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# BANKING ON WATER

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# WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?

- Colorado faces the challenge of meeting the water needs of an urban population projected to double by 2050, when municipal demand may exceed supplies by 500,000 acre-feet.
- Historically, municipalities have practiced “buy-and-dry,” i.e., cities purchase irrigated land with water rights, change their use in Water Court, and permanently remove the water from the land. Under current trends, buy-and-dry transactions could take one-third of irrigated land in the South Platte out of production by 2050.
- The loss of irrigated agriculture negatively impacts rural communities, regional economies, and the natural resources that contribute to Colorado’s high quality of life. In areas where buy-and-dry has occurred, the loss of agricultural production has reverberated throughout the region, leading to widespread ag and non-ag businesses closures, reduced tax revenue, and weed proliferation and wind erosion that negatively impact other farms.

# WHAT'S A WATER BANK?

- Water Banking: an institutional mechanism used to facilitate the legal transfer and market exchange of water that encompasses a variety of water management practices, such as stored (banked) water, rotational land fallowing-water leasing, deficit irrigation, crop switching but does not include irrigation efficiency. The general goal is to move water in time and space to new users who could not otherwise access it or to existing users who might otherwise be curtailed in response to priority “calls” on the river.
- A water bank functions as a broker, clearinghouse, or market-maker, e.g., C-BT/Northern, Lower Arkansas Valley Super Ditch



# ALTERNATIVE TRANSFER METHODS

FLEXIBLE & INNOVATIVE WATER SUPPLY  
ALTERNATIVES

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL LEADERS IN COLORADO

