

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## WATER MONITORING TO BEGIN IN PURGATOIRE RIVER BASIN

-Trinidad, CO

Tetra Tech, Inc., a national environmental engineering consulting firm, has announced a new watershed monitoring program that will begin in May 2010 in the Purgatoire River Basin to collect and evaluate surface water quality. The study area of the watershed is west of the Town of Trinidad, Colorado in Las Animas County covering approximately 400 square miles.

In conjunction with the monitoring program, a new website: [www.purgatoirewatershed.org](http://www.purgatoirewatershed.org) has been established to make real-time data collected via continuous satellite monitoring stations and monthly data collections available to the public.

While the U.S. Geologic Survey has gathered flow information on the Purgatoire River upstream of Trinidad Lake since 1972, and limited water quality information has been collected by the USGS, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Riverwatch, and other agencies, **this is the FIRST watershed based water monitoring study** where water quality and flow data will be collected throughout the upper Purgatoire basin that is made available to the public in real-time with monthly reports via the website.

The study will cover two full years of data collection, allowing for analysis of seasonal conditions and other factors that may affect water quality. This in-depth level of information is of great value to the local agricultural and recreational fishing industries and serves to provide sound scientific data as a foundation for state regulations for overall water quality standards in the Purgatoire River basin.

***Tom Verquer, a board member of the Colorado Farm Bureau and the Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District Board, says "I am pleased to see that operators are going to gather data that will help local users and regulatory bodies better understand the quality and quantity of water in the Purgatoire River. Since our local community has a high number of landowners who irrigate with or access this water for livestock operations, we are interested in being able to see the data via real-time and put that information to use in our own operations."***

The watershed monitoring program involves 25 locations in the Purgatoire River Basin, generally within the headwaters of the Purgatoire River and associated tributaries between the

Town of Stonewall and Trinidad Lake. Ten sample locations are on the main stem or Middle Fork of the Purgatoire River while fifteen locations are on tributaries to the Purgatoire River.

There will be two different types of monitoring stations including real-time, or continuous, and monthly. Nine of the twenty-five monitoring locations will have continuous gauging stations to monitor flow, PH, specific conductance, temperature, and chloride at 15-minute intervals. Twenty-five monitoring locations will be stations where data is gathered on a monthly basis. Water quality samples collected at these sites will analyze for 17 parameters, including field measurements, metals, and wet chemistry.

The data and analysis gathered from this project will help address issues raised at public input meetings hosted by the Colorado Water Quality Control Division last year where the water quality of coalbed methane (CBM) natural gas water and water quality were discussed, particularly as it relates to the protection of irrigated crops and other beneficial uses. The public comments varied considerably from wanting discharge of all acceptable produced water to no discharge of water with forced injection or treatment. This study will help answer questions about the water quality in the Purgatoire River, the influence of CBM discharge water in the watershed, and provide a scientific basis to support permitting decisions or regulatory options that could be introduced to the Water Quality Control Commission at a hearing for the Arkansas River basin in June 2013. The data collection will also identify water quality management solutions, such as potential areas where water could be discharged, blended, treated, or re-injected.

The project is being funded by CBM operators in the watershed in an effort to provide scientific information upon which to make policy decisions regarding the use of produced water from the coal bed natural gas development.

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