

The General Assembly hereby approves the compact, designated as the “South Platte River Compact”, between the states of Colorado and Nebraska, signed at the City of Lincoln, State of Nebraska, on the 27th day of April, A.D. 1923, by Delph E. Carpenter as the Commissioner for the State of Colorado, under authority of Chapter 243, Session Laws of Colorado, 1921, and Chapter 190, Session Laws of Colorado, 1923, and by Robert H. Willis as the Commissioner for the State of Nebraska, thereunto duly authorized, which said compact is as follows:

### **South Platte River Compact Between The States Of Colorado And Nebraska**

The State of Colorado and the State of Nebraska, desiring to remove all causes of present and future controversy between said States, and between citizens of one against citizens of the other, with respect to the waters of the South Platte River, and being moved by considerations of interstate comity, have resolved to conclude a compact for these purposes and, through their respective Governors, have named as their commissioners:

Delph E. Carpenter, for the State of Colorado; and Robert H. Willis, for the State of Nebraska; who have agreed upon the following articles:

#### Article I

In this compact:

1. The State of Colorado and the State of Nebraska are designated, respectively, as “Colorado” and “Nebraska”.
2. The provisions hereof respecting each signatory State, shall include and bind its citizens and corporations and all others engaged or interested in the diversion and use of the waters of the South Platte River in that State.
3. The term “Upper Section” means that part of the South Platte River in the State of Colorado above and westerly from the west boundary of Washington County, Colorado.
4. The term “Lower Section” means that part of the South Platte River in the State of Colorado between the west boundary of Washington County and the intersection of said river with the boundary line common to the signatory States.

5. The term “Interstate Station” means that streams gauging station described in Article II.

6. The term “flow of the river” at the Interstate Station means the measured flow of the river at said station plus all increment to said flow entering the river between the Interstate Station and the diversion works of the Western Irrigation District in Nebraska.

## Article II

1. Colorado and Nebraska, at their joint expense, shall maintain a stream gauging station upon the South Platte River at the river bridge near the town of Julesburg, Colorado, or at a convenient point between said bridge and the diversion works of the canal of the Western Irrigation District in Nebraska, for the purpose of ascertaining and recording the amount of water flowing in said river from Colorado into Nebraska and to said diversion works at all times between the first day of April and the fifteenth day of October of each year. The location of said station may be changed from year to year as the river channels and water flow conditions of the river may require.

2. The State Engineer of Colorado and the Secretary of the Department of Public Works of Nebraska shall make provision for the co-operative gauging at and the details of operation of said station and for the exchange and publication of records and data. Said state officials shall ascertain the rate of flow of the South Platte River through the Lower Section in Colorado and the time required for increases or decreases of flow, at points within said Lower Section, to reach the Interstate Station. In carrying out the provisions of Article IV of this compact, Colorado shall always be allowed sufficient time for any increase in flow (less permissible diversions) to pass down the river and be recorded at the Interstate Station.

## Article III

The waters of Lodgepole Creek, a tributary of the South Platte River flowing through Nebraska and entering said river within Colorado, hereafter shall be divided and apportioned between the signatory States as follows:

1. The point of division of the waters of Lodgepole Creek shall be located on said creek two miles north of the boundary line common to the signatory states.

2. Nebraska shall have the full and unmolested use and benefit of all waters flowing in Lodgepole Creek above the point of diversion and Colorado waives all present and future claims

to the use of said waters. Colorado shall have the exclusive use and benefit of all waters flowing at or below the point of division.

3. Nebraska may use the channel of Lodgepole Creek below the point of division and the channel of the South Platte River between the mouth of Lodgepole Creek and the Interstate Station, for the carriage of any waters of Lodgepole Creek which may be stored in Nebraska above the point of division and which Nebraska may desire to deliver to ditches from the South Platte River in Nebraska, and any such waters so carried shall be free from interference by diversions in Colorado and shall not be included as a part of the flow of the South Platte River to be delivered by Colorado at the Interstate Station in compliance with Article IV of this compact, provided, however, that such runs of stored water shall be made in amounts of not less than ten cubic feet per second of time and for periods of not less than twenty-four hours.

