

Western Regional Water Commission

STAFF REPORT

DATE: September 15, 2016

TO: Chairman and Members, Western Regional Water Commission (“WRWC”)

FROM: Chris Wessel, WRWC Water Management Planner
Frank McDonough, Desert Research Institute, Associate Research Scientist

SUBJECT: Report by the Desert Research Institute (“DRI”) on its Cloud Seeding Operations for the Truckee River and Lake Tahoe Basins for the past water year, and efforts to secure funding from other cloud seeding beneficiaries; discussion and possible approval of funding in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 from the Regional Water Management Fund (“RWMF”) to support similar Cloud Seeding Operations for the upcoming water year; if approved, authorize the Chairman to execute an interlocal agreement (ILA) with DRI for that purpose; and possible direction to staff.

SUMMARY

Since 2009, DRI has conducted its cloud seeding program for the Truckee River and Lake Tahoe Basins using funds provided by either the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (“TMWA”) or the Truckee River Fund (“TRF”), and the WRWC. DRI staff has provided a Proposal and Scope of Work including a budget for \$100,000 (attached) from the RWMF to partially fund and continue cloud seeding operations for water year 2016-2017. The WRWC budget for FY 2016-2017 includes \$100,000 for the proposed cloud seeding operations, and approval comes as a recommendation from the Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission. Mr. Frank McDonough of DRI will provide a presentation about the water year 2015-2016 program and proposed operations for the coming year.

BACKGROUND

Wintertime cloud seeding is focused on enhancing snowfall in mountainous regions to increase the snowpack, resulting in more spring runoff and water supplies in the surrounding areas. The DRI cloud seeding program has been in operation for more than 25 years. DRI estimates that, for the Truckee River Basin, cloud-seeding has boosted water in the snowpack by an average of 18,000 acre-feet a year over the last 10 years.

DRI funding cuts in 2008 threatened to eliminate its cloud seeding operations, such that outside financing was necessary to continue the program. In response, DRI applied to the TRF in 2009 to support the operation of five cloud-seeding generators in the Sierra Nevada. DRI received approval for partial funding from the TRF and the WRWC for the 2009-2010 water year. DRI applied for and received funding from the TRF, and more recently TMWA, and the WRWC to cover operations in each successive water year.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact to the RWMF, should this item be approved, will be \$100,000. Budget authority is located in Fund Group 766, Fund 7066, Account Number 710100, Professional Services, Cost Object WP310103.

RECOMMENDATION

The NNWPC recommends that the WRWC approve funding in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 from the RWMF to support DRI's Cloud Seeding Operations for the upcoming water year; authorize the Chairman to execute an interlocal agreement with DRI for that purpose, and provide appropriate direction to staff.

POSSIBLE MOTION

"Move to approve funding in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 from the RWMF to support DRI's Cloud Seeding Operations for the upcoming water year, and authorize the Chairman to execute an interlocal agreement with DRI for that purpose." [Possible direction to staff to follow.]

CW:df

Attachment: DRI Cloud Seeding Final Report for Water Year 2016