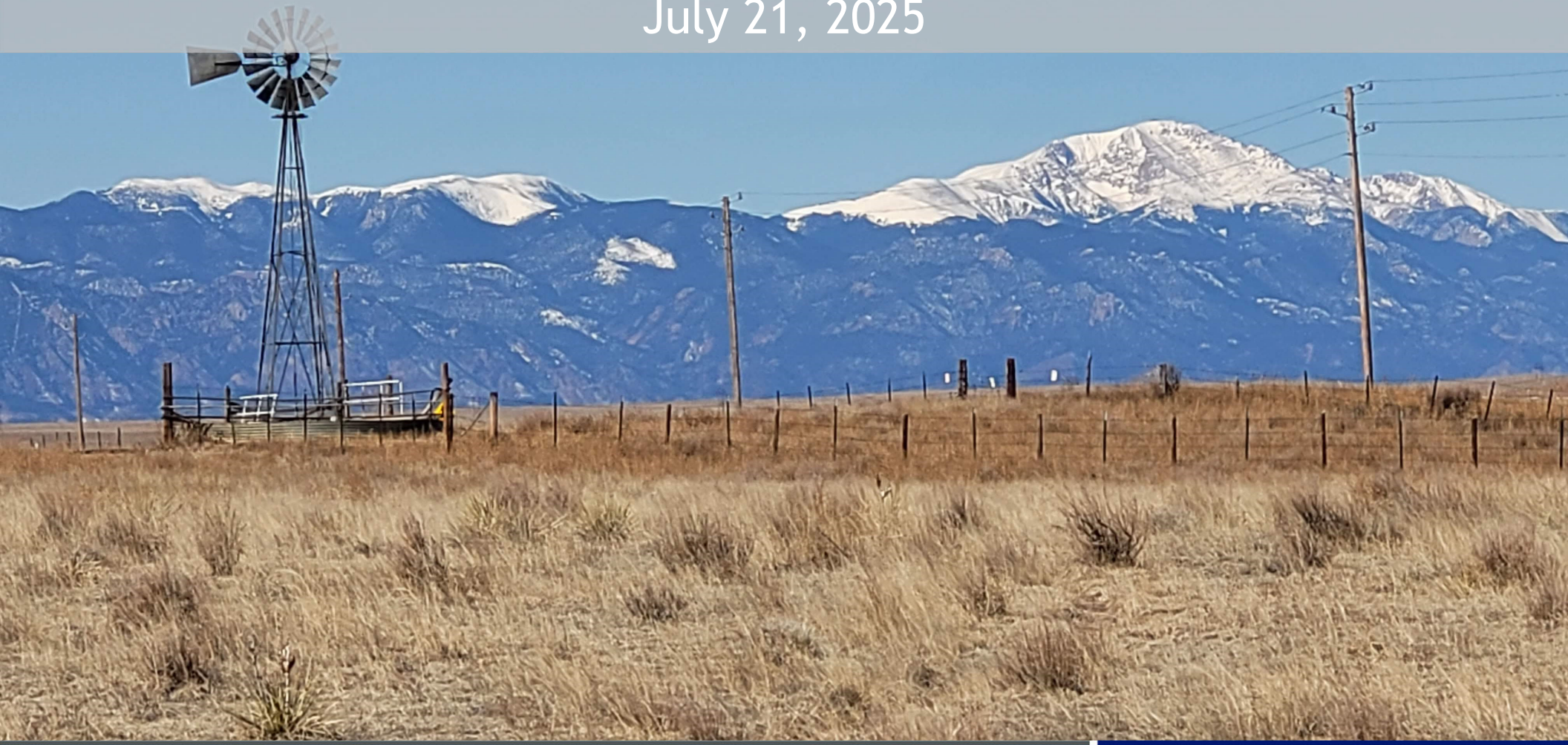


Western States Water Rights and State Land Boards

Managing the Colorado State Land Board's Water Resources

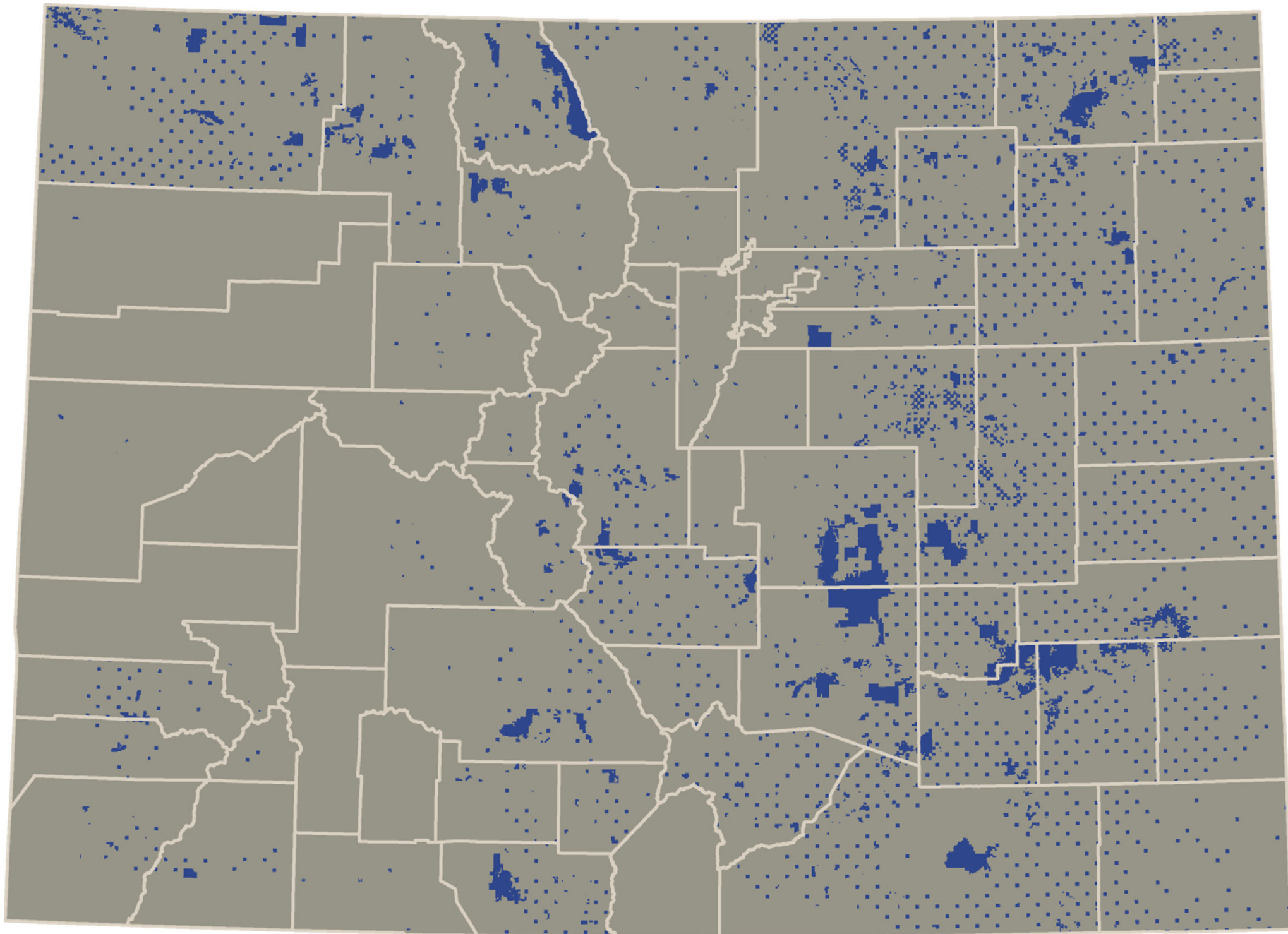
July 21, 2025



