

The Pueblo Chieftain

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Insanity

ONE LEGAL point that could stop the sale of Rocky Ford Ditch water rights to Aurora is contained in the original purchase of water from that ditch.

Aurora is required by the terms of its previous purchase of Rocky Ford Ditch shares to be *diligent* in reusing the water. Yet, according to its own records, Aurora last year released approximately 17,000 acre-feet of water from its two treatment plants and reused only 7,000 acre-feet. The other 10,000 acre-feet flowed down the South Platte.

Instead of spending perhaps \$25 million to \$30 million to buy 5,000 acre-feet from Rocky Ford (counting all the lawyers' fees into the cost) why doesn't Aurora invest the money in a pipeline to its nearby Quincy Reservoir and reuse those 10,000 acre-feet?

In months past the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District has been concerned about Aurora's water reuse record. Aurora agreed in its first purchase of water from the ditch that it would not seek further decrees for use or exchange of Arkansas River Basin water without demonstrating it diligently reuses all of the reusable water it already owns rights to.

But now, the Conservancy District likely will find that Aurora's reuse record is satisfactory. If that becomes the case, the sprawling Denver suburb will have passed a major hurdle in its rape of the Arkansas Valley.

What's doubly concerning about this latest state of affairs is that the Conservancy District was formed to make more water more available along a river that is the most over-appropriated in the state. The Conservancy District manages the water imported from the under-appropriated Colorado River Basin, but now seems intent on allowing what literally is some of that same water to go out of this basin.

The result would be damage to the District's own tax base, as well as to property-taxing entities in Otero County, plus the general economic damage to the area, particularly hard-hit Rocky Ford.

This is conservancy? Sounds to us like insanity.

The board of the Conservancy District, although appointed, holds a position of public trust not just for the "water community" but for the entire basin. It was formed to improve the general welfare of this valley, and allowing water to be exported without a fight is a dereliction of that public trust.

Business as usual will end up meaning no business at all.