Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution declaring a disaster emergency in Weld County and asking the Governor to order the pumping of restricted irrigation wells for 30 days to provide relief from emergency conditions.

Tuesday, June 12, 2012, a letter was sent by the Board to the Governor’s Office formally requesting a meeting to ask for immediate action regarding the disaster emergency declaration.

Wednesday, June 13, 2012, the Board was contacted after hours by representatives from the Governor’s Office and asked to attend a Thursday morning meeting regarding the Weld County disaster resolution.



Thursday, June 14, 2012, the Board, along with other stakeholders, met with the Governor in Denver to discuss the emergency situation and the relief being requested through the allowance of pumping some restricted irrigation wells. The Governor asked the group for additional information including the amount of water needed to provide necessary relief during a 30-day timeframe. A three-hour meeting later in the day with stakeholders and Central Water Conservancy District led to an outline of the amount of relief requested and monitoring plans.



Friday, June 15, 2012, members of the Board, along with area stakeholders including farmers and representatives from Central Water Conservancy District, participated in a conference call with staff members of the Governor’s Office and the Attorney General’s Office. The two topics discussed included the disaster emergency and the question of liability if some wells were allowed to pump.

Tuesday, June 19, 2012, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, and staff, meet with the Weld County Board of Commissioners and explained that, as per the Office of the Attorney General, the temporary pumping of wells in Weld County cannot be permitted.