#### Article IV

The waters of the South Platte River hereafter shall be divided and apportioned between the signatory States as follows:

1. At all times between the fifteenth day of October of any year and the first day of April of the next succeeding year, Colorado shall have the full and uninterrupted use and benefit of the waters of the river flowing within the boundaries of the State, except as otherwise provided by Article VI.

2. Between the first day of April and the fifteenth day of October of each year, Colorado shall not permit diversions from the Lower Section of the river, to supply Colorado appropriations having adjudicated dates of priority subsequent to the fourteenth day of June, 1897, to an extent that will diminish the flow of the river at the Interstate Station, on any day, below a mean flow of 120 cubic feet of water per second of time, except as limited in paragraph three (3) of this Article.

3. Nebraska shall not be entitled to receive and Colorado shall not be required to deliver, on any day, any part of the flow of the river to pass the Interstate Station, as provided by paragraph two (2) of this Article, not then necessary for beneficial use by those entitled to divert water from said river within Nebraska.

4. The flow of the river at the Interstate Station shall be used by Nebraska to supply the needs of present perfected rights to the use of water from the river within said State before permitting diversions from the river by other claimants.

5. It is recognized that variable climatic conditions, the regulation and administration of the stream in Colorado, and other causes, will produce diurnal and other unavoidable variations and fluctuations in the flow of the river at the Interstate Station, and it is agreed that, in the performance of the provisions of said paragraph two (2), minor or compensating irregularities and fluctuations in the flow at the Interstate Station shall be permitted; but where any deficiency of the mean daily flow at the Interstate Station may have been occasioned by neglect, error or failure in the performance of duty by the Colorado water officials having charge of the administration of diversions from the Lower Section of the river in that state, each such deficiency shall be made up, within the next succeeding period of seventy-two hours, by delivery of additional flow at the Interstate Station, over and above the amount specified in paragraph two (2) of this Article, sufficient to compensate for such deficiency.

6. Reductions in diversions from the Lower Section of the river, necessary to the performance of paragraph two (2) of this Article by Colorado, shall not impair the rights of appropriators in Colorado (not to include the proposed Nebraska canal described in Article VI), whose supply has been so reduced, to demand and receive equivalent amounts of water from other parts of the stream in that State according to its Constitution, laws, and the decisions of its courts.

7. Subject to compliance with the provisions of this Article, Colorado shall have and enjoy the otherwise full and uninterrupted use and benefit of the waters of the river which hereafter may flow within the boundaries of that State from the first day of April to the fifteenth day of October in each year, but Nebraska shall be permitted to divert, under and subject to the provisions and conditions of Article VI, any surplus waters which otherwise would flow past the Interstate Station.

## Article V

1. Colorado shall have the right to maintain, operate, and extend, within Nebraska, the Peterson Canal and other canals of the Julesburg Irrigation District which now are or may hereafter be used for the carriage of water from the South Platte River for the irrigation of lands in both states, and Colorado shall continue to exercise control and jurisdiction of said canals and the carriage and delivery of water thereby. This Article shall not excuse Nebraska water users from making reports to Nebraska officials in compliance with the Nebraska laws.

2. Colorado waives any objection to the delivery of water for irrigation of lands in Nebraska by the canals mentioned in paragraph one (1) of this Article, and agrees that all interests in said canals and the use of waters carried thereby, now or hereafter acquired by owners of lands in Nebraska, shall be afforded the same recognition and protection as are the interests of similar land owners served by said canals within Colorado; provided, however, that Colorado reserves to those in control of said canals the right to enforce the collection of charges or assessments,

hereafter levied or made against such interest of owners of the lands in Nebraska, by withholding the delivery of water until the payment of such charges or assessments; provided, however, such charges or assessments shall be the same as those levied against similar interests of owners of lands in Colorado.

3. Nebraska grants to Colorado the right to acquire by purchase, prescription, or the exercise of eminent domain, such rights-of-way, easements or lands as may be necessary for the construction, maintenance, operation, and protection of those parts of the above mentioned canals which now or hereafter may extend into Nebraska.