An innovative land trust funding Colorado schools since 1876.



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State Land Board





WATER ASSETS



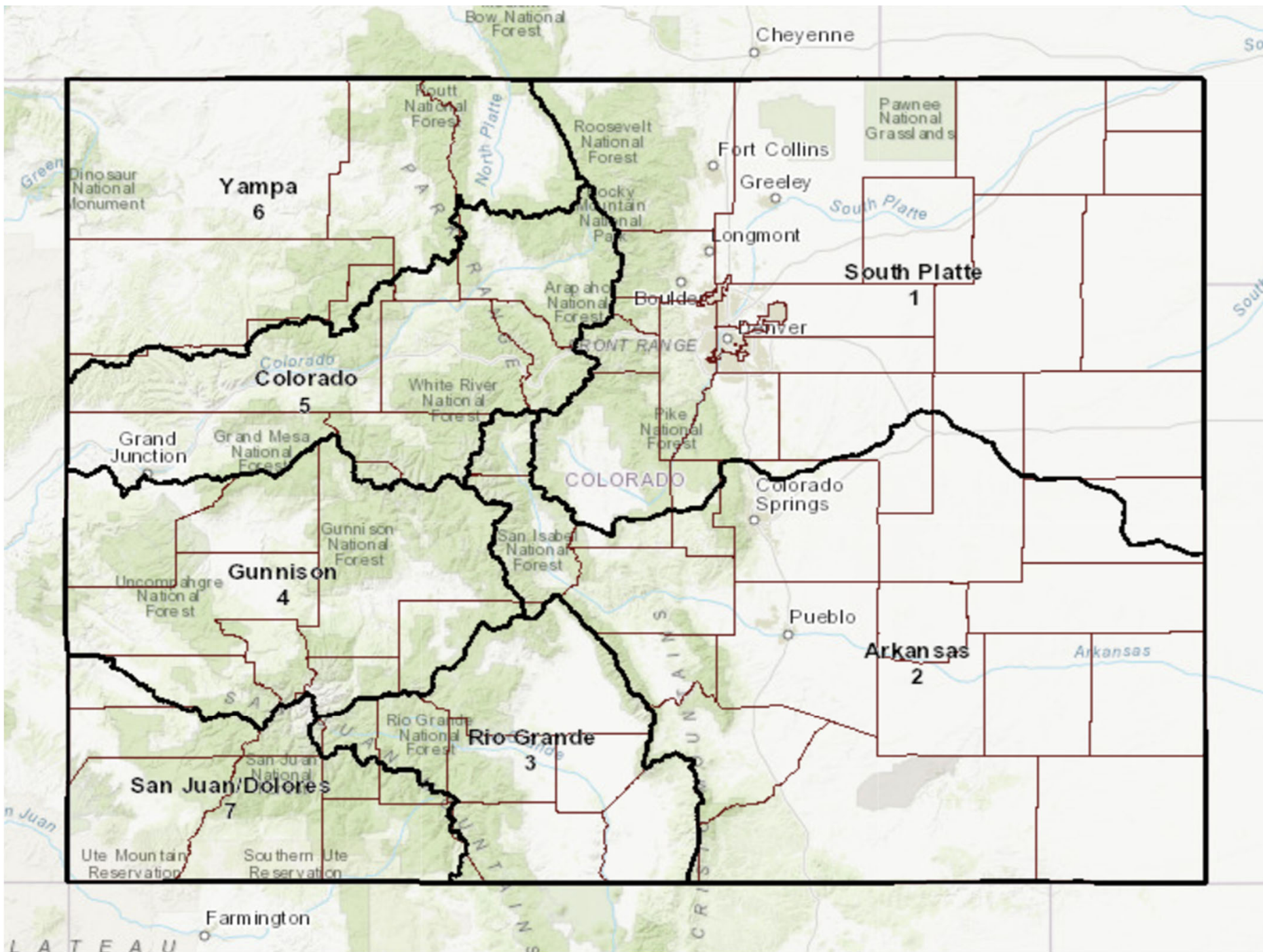
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RIVER BASINS



