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**Environmental Defense Fund, Partners Offer Common Sense Plan for Colorado River's Future**

***Major federal study to conclude that climate change will require major changes in river management***

(Boulder, CO – Dec. 11, 2012) A practical, flexible plan to bring balance back to the Colorado River is one of several approaches assessed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in a major study that will help determine the course of the iconic river and the seven Colorado River Basin states that depend on it.

The plan proposed by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Western Resource Advocates, the Nature Conservancy, Protect the Flows, Pacific Institute and Nuestro Rio starkly contrasts with a separate proposal by the Colorado River Basin states' water agencies and utilities to build an expensive 700-mile pipeline from the Upper Missouri River to Colorado. The states' utilities also advocate for construction of five large desalination plants off the coast of California and Mexico to turn ocean water into drinking water.

The landmark study is expected to confirm that demand for the Colorado River's water will outpace supply in coming years. Referred to as the [Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study](#), it provides an important look at the costs and benefits of a range of proposals to ensure the Colorado River Basin region has enough water to support its economy, environment and quality of life.

More than 30 million people in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming depend on the Colorado River for drinking water, crops, ranching, tourism, energy and business.

"The Colorado River is the lifeblood of the dry West and what makes it possible for us to live in this spectacular region. But we can't keep bleeding the river dry," says Dan Grossman, Rocky Mountain regional director of EDF. "The Basin Study says loud and clear that it's time for a new approach that puts conservation first, so we can both maintain the river we love and ensure our cities, businesses, farms and families have the water we need."

The study evaluates more than 100 options and strategies to see how they would address the challenges facing the water supply in the Colorado River, both alone and in four "portfolios" that combine different options.

Known as Portfolio C, the plan by EDF and its partners emphasizes modern river management and includes strategies such as conservation, reuse of waste water for irrigation, and desalination of brackish groundwater. Conservation is comparatively cheaper, faster and easier to implement than strategies contained in other portfolios, which include the costly new pipeline and the impractical, energy-guzzling plants to desalinate ocean water.

Jennifer Pitt, EDF's Colorado River Project Director, said, "Two things are clear: One, there's a big problem and if we don't do something about it we leave our children a legacy of water shortages and

dried up rivers; and two, everyone agrees on the common sense solutions like more water conservation throughout the basin. There's plenty we can do now before we need to decide on the more controversial solutions like expensive infrastructure projects."

Portfolio C also relies on market-oriented solutions, such as water banking in which conserved water is "banked" to help water users in times of drought and to benefit healthy river flows for boating, rafting and the environment.

"These approaches will ensure we have the water we need for thriving economies and prosperous communities in the Basin while still protecting the river and the ecosystems and wildlife it supports," Grossman added.

For the news and background about the Colorado River and the Study please visit [www.coloradoriverbasin.org](http://www.coloradoriverbasin.org).

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*Members of the media seeking more information about the Colorado River Basin Water Demand and Supply Study, including a fact sheet, comparison of the four portfolios, or to speak with one of EDF's experts, can contact Chandler Clay at 202-572-3312 or [cclay@edf.org](mailto:cclay@edf.org).*

*[Environmental Defense Fund](#) is a leading national nonprofit organization that creates transformational solutions to the most serious environmental problems. EDF links science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships.*

*[Western Resource Advocates](#) is a regional nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the West's land, air and water. Offices or staff are located in Boulder (CO), Phoenix and Tucson (AZ), Pocatello (ID), Santa Fe (NM), Carson City (NV) and Salt Lake City (UT).*

*[The Nature Conservancy](#) is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than 1 million members have protected nearly 120 million acres worldwide.*

*[Protect the Flows](#) is a coalition of over 600 businesses in the seven Colorado River Basin states that own and operate businesses in communities along the Colorado River and its tributaries.*

*[Pacific Institute](#) is one of the world's leading independent nonprofit research organizations working on the world's water. The Institute conducts interdisciplinary research and partners with stakeholders to produce solutions that advance environmental protection, economic development, and social equity.*

*[Nuestro Rio](#) is a network of Latinos in the West that use our collective voice to educate our communities about the history of Latinos and the Colorado River and to tell our story as we advocate for a healthy river for generations to come.*