## Article VI

It is the desire of Nebraska to permit its citizens to cause a canal to be constructed and operated for the diversion of water from the South Platte River within Colorado for irrigation of lands in Nebraska; that said canal may commence on the south bank of said river at a point southwesterly from the town of Ovid, Colorado, and may run thence easterly through Colorado along or near the line of survey of the formerly proposed "Perkins County Canal" (sometimes known as the "South Divide Canal") and into Nebraska, and that said project shall be permitted to divert waters of the river as hereinafter provided. With respect to such proposed canal it is agreed:

1. Colorado consents that Nebraska and its citizens may hereafter construct, maintain, and operate such a canal and thereby may divert water from the South Platte River within Colorado for use in Nebraska, in the manner and at the time in this Article provided, and grants to Nebraska and its citizens the right to acquire by purchase, prescription, or the exercise of eminent domain such rights-of-way, easements or lands as may be necessary for the construction, maintenance, and operation of said canal; subject, however, to the reservations and limitations and upon the conditions expressed in this Article which are and shall be limitations upon and reservations and conditions running with the rights and privileges hereby granted, and which shall be expressed in all permits issued by Nebraska with respect to said canal.

2. The net future flow of the Lower Section of the South Platte River, which may remain after supplying all present and future appropriations from the Upper Section, and after supplying all appropriations from the Lower Section perfected prior to the seventeenth day of December, 1921, and after supplying the additional future appropriations in the Lower Section for the benefit of which a prior and preferred use of thirty-five thousand acre-feet of water is reserved by subparagraph (a) of this Article, may be diverted by said canal between the fifteenth day of October of any year and the first day of April of the next succeeding year subject to the following reservations, limitations and conditions:

(a) In addition to the water now diverted from the Lower Section of the river by present perfected appropriations, Colorado hereby reserves the prior, preferred and superior right to store, use and to have in storage in readiness for use on and after the first day of April in each year, an aggregate of thirty-five thousand acre-feet of water to be diverted from the flow of the river in the Lower Section between the fifteenth day of October of each year and the first day of April of the next succeeding year, without regard to the manner or time of making such future uses, and diversions of water by said Nebraska canal shall in no manner impair or interfere with the exercise by Colorado of the right of future use of the water hereby reserved.

(b) Subject at all times to the reservation made by subparagraph (a) and to the other provisions of this Article, said proposed canal shall be entitled to divert five hundred cubic feet of water per second of time from the flow of the river in the Lower Sections, as of priority of appropriation of date December 17, 1921, only between the fifteenth day of October of any year and the first day of April of the next succeeding year upon the express condition that the right to so divert water is and shall be limited exclusively to said annual period and shall not constitute the basis for any claim to water necessary to supply all present and future appropriations in the Upper Section or present appropriations in the Lower Section and those hereafter to be made therein as provided in subparagraph (a).

3. Neither this compact nor the construction and operation of such a canal nor the diversion, carriage and application of water thereby shall vest in Nebraska, or in those in charge or control of said canal or in the users of water therefrom, any prior, preferred or superior servitude upon or claim or right to the use of any water of the South Platte River in Colorado from the first day of April to the fifteenth day of October of any year or against any present or future appropriator or use of water from said river in Colorado during said period of every year, and Nebraska specifically waives any such claims and agrees that the same shall never be made or asserted. Any surplus waters of the river, which otherwise would flow past the Interstate Station during such period of any year after supplying all present and future diversions by Colorado, may be diverted by such a canal, subject to the other provisions and conditions of this Article.

4. Diversion of water by said canal shall not diminish the flow necessary to pass the Interstate Station to satisfy superior claims of users of water from the river in Nebraska.

5. No appropriations of water from the South Platte River by any other canal within Colorado shall be transferred to said canal or be claimed or asserted for diversion and carriage for use on lands in Nebraska.

6. Nebraska shall have the right to regulate diversions of water by said canal for the purposes of protecting other diversions from the South Platte River within Nebraska and of avoiding violations of the provisions of Article IV; but Colorado reserves the right at all times to regulate and control the diversions by said canal to the extent necessary for the protection of all

appropriations and diversions within Colorado or necessary to maintain the flow at the Interstate Stations as provided by Article IV of this compact.