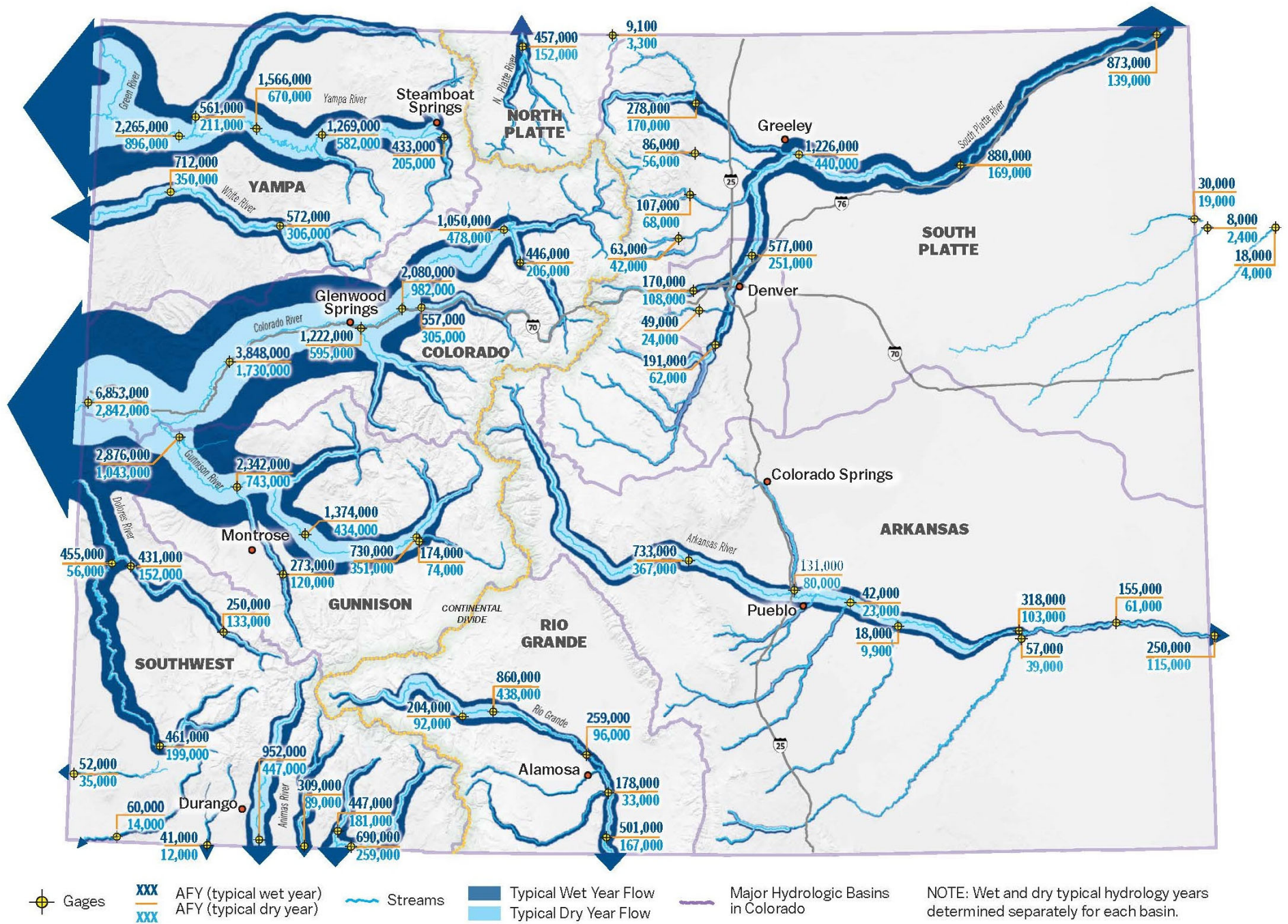
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RIVER BASINS



