

Brophy's water rights bill fails in committee

Written by Marianne Goodland
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The South Platte River Basin may have benefitted from the September 2013 floods, but that benefit was at best short-term. That's according to witnesses who testified recently at a hearing on a bill carried by Sen. Greg Brophy (R-Wray).

Senate Bill 14-072 claimed the flood, which inundated parts of the South Platte basin, created its own augmentation plan that fully replaced groundwater depletions for junior water rights holders.

But most of the witnesses told the Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources and Energy Committee last Thursday there's no evidence of that benefit to the aquifer. Wells near the river saw some increases, according to Deputy State Water Engineer Kevin Rein, but those further away from the river saw less impact. Any increases were only temporary, he said.

For example, in October and November, the North Sterling Reservoir filled with water from the flood, and as a result lower-priority wells did not receive orders to stop pumping water during that time.

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