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Colorado revising disputed water-use report for Pitkin County

By Bruce Finley

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State officials this week said they'll revise published data that showed Pitkin County residents' water consumption was the highest in Colorado.

A report expected in June likely will present water use in Pitkin County, home of Aspen, more in line with consumption in other counties — about 270 gallons per person a day, said Jacob Bornstein, water-supply planning program manager for the Colorado Water Conservation Board, an arm of state government.

State officials have agreed not to include water from Aspen's municipal system that is used for ski resort snow-making, Bornstein said. An updated "Colorado's Water Supply Future" report also will factor in residents who live outside the cities of Aspen and Basalt — not included in a published draft report — as well as the water billing data received Tuesday, he said.

"Unknowingly, we just used their data (in the published report). And their data . . . had this error in it that we didn't understand," he said.

The state board's website still presents the old data, which the state has circulated widely since last June. These indicate Pitkin County residents used 1,851 gallons per person each day, up from 681 in 2000. The statewide average is 240 gallons. The national average is 179.

Aspen public works director Phil Overeynder said "bad data" is to blame and that the revisions will increase accuracy, reflecting efforts over the past 15 years to conserve water.

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