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MANAGEMENT BACKDROP



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State Land Board



1859 – Gold Rush in Colorado

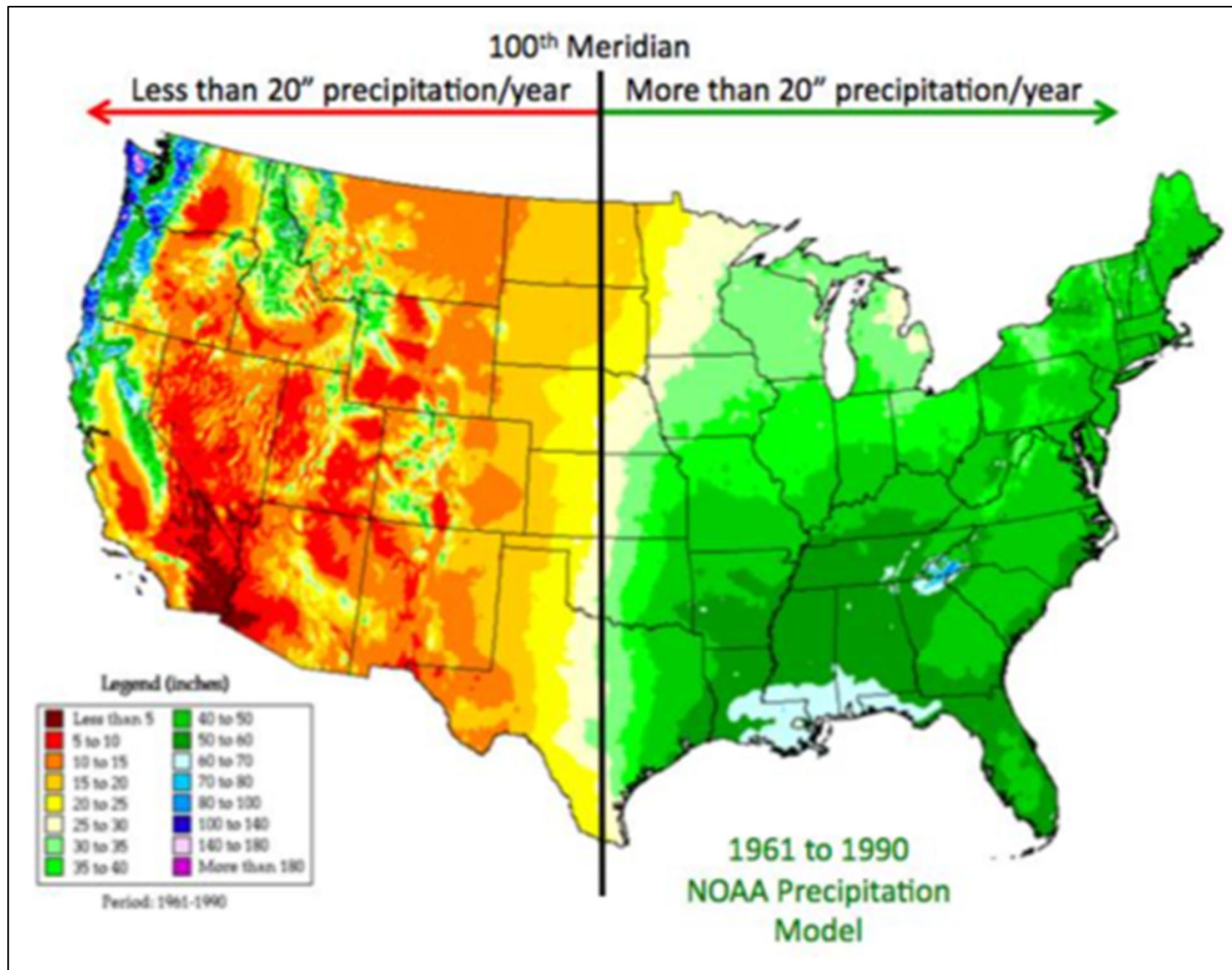
1876 – Colorado becomes a state,
and a strict Doctrine of Prior
Appropriation is adopted in the
state constitution, an
innovative idea for its time.



HISTORY



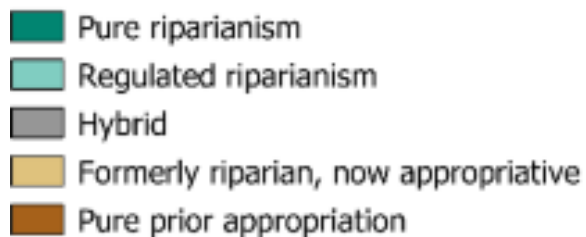
COLORADO
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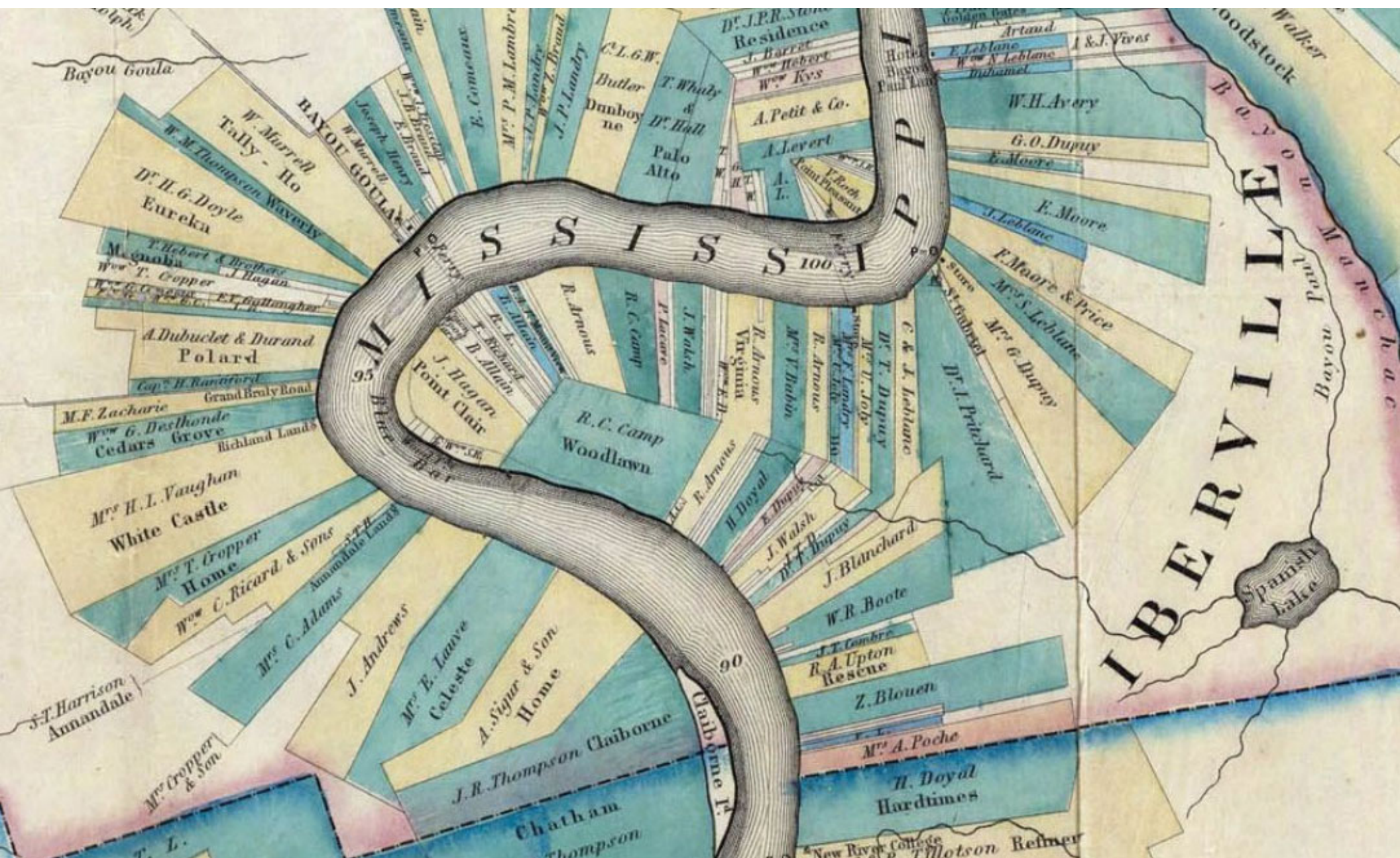
SCARCITY



