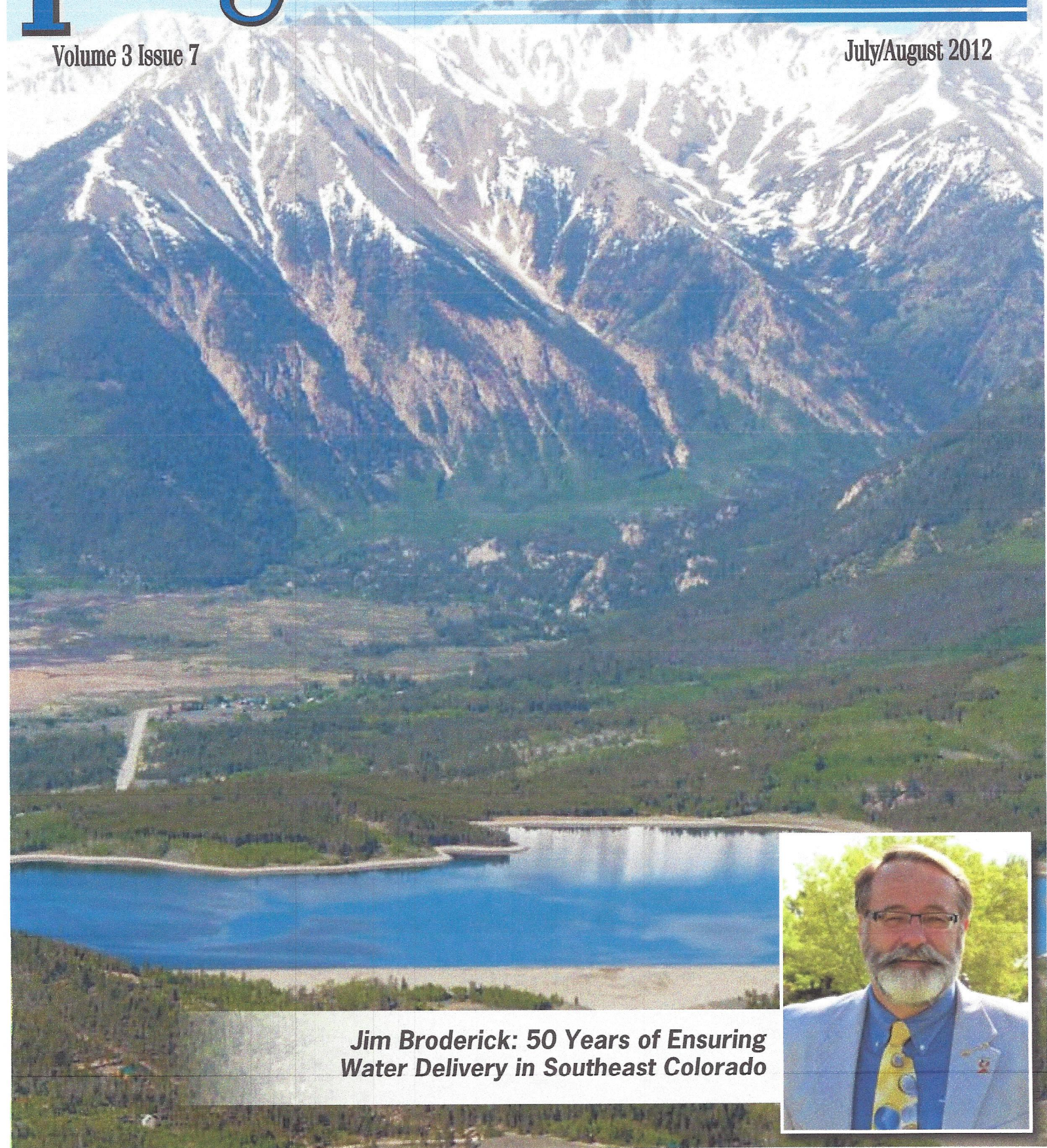


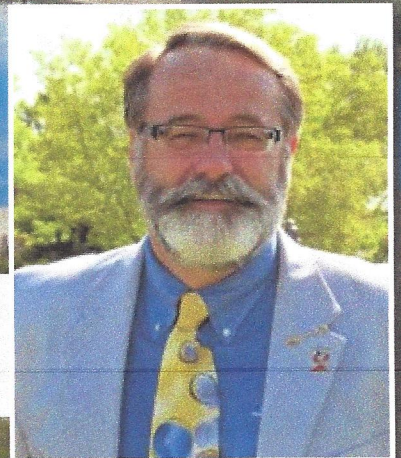
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***Jim Broderick: 50 Years of Ensuring
Water Delivery in Southeast Colorado***



