

## **WATER SUPPLY**

### **Gap looming for Ark Valley?**

**Farmers, cities could see tighter supply in just a few years**

**By CHRIS WOODKA**

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

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While the state is preparing for a water gap 50 years in the future, the crisis could come much sooner for the Arkansas River basin.

"The agriculture gap is coming sooner," said Alan Hamel, who represents the Arkansas River basin on the Colorado Water Conservation Board. "If you start thinking about it, even without any new ag demands or changes in crops, there is less water available."

Hamel reviewed comments he made at last month's CWCB meeting with the Arkansas Basin Roundtable on Wednesday.

Well augmentation rules adopted in 1996 and the 2010 surface irrigation rules have left farmers scrambling for additional water. They've found short-term supplies from Pueblo, Colorado Springs and Aurora, but those could dry up as the cities begin using more. "It's become obvious that both of those programs have become dependent on the cities," Hamel said.

The cities planned ahead following the 2002 drought, but another year of drought could accelerate the gap for the Arkansas Valley.

"I think people may be misled into thinking the gap will be critical in 2050, when it could hit us in 2013, 2014 or 2020," Hamel said. "We may need more water to meet the demands we have today." Hamel said the roundtable's efforts to support water leasing following studies, coupled with more storage projects have identified a way the valley could cope with nearterm water shortages.

"If we had built 75,000 acre-feet of additional storage, we could have filled it in 1999, and again in 2011," he said. [cwoodka@chieftain.com](mailto:cwoodka@chieftain.com)

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