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State Land Board



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State Land Board

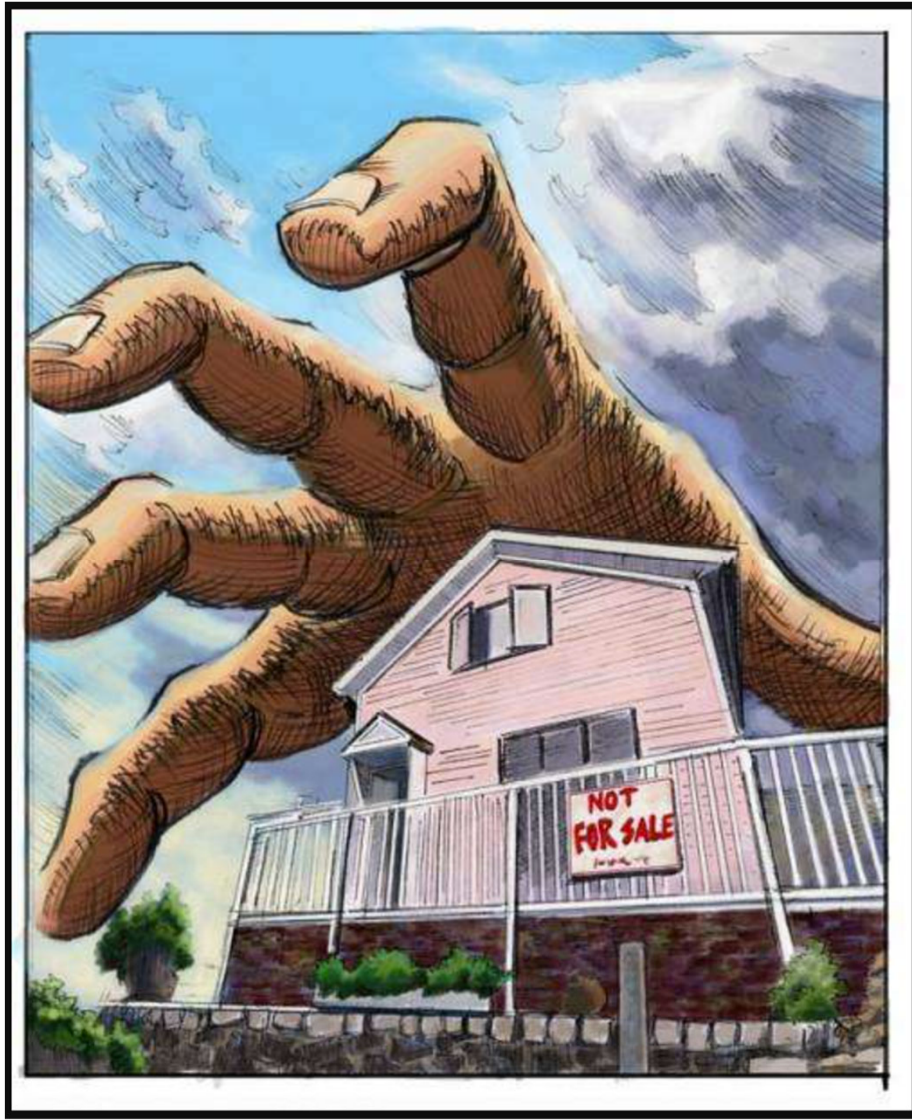


WATER LAW DOCTRINE



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State Land Board

- Water is a **public resource**
- Water is **scarce** in Colorado
- Rights to use water are **carefully administered** to ensure the maximum public benefit



“They’re
gonna take
MY water!”

