



UPPER ARKANSAS
WATER CONSERVANCY
 DISTRICT

A FOOTNOTE IN HISTORY AS THE ARKANSAS RIVER
 FLOWS THROUGH THE UPPER VALLEY

We are here during June 2009 to commemorate the founding of a small water conservancy district inspired by the genius of George Everett, Jr., and created by irrigators, businessmen, politicians, a creative journalist and ordinary citizens of Chaffee and Fremont Counties, all of whom were energized by events of 1977. In September 1977 a group of our own died in route to southwestern Colorado to join others in a political battle combating a state agency in its efforts to create minimum stream flows on the natural streams of Colorado. The loss of our friends, companions and family inspired a few courageous irrigators to defy the water regulators of the state who demanded senior ditch water appropriators curtail irrigation while junior well water appropriators were allowed to pump in the lower valley. The defiance of the ditch owners resulted in a lost cause – at least for that moment.

From these setbacks a phoenix arose among the citizens of the upper valley – the inspiration of rancher Everett took on a life of its own. Without recorded opposition, a small band of neighbors and friends petitioned the 11th Judicial District Court in Fremont County with signatures from throughout the valley requesting a decree creating Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District. April 27, 1979, Judge Max Wilson signed the decree creating the new district. The court appointed seven directors all of whom were active participants in promotion and organization of the district. The first meeting of the new board was held on June 7, 1979 – 30 years ago.

The first board of directors included:

Denzel Goodwin	RE-3	Fremont County
Thomas Young	RE-3	Fremont County
Glenn Everett	R-32-J	Chaffee County
Wendell Hutchinson	R-32-J	Chaffee County
Roy Bowen	R-31	Chaffee County
Franklin Springer	R-31	Chaffee County
Verl Freek	At Large	

Ken Baker, one of the original district organizers, was appointed by directors as general manager and attorney. Jimmy McCormick, one of the most active petitioners, was selected as honorary treasurer and continues in this role. Dick Dixon, a professional journalist, served as secretary of the Upper Arkansas Water Association that was the original political entity sponsoring the new water conservancy district. For professional reasons Dixon chose not to become an official member of the new district, but has served as an ally. He is the husband of Terry Dixon, who was a staff member of the original water association and the district since 1978. Creation of the Water Activity Enterprise to manage the augmentation plan in 1994 introduced to our office and to the local water community Linda Foster who manages our augmentation program.

The original office of the District was 122 West Second St., Salida, the law office of Ken Baker. In 1991 John Peeples and Ken Baker sold the building to the district and it assumed part of the building as its official headquarters. August 14, 2001, the district sold the original office building and acquired the current office complex at 339 E. U.S. 50. From early day meetings in the Chaffee County Court House and Chaffee County Bank, the district board graduated to the modern board room in the Enterprise Building.

The "Little Engine That Could" outgrew Ken Baker's briefcase and the directorship of seven men in boots and blue jeans became a technologically state-of-the-art organization under the leadership of Terry Scanga. The district now includes all of Fremont County, Custer County, Chaffee County, the southern edge of El Paso County, and the Silver Creek area of Saguache County. The original boundary of the district included of approximately 1500 square miles and now includes 3300 square miles. The district owns and manages a Water Activity Enterprise that operates the largest water augmentation plan in Colorado and continues to expand and serve residents within its boundaries. The District Board of Directors includes thirteen members:

Glenn Everett	R-32-J	Chaffee County
Bob Senderhauf	Custer	Custer County
Tim Canterbury	RE-3	Fremont County
Greg Felt	R-32-J	Chaffee County
Bill Donley	Custer	Custer County
Frank McMurry	R-31	Chaffee County
Jeff Ollinger	R-31	Chaffee County
Tom French	RE-3	Fremont County
Bill Jackson	RE-1	Fremont County
Mannie Colon	RE-1	Fremont County
Bill McGuire	RE-2	Fremont County
John Sandefur	RE-2	Fremont County
Thomas Goodwin	At Large	

Within the three decades from birth to maturity, the district has fought two major battles. The battle with the pumpers in the lower valley was settled by a Special Master who declared well users were pumping out of priority and violated the Arkansas River Compact. A political battle among enemies from within and enemies without, testing the right to annex territory to the district, was settled by the Colorado Supreme Court. The court reasoned the district needed to get on with its business and dismissed the opposition. Justice prevailed--the good guys won.

Ken Baker
 UAWCD Board Consultant