



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Landmark Agreement Launches Three Lakes CLEAR Initiative with \$30 Million Commitment to Improve Grand Lake Clarity

Berthoud, CO – The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (Northern Water), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Grand County, the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG), the Colorado River Water Conservation District (Colorado River District), and the Town of Grand Lake today announced a landmark agreement establishing the Three Lakes CLEAR Initiative, a long-term effort to improve water clarity, watershed health, and resilience across Grand Lake, Shadow Mountain Reservoir, and Granby Reservoir (the Three Lakes). The Three Lakes System is part of the federal Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT) Project, which collects and stores water in Grand County and then diverts it for use by C-BT beneficiaries on the Front Range through a series of reservoirs, ditches, and tunnels. The CLEAR Initiative continues the ongoing Grand Lake Adaptive Management framework for managing C-BT Project operations and incorporates additional collaborative initiatives to enhance clarity and provide watershed health benefits within and upstream of the Three Lakes System.

CLEAR stands for Clarity, Legacy, Ecosystem, Adaptation and Resilience, reflecting the shared commitment by partners to protect and improve this important resource.

The agreement marks a major milestone following two decades of coordinated work to improve clarity in Grand Lake and water quality in Shadow Mountain Reservoir and reflects a renewed commitment to sustained action and investment. It also provides a long-term framework to continue and expand this work as the Grand Lake Clarity Stakeholders' Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), established in 2016, expires in December 2026.



Today's action renews and expands upon that MOU, protecting the Three Lakes and tributary watersheds for the next 30 years.

As part of the agreement, Northern Water, the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District Municipal Subdistrict, and the Windy Gap Firing Project Enterprise will provide \$30 million over 30 years to address both C-BT system operations and the broader environmental conditions influencing water quality by supporting implementation of projects and initiatives that address watershed and lake conditions. Of that amount, \$20 million will be directed toward project funding to accelerate near-term, priority on-the-ground improvements initiatives, while \$10 million will build a long-term reserve fund intended to provide sustained, legacy funding and the flexibility to address future needs as conditions evolve beyond the 30-year agreement.

The initiative continues and strengthens the collaborative adaptive management of C-BT Project operations in the Three Lakes that began with the original MOU, using real-time adjustments to improve clarity in Grand Lake while balancing water supply, power generation, and environmental needs. At the same time, the initiative establishes a dedicated fund directed by the parties, to invest in watershed and system health projects that improve water quality and ecological conditions across the Three Lakes system and tributary watersheds.

Projects will focus broadly on watershed and forest health, reducing sediment and nutrient inputs, improving lake and reservoir conditions, and strengthening monitoring and adaptive management tools across the interconnected system.

"The foundation for this landmark agreement to improve Grand Lake clarity and create the Three Lakes CLEAR Fund was laid over decades of effort by many, representing all Parties, to improve and use our knowledge of the Three Lakes System for actionable projects that can move the needle for better Grand Lake clarity. The Parties have differing interests for sure, but we strive to find common ground because we have a spirit of mutual trust and respect," said Jeff Metzger, Town of Grand Lake.

Northern Water emphasized the enduring framework the agreement creates to support the long-term health and resilience of the Three Lakes System while benefiting communities on both sides of the Continental Divide. "The Three Lakes CLEAR Initiative demonstrates how shared stewardship of Grand Lake clarity and the health of the broader



Three Lakes System and its watersheds can strengthen the long-term resilience of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project for the benefit of Front Range water users while supporting the natural resources and thriving West Slope communities that depend on them. By creating a lasting legacy of collaboration and investment, this agreement helps ensure these shared resources will continue to be protected for generations to come," said Esther Vincent, Environmental Services Director for Northern Water.

Grand County Board of County Commissioners Chair Edward Raegner highlighted the importance of the agreement for Grand County and the local communities that have stewarded the Three Lakes watershed for generations. "This 30-year MOU reflects an unprecedented commitment to Grand Lake's health and the long-term future of the Three Lakes System. Grand County is proud to work alongside our partners to help preserve Grand Lake's water clarity for generations to come."

The Colorado River District emphasized the value of continuing the collaborative approach that has guided clarity improvements in the Three Lakes System for the past decade. "This MOU continues the collaborative approach that has guided clarity work in Grand Lake and water quality throughout the Three Lakes system since 2016. Over the past decade, we've gained valuable knowledge about how to effectively use adaptive management in the system, and this agreement will provide a strong foundation to continue that work for the long term. As a signatory to this MOU, the Colorado River District will continue to be a voice for the Western Slope and advocate for solutions that protect our water resources and the communities which depend on them," said Rebecca Briesmoore, Senior Water Resources Engineer with the Colorado River District.

NWCCOG Executive Director Jon Stavney also welcomed the long-term commitment. "Since the 1970s, our organization has been engaged in multiple efforts to protect and enhance the water quality of Grand Lake. This MOU represents a new beginning backed by a long-term commitment of substantial resources to the clarity of Grand Lake."

Additional details will be shared as implementation moves forward.