PUBLIC RESOURCE



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**Executive
administers
water rights**

**Legislative makes
laws regarding water
rights**

**Judicial
grants water
rights**



WATER RIGHTS



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Water rights are defined by the water court decree:

- Priority **Date** (Appropriation Date + Administration Date)
- Amount (**flow** or **volume**)
- **Types** of Use
- **Location** of Use (either express or implied)
- **Diversion** Point
- Source (**surface** or **groundwater**)

WATER RIGHTS



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State Land Board

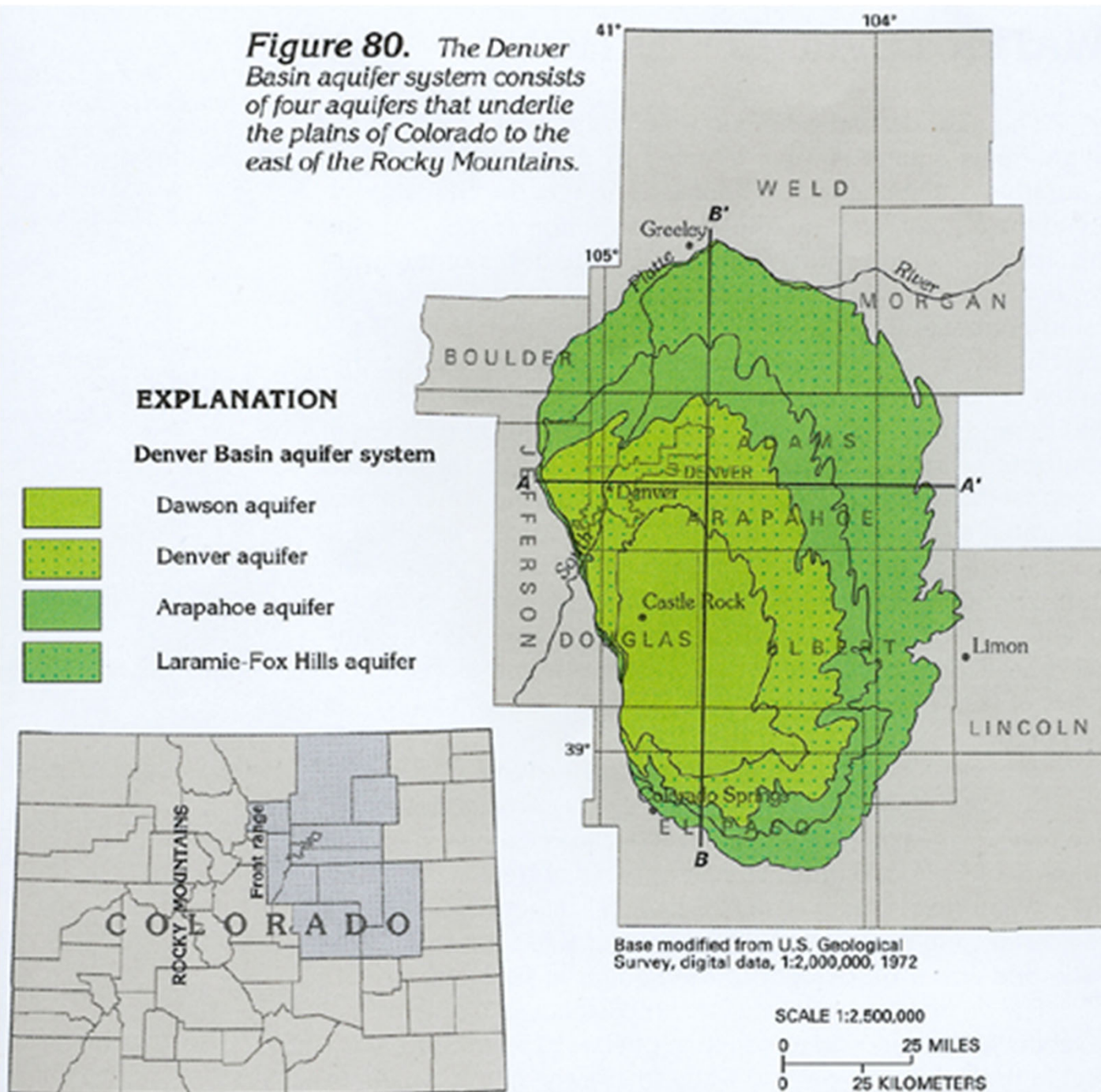
- Tributary - hydrologic connection to surface water
- Non-Tributary - no hydrologic connection to surface water
- Not Non-Tributary - hydrologic connection in Denver Basin
- Designated - ground water within the boundaries of a designated ground water basin

GROUNDWATER



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Figure 80. The Denver Basin aquifer system consists of four aquifers that underlie the plains of Colorado to the east of the Rocky Mountains.



