

From the December 6, 2011, issue of the Price Sun Advocate.
Guest column, by William Krompel.

In connection with publisher, Richard Shaw's October 25, 2011 editorial entitled "Governors narrows state of mind," in the Sun Advocate, I believe Governor Herbert and other relevant state and federal officials need to examine the issue of Sanpete's proposed Narrows dam and reservoir project with a wider focus.

Because of the importance of this issue to Carbon County and the entire state, I've spent well over two decades studying and collecting information on this issue from officials of Utah State Water Rights, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, water users on both sides of the mountain, energy industries, fishing, recreation, conservation, environmental groups, etc. In addition on a number of occasions I've toured and hiked this region above Scofield Reservoir with some of these individuals from the above mentioned groups. This includes hiking the National Recreation Trail along the Upper Fish Creek and touring the headwaters of the Price River above Scofield Reservoir where the Narrows Reservoir is proposed to be built. I've also seen firsthand some of the Sanpete water users trans-mountain ditches and diversion tunnels in this region

Looking at this from a wider perspective, here are some relevant facts and conclusions I've drawn on this important issue that need to be considered.

*For decades Sanpete water users have and are currently diverting significant amounts of fresh water from Emery and Carbon Counties natural water drainages; an on average estimated 10,000 acre-feet per year according to Utah State Water Resources officials. This is accomplished by a network of over 68 miles of Trans-mountain ditches and tunnels operated by Sanpete water users that run along the top of the Wasatch Plateau. Some of diverted water is stored in the Sanpete water users private reservoirs known as Fairview Lakes. I have copies of documents that list Sanpete's trans-mountain diversion ditches and water rights from the U.S. Forest Service and State Water Rights.

*Sanpete Water Conservancy District, per a 1984 legal agreement, secured an additional trans-mountain water right of 5,400 acre feet per year. The 1984 agreement can be viewed on Sanpete Water District web page at :www.Narrowsproject.com

However, for the last 27 years since 1984 according to Bureau of Reclamation officials, none of the 5,400 acre-feet have been put to beneficial use. Furthermore, the 1984 agreement did not, according to court rulings, guarantee funding and construction of Sanpete's proposed 17,000 acre-foot Narrows Reservoir.

*Carbon water users also have equally valid Scofield Reservoir water rights of 30,000 acre-feet per year that have consistently, for many decades, put to beneficial use.

*The heart of the problem in my view is the over allocation of water rights by the state. Some

U.S. Forest officials claim water rights on some rivers and streams are over-allocated by a factor of two or three times the available water. For example, proponents of the Narrows project claim that "they only want to store water in their proposed Narrows reservoir that is spilling over the spillway at Scofield every year which they say is of no use to either Carbon or Emery Counties. Yet the history of 67 years of water data at Scofield Reservoir from 1945 to 2011 show Scofield only spills about 30 percent of the time. Scofield last spilled in 1999, 12 years ago-even with large quantities of fresh water being pumped into Scofield from Skyline mine since 2000.

*During drought cycles Carbon water users receive only fractional parts of their yearly water rights of 30,000 acre-feet. In 1961, a drought year, only 6,790 acre-feet of maximum active storage at Scofield was available or 22 percent of Carbon water user water rights. In 1991, also a drought year, only 3,000 acre-feet were available out of maximum storage of 65,800. That was 5 percent of the capacity of the reservoir. This represents 10 percent of Carbon's water right. Had the Narrows Reservoir been in place during the time, Scofield Reservoir would have been completely out of usable water at least two years before the drought finally ended and 20,000 citizens lives and property would have been put in jeopardy.

*In the last drought cycle, which started in 2000, the maximum active storage at Scofield on May 14, 2004 would have been more like 6,000 acre feet or less than 10 percent of capacity. What saved us was the fresh water that Skyline Mine has been pumping into Scofield since 2000 at the rate of 6,000 gallons per minute or nearly 10,000 acre feet per year. This is a temporary phenomenon that will no longer be available once mine operations cease.

*In closing I think it is imperative that the governor and other relevant State and Federal officials understand the seriousness of this issue by looking at Sanpete's proposed Narrows project in this broader context to avert a calamity to Carbon County's energy-based economy that benefits the entire state and nation as well as its 20,000 citizens that rely on this water supply.

The proposed Narrows project, if built, will certainly intensify the frequency and duration of drought effect cycles in Carbon. And the droughts will become so severe that it is very likely there will be recurring states of water shortage emergencies in Carbon County.

To read Sanpete's answers to Mr. Krompel's comments above, [click here](#).