California's Mountain Counties Gaining a Voice in the State Water Policy Debate

By John Kingsbury

The Mountain Counties Water Resources Association (MCWRA) was formed in the 1950s and represents 57 water districts, agencies, cities, counties, professional consultants, and regional agricultural interests located in the foothills and mountains on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada and a portion of the Cascade Mountain Range. I have been the executive director of the association since March 2011, but have been in the California water business for 24 years. I have also farmed in the Sierra Nevada region for 25 years, raising pigs, cattle, horses, poultry, and crops.

The MCWRA mission is to draw attention to critical issues affecting its region and to be a visible activist for the value of the Sierra Nevada watershed. Primarily, our objective is to protect our area of origin and senior water rights and make sure that in resolving the California Delta situation, the state doesn't redirect the problem to the Sierra Nevada communities.

New Focus on Outreach and Education

Since I came on board as the executive director a year ago last March, MCWRA has become a more active advocate in the California water policy debate. The board hired me because they wanted to get Mountain Counties and our valuable resources recognized. We play a critical role in the state's water management debate, and it is absolutely essential that our members have a voice. As a small organization, we realize that we cannot do it alone; our strength comes in partnering with other organizations with similar interests. One of the things I've tried to do

during my tenure is bring stakeholders together to figure out how we can improve programs like forest management.

In the past year, MCWRA has established a legislative and governmental affairs committee, a technical advisory committee, and strengthened its important relationship with the Association of California Water Agencies. We have partnered with other northern California associations and helped create the North State Water Alliance, whose members are committed to statewide water solutions that protect the economy, environment, and quality of life in northern California. Water is at stake, and it is an essential element to the well-being of northern California communities for economic growth, clean hydropower, reliable water supply, recreation and tourism, and wildlife protection. We need to work together to make people realize that statewide solutions must take into account the resources and needs of northern California; statewide, lawmakers and stakeholders need to embrace plans to enhance and protect the Mountain Counties' economy, environment, and quality of life.

Few Californians are aware of the extensive federal and private landholdings that exist in the Sierra Nevada watershed. In 2012, a survey was released gauging the knowledge of southern Californians about the California Delta. The survey found that 86 percent of the respondents knew almost nothing about the Delta's water issues. Most of the water policy decisions for California are made in the southern part of the state because that's where the population is concentrated. If 86 percent of those people know nothing about water in the delta, I strongly suspect they know even less about the Sierra Nevada watershed.

In the past year or two, we've made a concerted

French Lake, at an elevation of 7,500 feet, is part of a string of five lakes, including Bowman Lake, Sawmill Lake, Faucherie Lake, Meadow Lake and Fordyce Lake. Photo courtesy of Dave Carter



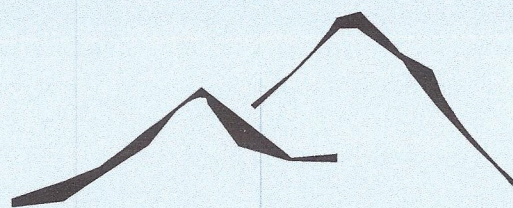
effort to educate not just the public, but to reach out to local, state, and federal policymakers. Many of these key decisionmakers live outside our region—they come into Sacramento during the work week and then go back to wherever they came from. They don't have a full understanding of this valuable resource: the Sierra Nevada watershed.