DENVER BASIN GROUNDWATER



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WATER BUSINESS



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State Land Board

Defense

Offense

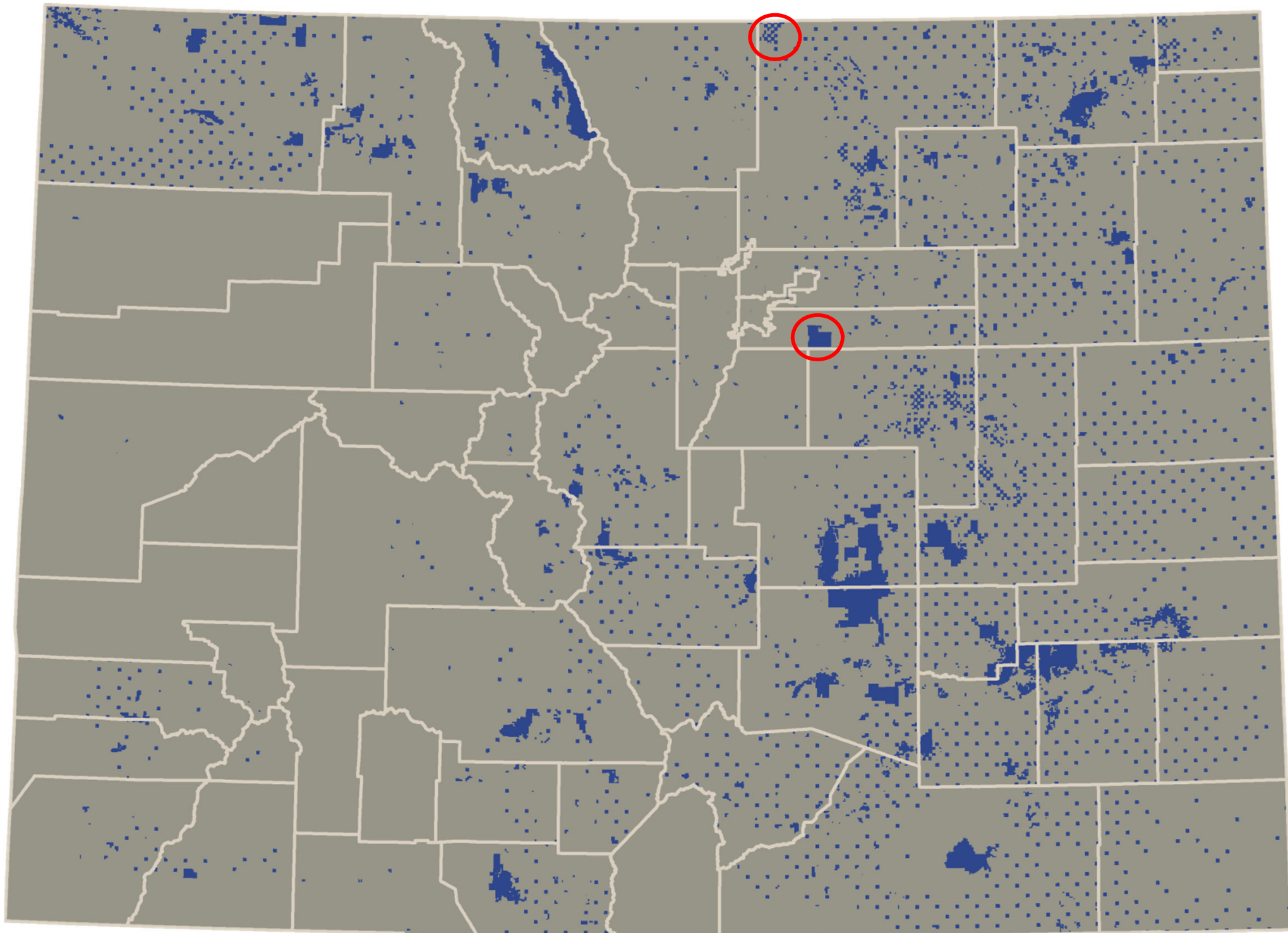
Management



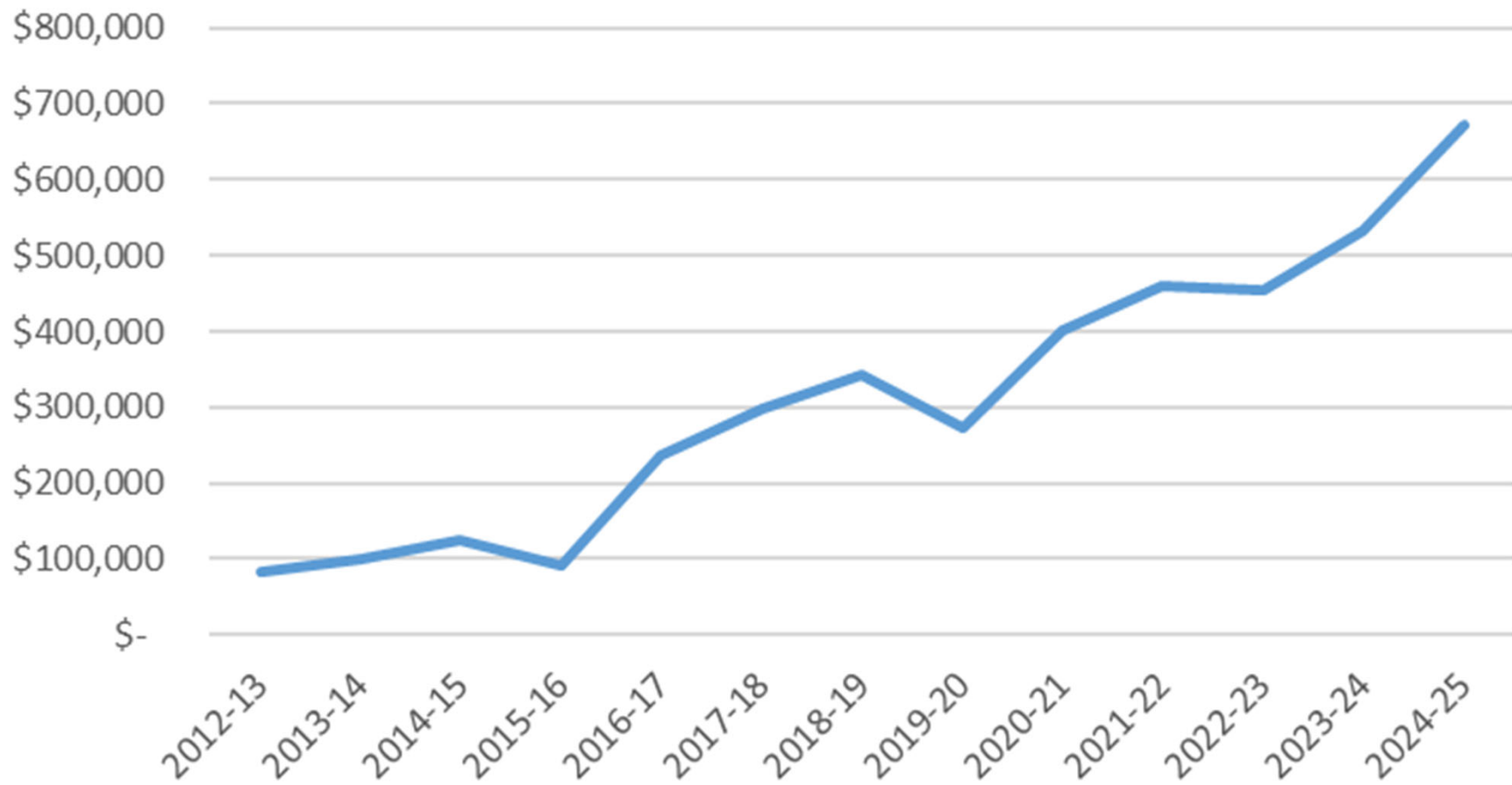
WATER BUSINESS



