

Contact:

Leslie Weddell

(719) 389-6038

[Leslie.Weddell@ColoradoCollege.edu](mailto:Leslie.Weddell@ColoradoCollege.edu)

**Keeping the Colorado River Basin healthy for the next generation**

***Students outline five action steps at Colorado College conference, issue report calling for collaboration, cooperation, conservation***

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – April 10, 2012 – Competing interests for water rights, combined with a dwindling supply of the vital natural resource, have created serious challenges for the seven-state Colorado River Basin. But addressing the situation now will ensure the river’s continued ability to provide drinking water, wildlife habits, recreation, and agricultural and industrial allotments, concludes a newly released report.

The *2012* *State of the Rockies* *Report Card*, the summation of a nine-month study conducted by Colorado College students last summer and during the 2011-2012 academic year, was released at the [State of the Rockies Project Conference](http://www2.coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/conference.html), held April 9-10 on the campus in Colorado Springs.

This is the ninth year for a team of Colorado College undergraduate students to examine issues affecting the environmental, social and economic health of the Rocky Mountain region, as part of the [State of the Rockies Project](http://www2.coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/). This year’s focus: “The Colorado River Basin – Agenda for Use, Restoration and Sustainability for the Next Generation.”

To compile the report, five student researchers participated in a two-week field trip to study points along the river and hear from local officials. Also, two recent Colorado College graduates spent 110 days kayaking its expanse, from the headwaters of the Green River in Wyoming to the Sea of Cortez and the threatened river delta. A monthly speaker series featuring experts in the field, two public opinion surveys and other data helped shape this year’s report.

Students have identified five calls to action for successful basin management:

* Modify and amend the “Law of the River” to build in cooperation and flexibility, to remove the competition among users.
* Recognize the finite limits of the river’s supplies and pursue a “crash course” in conservation and water distribution.
* Embrace and enshrine basin-wide “systems thinking” in the region’s management of water, land, flora, fauna, agriculture and human settlements.
* Give “nature” a firm standing in law, administration and use of water in the basin.
* Adopt a flexible and adaptive management approach on a decades-long basis to deal with past, present and projected future variability of climate and hydrology.

The report also gives a basin overview, pinpoints key issues and summarizes findings from the [source to sea journey](http://www2.coloradocollege.edu/StateoftheRockies/sourcetosea.html) kayaking trip, which included the unique experience of talking with officials from the U.S. Department of the Interior to hear their opinions on the state of the river.

Also during the April State of the Rockies Project Conference, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar discussed the challenges of saving the river now and in the future. And Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper addressed what future generations can do to manage the state’s water resources.

For more information, go to <http://www2.coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/>.

**About Colorado College**

Colorado College is a nationally prominent, four-year liberal arts college that was founded in Colorado Springs in 1874. The college operates on the innovative Block Plan, in which its approximately 2,000 undergraduate students study one course at a time in intensive 3½-week segments. The college also offers a master of arts in teaching degree. For more information, go to [www.ColoradoCollege.edu](http://www.ColoradoCollege.edu).

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