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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wyoming State Engineer Patrick T. Tyrrell announced today that, in accordance with Wyoming water law, priority administration is in effect on water rights diverting from the North Platte River and its tributaries upstream of and junior to Pathfinder Reservoir, priority of December 6, 1904; and between Pathfinder Dam and Guernsey Reservoir, priority of April 20, 1923, until such time as the administration is lifted no later than May 1, 2013.

The North Platte River system has experienced below average winter snowpack and streamflow conditions over the past 16 months. Mr. Tyrrell indicated the combination of below average snowpack conditions and low carryover storage in the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation reservoir system requires the administration of water rights junior to Pathfinder and Guernsey Reservoirs. Based on the existing water supply, snowpack and forecasted runoff, it is anticipated that water supplies will be below average in 2013.

The February storage and runoff forecasts for the coming season total 705,364 acre-feet, well below the 1,100,000 acre-foot "trigger" value which represents a full North Platte Project ownership supply. Priority administration is required by Wyoming water law and is initiated by the request for regulation as provided by the Modified North Platte Decree, in order to protect senior Wyoming water rights held by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for storage in their reservoirs.

"We continue to monitor the snow pack and water supply conditions in the basin, yet unfortunately it is clear at this point that the supply will be much less than we'd like to see," says Tyrrell. "It's hard to believe that just two years ago we had a record snowpack and flooding during the runoff." If water supply conditions change over the next few months, as the weather patterns often do in Wyoming, the State Engineer's Office will make adjustments to the basin-wide priority administration activity.

Since the initiation of the Modified North Platte Decree in 2001, and later the implementation of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP), many of the municipalities located within the North Platte River basin have secured replacement water for their municipality in the event their existing rights cannot meet the water demand of the community.

"Most of the towns and cities in the basin, and its industries, are in good shape and have planned ahead," says Tyrrell.

The immediate effects of the priority administration would mainly affect those junior priority water rights

held by some municipalities and industries and storage reservoirs that may divert or store water. Mr. Tyrrell is sending letters to the municipalities and industries that may be affected by these administration activities. The letters inform the entities to review their water rights portfolio and determine if the water demand of their community will exceed their reliable water supply for the upcoming year. Alternatively, water may be obtained through a temporary agreement or contract from available storage, a temporary change of use agreement, a transfer or exchange agreement, or other supplies available under Wyoming law and approved by the Wyoming State Engineer's Office. Effects on junior irrigation rights are expected to be small in February and March.

The priority administration actions for the affected water users will be carried out pursuant to state law by water commissioners and hydrographers assigned to various portions of the North Platte River basin, working under direction of Mr. Brian Pugsley, Division I Superintendent.

“The State Engineer's Office personnel will remain in contact with the affected water appropriators and are available to assist water users with their questions,” added Tyrrell. “Nearly all of our staff went through the drought and previous allocation years in 2002 through 2005 and do a fantastic job in carrying out the obligations of the law in an efficient and cooperative manner that can make maximum beneficial use of the limited water supply.”

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