#### Article VII

Nebraska agrees that compliance by Colorado with the provisions of this compact and the delivery of water in accordance with its terms shall relieve Colorado from any further or additional demand or claim by Nebraska upon the waters of the South Platte River within Colorado.

#### Article VIII

Whenever any official of either State is designated herein to perform any duty under this compact, such designation shall be interpreted to include the state official or officials upon whom the duties now performed by such official may hereafter devolve, and it shall be the duty of the officials of the State of Colorado charged with the duty of the distribution of the waters of the South Platte River for irrigation purposes, to make deliveries of water at the Interstate Station in compliance with this compact without necessity of enactment of special statutes for such purposes by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado.

#### Article IX

The physical and other conditions peculiar to the South Platte River and to the territory drained and served thereby constitute the basis for this compact and neither of the signatory States hereby concedes the establishment of any general principle or precedent with respect to other interstate streams.

#### Article X

This compact may be modified or terminated at any time by mutual consent of the signatory States, but, if so terminated and Nebraska or its citizens shall seek to enforce any claims of vested rights in the waters of the South Platte River, the statutes of limitation shall not run in favor of Colorado or its citizens with reference to claims of the Western Irrigation District to the water of the South Platte River from the sixteenth day of April, 1916, and as to all other present claims from the date of the approval of this compact to the date of such termination, and the State of Colorado and its citizens who may be made defendants in any action brought for such purpose shall not be permitted to plead the statutes of limitation for such period of time.

## Article XI

This compact shall become operative when approved by the Legislature of each of the signatory States and by the Congress of the United States. Notice of approval by the Legislature shall be given by the Governor of each State to the Governor of the other State and to the President of the United States, and the President of the United States is requested to give notice to the Governors of the signatory States of the approval by the Congress of the United States.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Commissioners have signed this compact in duplicate originals, one of which shall be deposited with the Secretary of State of each of the Signatory States.

Done at Lincoln, in the State of Nebraska, this 27th day of April, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-three.

Delph E. Carpenter,

Robert H. Willis.

## HISTORICAL AND STATUTORY NOTES

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Complementary Legislation:

Neb.--R.R.S. 1943, § A1-105.

Derivation:

Laws 1925, H.B.484, § 1.

C.R.S.1953, § 148-4-1.

C.R.S.1963, § 149-4-1.

## CROSS REFERENCES



Eminent domain, governmental entities, corporations and persons authorized to use, see § 38-1-202.

## LAW REVIEW AND JOURNAL COMMENTARIES

Colorado's Water Resources. D. Monte Pascoe, 55 U.Colo.L.Rev. 391 (1984).

Effect of Water Law on the Development of Oil Shale. Jan G. Laitos, 58 Denv.L.J. 751 (1981).

Water rights protection in water quality law. Gregory J. Hobbs, Jr. & Bennett W. Raley, 60 U.Colo.L.Rev. 841 (1989).

## LIBRARY REFERENCES

2004 Main Volume

States 6.

Westlaw Topic No. 360.

C.J.S. States §§ 31 to 32, 143.

## NOTES OF DECISIONS

Construction and application 1

1. Construction and application

As a result of changed conditions since the compact was created, South Platte River Compact was deficient in establishing standards for administration within Colorado to provide for meeting its terms, and thus State Engineer was justified in promulgating rules for the river basin pursuant to his compact rule power; however, because State Engineer was still constrained by all of statutory restrictions imposed on his water rule power, including restrictions on his authority to approve out-of-priority uses of water involving replacement water, State Engineer's compact rule power did not authorize him to promulgate river basin rules giving him authority to unilaterally

approve replacement plans for out-of-priority groundwater depletions by pre-1972 wells.  
Simpson v. Bijou Irrigation Co., 2003, 69 P.3d 50, modified on denial of rehearing. States 6;  
Water Law 1042; Water Law 1618; Water Law 1620

C. R. S. A. § 37-65-101, CO ST § 37-65-101

Current through laws effective July 1, 2011, see scope for further details

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