

## ***What does the Division of Water Resources do?***

For well over 100 years, Colorado has used a system of water distribution known as the doctrine of prior appropriation. Under this doctrine, the first appropriator of water has a senior right to that water, and that right must be satisfied before any rights junior to that right can receive water. The Division of Water Resources is empowered to administer all surface and ground water rights throughout the state and ensure that this doctrine is enforced.

Obviously, the State Engineer does not perform the day-to-day administration of all of these water rights. Most of that work is accomplished through the field offices, known as the Division Engineer's offices. The seven division offices are located throughout the state in each major drainage basin. The division offices employ water commissioners who are actually out in the field, turning headgates, issuing orders to shut down, collecting water use and/or diversion data, and enforcing the decrees and water laws of the State of Colorado.



**Water Commissioner measuring flow of water**

## ***For what other areas is the State Engineer responsible?***

While water administration and enforcement is a major duty of the State Engineer's Office, a host of other duties are under his responsibility. Ground water well permitting is one of those duties.

By law, every new well in the state that diverts ground water must have a well permit. In order to obtain a permit, a person must file an application for approval of a permit with the State Engineer. Over 10,000 applications are submitted for review annually and the staff determines the amount of water available and analyzes the potential for injury to other existing water rights under strict statutory guidelines.

The State Engineer also provides staff to assist in technical support to the Colorado Ground Water Commission, in the exercise of its duties in the Designated Basins, generally located on the eastern plains of Colorado. Well permits for wells located in these basins are evaluated by the staff and submitted to the Commission for approval.

Further, the State Engineer provides staff assistance for the Board of Examiners of Water Well Construction and Pump Installation Contractors. This Board oversees the safe and proper installation of well pumping equipment and regulates the proper, safe construction of wells throughout the state.

The Division, in cooperation with various local ground water management districts, operates a statewide network for monitoring ground water levels. Over 1,500 wells are measured to assist in projecting ground water levels and to aid in the administration of ground water.

## ***What does the State Engineer have to do with dams in Colorado?***

Dam safety engineers review, and the State Engineer approves, plans and specifications for construction of new dams and



**Tarryall Dam, located in South Park, owned by the Colorado Division of Wildlife**

plans for repair of existing dams. The dam safety engineers determine safe storage levels in reservoirs and inspect most dams located throughout the state to ensure the safety of the public. If deficiencies are found, the State Engineer has the authority to issue repair and/or restriction orders.

## ***What does the Division have to do with water flowing out of the state?***

Waters flowing across state boundaries are apportioned through interstate compacts, federal court decrees, and U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The State Engineer and his staff administer flows along the South Platte, Rio Grande, Republican, Costilla, Arkansas, Colorado, Laramie, North Platte and La Plata Rivers on a daily basis to make sure that Colorado is meeting the commitments set forth in those documents.

## ***If I need information on water rights, is the Division of Water Resources the place I need to go?***

In most instances, the answer is yes. The Division maintains records of streamflows, as well as water rights adjudications and

well permits, plans for dams and reservoirs, water diversions, and miscellaneous supporting data. This information can be obtained on a statewide basis from the Records Section located in Denver. They are open to the public Monday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (please note, the Records Section is closed on the last Friday of each month for records maintenance). Localized data, to a limited extent, can be found in our division field offices. Information on ground water well permitting can be obtained from the Ground Water Information desk at 303-866-3587. *The Division does not carry data regarding the buying and selling of water rights.*

**What other duties do the State Engineer's Office staff perform?**

Professional engineers and geologists collect and analyze data on water supply to forecast streamflows, determine diversion requirements, investigate stream transit losses, determine evaporation losses, and calculate historic use and current conditions. A statewide satellite monitoring system that records streamflows on a real-time basis is also maintained by this office and has become crucial in the state's flood monitoring efforts. Additionally, the staff acts in an advisory capacity to county commissioners, provides advice to other state agencies, and plans for future use and development of the waters of the state in conjunction with other agencies.



**Gaging station, South Platte River at Waterton**

**How can I get more information?**

**In Denver:**

**Colorado Division of Water Resources**  
 1313 Sherman Street, Room 818  
 Denver, CO 80203  
 Phone: (303) 866-3581  
 Fax: (303) 866-3589  
 Website: <http://www.water.state.co.us>

**Ground Water Information**  
 (303) 866-3587  
**Records Section**  
 (303) 866-3447

**Throughout the state:**

- Division 1** Greeley (970) 352-8712
- Division 2** Pueblo (719) 542-3368
- Division 3** Alamosa (719) 589-6683
- Division 4** Montrose (970) 249-6622
- Division 5** Glenwood Springs (970) 945-5665
- Division 6** Steamboat Springs (970) 879-0272
- Division 7** Durango (970) 247-1845



**Bill Owens**  
 Governor



**Russell George**  
 Executive Director

**Office of the State Engineer**

**Hal D. Simpson, State Engineer**