On May 21, the MCWRA and its members hosted a day-long familiarization tour of the Mountain Counties region for 49 federal, state, and local policymakers. The tour was part of a broad-based educational effort to enlighten these decisionmakers about the need to protect the sources of California's water. Along the way, our guests heard about the region's water management activities and practices. We stopped at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery in Rancho Cordova, where state Fish and Game and engineers described efforts to improve the river habitats for Chinook salmon and Steelhead trout. We stopped at Folsom Lake, which is the first responder to supply fresh water to the delta when delta water quality is impaired. Besides providing flood control, municipal supplies, reliable hydro-power generation, and agricultural water, the lake's cold water is essential for fish survival in the Lower American River. It is also one of the state's most popular recreation sites. While at the lake, we highlighted the Water Forum agreement, an agreement that was 10 years in the making. The agreement provides a safe and reliable water supply for the region's economic growth to the year 2030 and preserves the fishery, recreation, and aesthetic values of the lower American River.

After visiting the Placer County Water Agency's American River Pump Station on the north fork of the American River, which was built to provide a reliable water supply to the residents in Placer County, the tour concluded at the scenic 1,000-foot-deep canyon separating Placer and El Dorado Counties, where our guests heard from experts on watershed restoration projects. When all was said and done, it was a wonderful day and we had a fantastic opportunity to bring the state's decisionmakers to where we live, work, and recreate. We had a great response, and we plan to make this a recurring event.

State Legislation Threatens Northern California Water Supplies

In 2009, our members became concerned when the state passed the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta Reform Act. The act focuses, in part, on improving the delta ecosystem, a mind set that we fear could undermine our area of origin water rights and diminish our river flow. On its face, the legislation established two coequal goals. The first was to restore, protect, and enhance the delta ecosystem. The second was to ensure water reliability for the state. Unfortunately, we don't hear much about water reliability for the northern part of the state. Absent



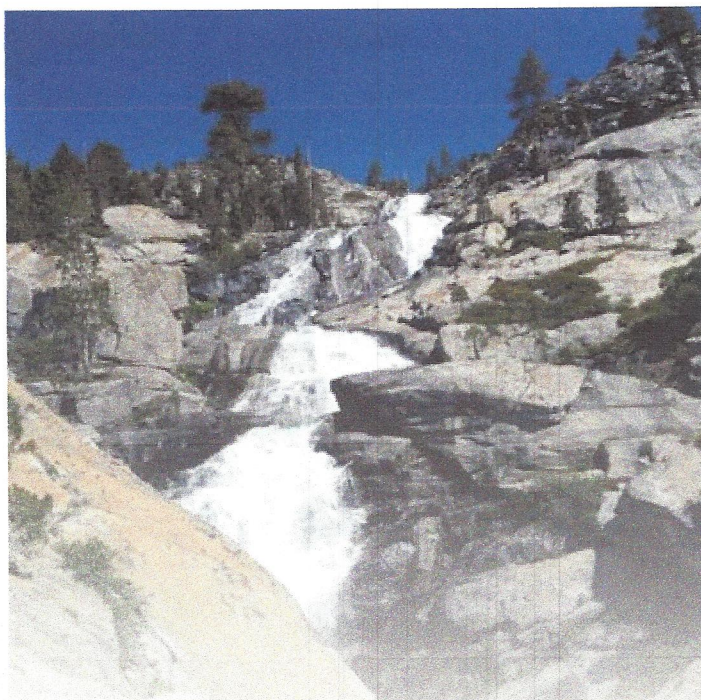
Mountain Counties

WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION

- The Mountain Counties region covers 15,758 square miles or 9.9 percent of the California's total land mass.
- The counties are the source of 40 percent of the state's water supply.
- Less than ½ of 1 percent of the state's population resides within the counties.
- 383 miles of wild and scenic rivers are under Federal and State Law within the counties.
- Ten major watershed areas account for 13,236 square miles.
- The counties boast 17 million acre-feet of natural runoff.
- The counties provide water for drinking, industrial uses, agriculture, hydroelectric power, flood control, protection of endangered fish and wildlife, and recreation.
- Fifteen of California's 58 counties are represented in whole or part, extending from Lassen County in the north to Fresno County in the south.

that acknowledgement, we're very concerned that we may end up losing water to solve the Delta crisis with no consideration for water reliability on our own farms, communities, and cities in the Mountain Counties. Ironically, meeting the flows necessary to satisfy the first coequal goal is likely to undermine the ability to achieve the second coequal goal, especially if you look at water reliability in the northern part of the state.

