



## HB18-1151

**SHORT TITLE:** Colorado Water Conservation Board Approve Deficit Irrigation Pilot Projects

**LONG TITLE:** Concerning the authorization of deficit irrigation pilot projects approved by the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

**SPONSORS:** Rep. Arndt/Rep. Catlin and Sen. Crowder

**COMMITTEES:** House Committee – Agriculture, Livestock, & Natural Resources

**PURPOSE OF THE BILL:** To include deficit irrigation among the 15 allowable pilot projects approved by the water conservation board while excluding that decreased use from calculation of historic consumption. The unused water could then be leased for other uses pursuant to terms already in place for the pilot projects.

**PROponents OF THE BILL:** We understand that this bill comes from the Lower Arkansas basin

**POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS:** Municipalities, other water users seeking temporary use of water decreed for irrigation.

**BACKGROUND:** The bill appears to be an expansion of previous legislation authorizing pilot projects to allow temporary lease of water made available through fallowing. This bill would not go so far as fallowing but would rely on reduced consumption by irrigation.

**Is this bill necessary this year?** It does not appear that there is a deadline to be met.

**How does the bill change current law?** Current law allows up to 15 pilot projects for fallowing and leasing of water decreed for irrigation of agricultural lands. This bill adds deficit irrigation, defined as irrigation with less than optimal water use, to the demonstration projects which the CWCB may approve. As with fallowing, deficit irrigation may not be approved for more than 30% of a single irrigated farm for more than ten years, nor more than three years in a ten year period.

**Does the bill affect the prior appropriations system:** It is not intended to do so; however, it allows for use of the water subject to the lease agreement by an entity that does not have priority. A possible problem could arise if the amount of decreased irrigation water allowed under the lease is not accurately accounted for. More information is needed.

**How is the bill implemented?** Persons wishing to lease water made available by decreasing their own irrigation use would apply to the CWCB for approval of a pilot project, meeting the terms and conditions of the program.

**Practical considerations:** How much water will be made available through simply decreasing the amount of irrigation to a crop as opposed to fallowing a portion of the land? Can the amount of decrease be made consistent when temperatures, evaporation and other factors vary? How will these variables affect the amount of water that can be leased?

**Fiscal Impact:** None identified.