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Arkansas Farmers Send Needed Water to Colorado

March 18, 2004

Arkansas Valley farmers made history when they agreed to transfer 12,600 acre-feet of water to the City of Aurora, Colo.

The $5.5 million deal has been approved by the federal Bureau of Reclamation, making this water lease the largest temporary water transfer in state history.

The deal took advantage of revised state legislation that allows temporary water transfers. After months of negotiations between Aurora and the 152 High Line Canal farmers, the farmers agreed to send Aurora as much as 4.1 billion gallons of water, about 8 percent of the city's total supply. Aurora, in turn allowed the farmers to keep their water rights and earn some income in a dry year when they could expect only limited success growing crops.

Melissa Elliott, spokeswoman for the Aurora Department of Utilities, said the city's reservoirs currently are at 46% of capacity, thought capacity fell as low as 26% at one point last year. Aurora officials are trying to refill the reservoir to at least 60% of capacity.

The cost of the lease will be paid by Aurora customers through a drought surcharge.

Source: *U.S. Water News Online* March 18, 2004

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