For years, water planners have been eyeing northern California watersheds as a supplemental source of fresh water to support endangered wildlife and stabilize water deliveries in southern California. In perspective, water exports, alteration of the delta, the introduction of nonnative predatory species, as well as degradation of water quality, all led to the delta's decline and are now driving the crisis there. Those of us here in the Mountain Counties fear that to improve the flows in the delta, the state will divert water that we depend on for sustaining and



Horsetail Falls is a waterfall in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, to the west of Lake Tahoe in the Desolation Wilderness of El Dorado County, California. Photo courtesy of Roberta Long

stabilizing our own communities and economic survival. We strongly oppose that. Not to put too fine a point on it, but we did not break the delta up here in the watershed.

Solving California Delta Issues Cannot Ignore the Source of the Delta's Water Flows

Mountain Counties water rights extend back to 1927 when California was developing the State Water Project. The state Water Code also establishes area of origin and senior water rights for the Sierra Nevada watershed. All the talk now is about improving the delta, with no regard for where the water is coming from, and people are completely failing to connect the dots. Fixing the delta at the expense of the Sierra Nevada watershed is almost like cutting off your head to save your body. The delta is the conveyance system for a good portion of the state; more than two-thirds of California residents—about 26 million people—receive at least a portion of their water supply from the delta. But the source of the delta is the Mountain Counties. When I go to Sacramento, I hear a lot of talk about building these tunnels or improving the delta, but you have to realize that first you must take care of the Sierra Nevada watershed before you start taking care of the delta. If you don't, you just redirect the problem up here, ultimately causing the delta to fail again. Taking a quote from a friend of mine, "If you manage for water in the watershed, everything else will fall into place."

Water wars have been going on in California before California was California, but I am somewhat optimistic that people are now beginning to realize that we cannot continue to look at each water problem in a vacuum; we

need to take all of the state's resources into consideration when developing site-specific solutions. If we can't find a way to make this work, we're going to be talking about it all over again in another 100 years. We are making every attempt to let our friends in southern California know that preserving the Sierra Nevada watershed is paramount for their survival and well-being, and that we need their help in preserving an essential water resource for the entire state.

Climate Change and Looming Water Shortages Add Urgency to the California Water Policy Debate

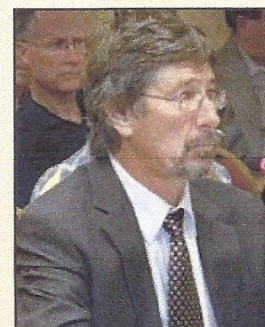
I believe water management has taken on an added layer of urgency in the past few years as we are beginning to experience first-hand the results of climate change. Two years ago, we had a look into the future. The rainfall that spring exceeded our storage capacity, and what the reservoirs couldn't hold was wasted and washed to the sea.

As precipitation patterns change from snow to rain, the state needs to be prepared to capture this rainfall to sustain a reliable water supply, which is one of the two coequal goals I talked about earlier.

I worry that we are going to see long-term droughts the likes of which we've never seen in our lifetime. Our region does not have the water resources or the options in the mountains like our friends in the Bay Area or in southern California. In most areas, we lack adequate storage, and we can't recycle water because elevations can fluctuate from 400 and 4,000 feet. It's just not practical to expend the energy to pump water back up the hill. Tapping into ground water basins is limited because most of the Sierra is on fractured rock, and we can't go to the sea.

It's often said that California only reacts in a crisis and until we have a crisis, nothing really happens. I don't think we can afford to wait for a crisis to happen before we begin to think about how to address long-term droughts or climate change-related problems that have already begun to surface. Our forefathers had a vision back in the 1960s that they needed to build a good, reliable water supply for us today, and we need to do the same thing for our future generations, climate change or not. We need our lawmakers to recognize that the entire state's economic and environmental well-being is dependent on decisions that are being made in Sacramento. I've invested my life in this region, and I need to keep on fighting until our voices are heard.

For additional information, please contact John Kingsbury at www.mountaincountieswater.com.



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