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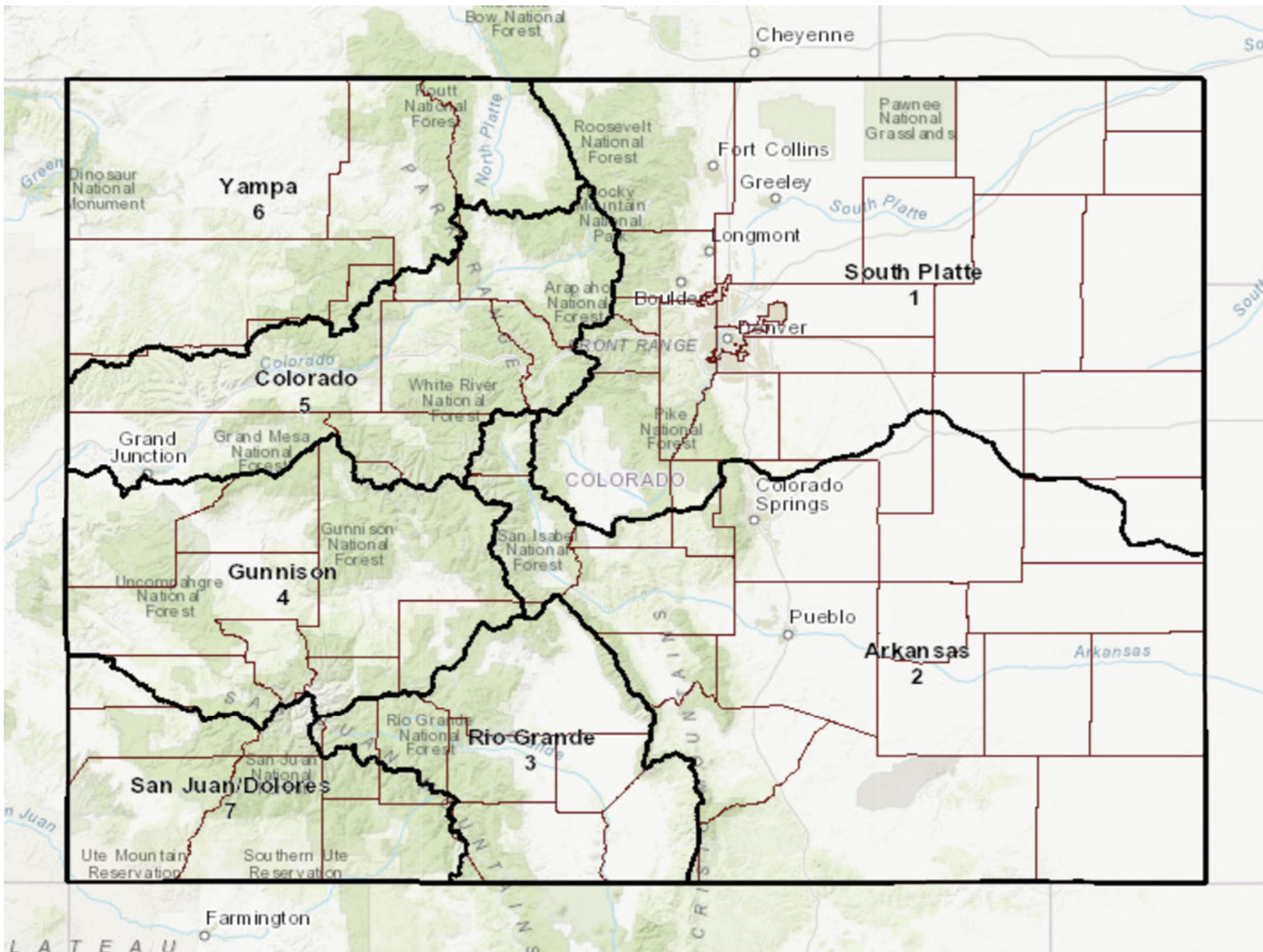
Water Program Revenue



OFFENSE



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DEFENSE



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MANAGEMENT



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Questions/Comments



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