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PRESS RELEASE

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WELD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS DECLARE DISASTER EMERGENCY, URGE GOVERNOR TO TURN ON WATER PUMPS TO HELP SAVE CROPS

WELD COUNTY, CO – The Weld County Commissioners have declared a disaster emergency for Weld County and are asking Governor John Hickenlooper to order the pumping of restricted irrigation wells for 30 days to provide relief from emergency conditions. The Commissioners unanimously passed the resolution during this morning’s Board meeting.

The resolution states: “**WHEREAS**, in 2012, two events have combined to cause an emergency situation for farmers in the South Platte River Basin in Weld County: 1) below average snowfall since January and below average precipitation this Spring, and 2) the restriction by the Colorado State Engineer of pumping from irrigation wells that are subject to court approved augmentation plans or substitute water supply plans that have been approved by the State Engineer under current statutory authority (referred to herein as the “Restrictions”),” as the foundation for the action.

The resolution continues by calling on the Governor to take immediate action: “**WHEREAS**, pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-32-2107(1), because of the drought conditions, the Restrictions, and the availability of an overfull groundwater reservoir in the South Platte alluvial aquifer, the Board hereby declares that there exists in Weld County a disaster emergency, and requests Governor Hickenlooper to: 1) FORTHWITH declare a statewide disaster emergency affecting Weld County, pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-32-2104(4); 2) FORTHWITH allow those irrigation wells within Weld County which are in approved augmentation plans or substitute water supply plans approved by the State Engineer under current statutory authority to pump for a period of thirty (30) days and suspending the Restrictions in order to cope with and prevent the drought disaster emergency; 3) require that the irrigation wells allowed to pump be metered, with flow data collected to be reported to an entity or State department as directed by the Governor; and 4) require that monitoring wells be established in the South Platte alluvial aquifer in Weld County to determine the effect of the pumping on the groundwater levels and groundwater return flows to the South Platte River.”

“We have only a short window of time available to try to avert an agricultural disaster here in Weld County,” said Weld County Chairman Sean Conway. “The best guess is we have between one to two weeks to get the wells turned on in order to save this year’s crop.”

Weld County is the top agricultural county in the Colorado producing approximately \$1.5 billion in value of agricultural products sold according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

“The next step the Commissioners will take,” said Commissioner Barbara Kirkmeyer, “is to arrange a meeting with Governor Hickenlooper before the end of the week and discuss in person the need for immediate action.”

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