

District Board declares 40 percent C-BT quota

LOVELAND – For the first time in 47 years of full operations, the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District Board of Directors declared a 40 percent quota. Until now, the lowest quota was 50 percent, which has happened only five times.

The 12-member board said it was possible they would revisit the quota in May or June.

“I’d say, don’t anticipate 50 percent,” said Bill Bohlender, one of three directors who represent Weld County.

Board President Mike Applegate cautioned, “We’re not out of the woods yet.”

Said Les Williams, a Boulder County representative, “Things went backwards in a hurry last year. Let’s keep our options open. Maybe in mid May we need to take another look.”

The decision Friday morning was also the first time the Board based quota on water availability rather than need.

NCWCD operates and maintains the Colorado-Big Thompson Project which supplies supplemental water to an eight-county region of northeastern Colorado. The quota will provide 124,000 acre feet of Colorado River water for agricultural, municipal, domestic and industrial users in the District. Under 2002's 70 percent quota, allottees took delivery of 194,000 acre feet. One acre foot is 326,000 gallons, roughly the amount two urban families use annually.

The 2002 drought drained reservoirs across the West. C-BT’s major storage reservoir, Lake Granby, is down to 18,194 acre feet of active storage, or about 3 percent of its capacity. March snowstorms boosted snowpack, especially on the East Slope, but didn’t end the drought.

The C-BT quota is set to help farmers; ditch and irrigation companies; city water officials; and rural domestic suppliers plan their water supply needs. The Board considers snowpack, runoff and estimated direct diversions, then works to balance the supplemental needs of the region with C-BT reserves.