

Roundtable Conservation Mini-Summit – December 3, 2012

Meeting Highlights

Overview

This mini-summit was initiated by basin roundtables on the West Slope and the Front Range to continue to advance the cross-roundtable dialogue about conservation. Approximately 60 roundtable members and interested individuals participated in this meeting, continuing the trend of strong roundtable engagement in roundtable-based conservation discussions. Representatives from across the state participated, approximately one-third from the East Slope and two-thirds from the West Slope. The meeting was divided into two parts: 1) a morning session characterized by brief presentations on the importance of conservation to different interests and parts of the state, and 2) an afternoon session that focused on small-group dialogue and discussion.

Morning Session: Presentations

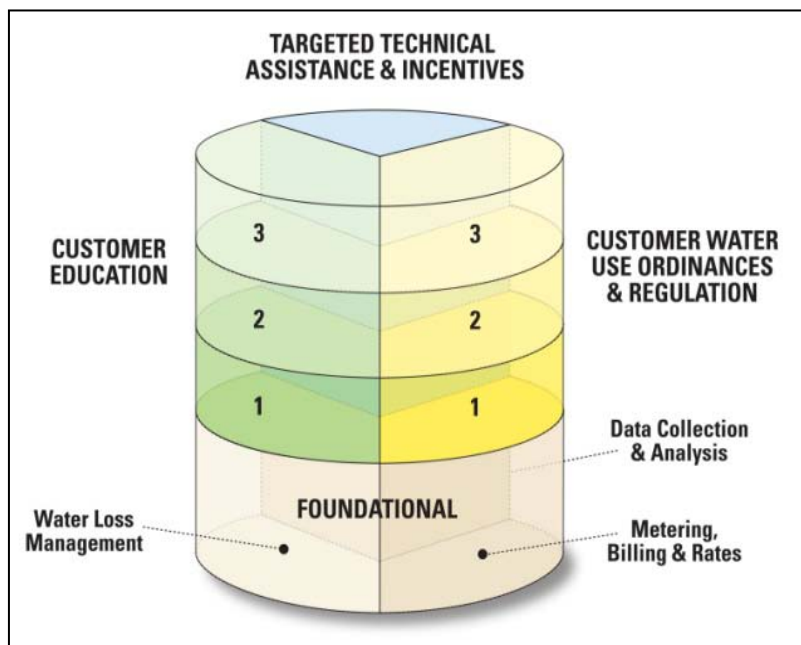
Why Conservation Is Important

Wayne Vanderschuere, who co-chairs the IBCC's Conservation Subcommittee, stated that conservation is critical to meeting the water supply gap, and that efficiency in water use is particularly important. John McClow, who represents the Gunnison Basin Roundtable on the Colorado Water Conservation Board, noted that the Board views conservation as a critical component in closing the water supply gap. He also reported discussions from his basin about the lack of incentive to conserve water on the West Slope and concerns about who gets water that is conserved on the West Slope. Greg Fisher, Manager of Demand Planning for Denver Water and member of the Water Conservation Technical Advisory Group, stated that conservation is an integral part of the solution to the gap, and said that in addition to reducing use it also reduces the treatment and diversion of more water, which have environmental and financial costs.

Several topics that emerged during the question and answer session that followed the presentations carried over into the small-group discussions in the afternoon. These topics included the concern the conservation on the West Slope may make some believe that there is more water available to divert to the Front Range, interest in using conserved water to make a "conservation pool" to help avoid a Compact call, and the option of establishing new conservation requirements for new residents and new development in Colorado.

What Is Already Being Done

Beorn Courtney, Director of Water Resources Engineering for Headwaters Corporation, summarized the methodology behind the water conservation data in SWSI 2010. Kevin Reidy, Water Conservation Technical Specialist for the Colorado Water Conservation Board, summarized the "levels analysis," which establishes increasing levels of conservation efforts by water providers, including technical support, education, and local ordinances (see graphic to the right). Rick Brinkman, Water Services Manager for the City of Grand Junction, provided an overview of



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the region's conservation education and outreach efforts. All of these presentations are available as attachments to this document. Issues that emerged during this discussion included the need to provide specific information about how people can maintain their trees and other landscape elements while also using less water, questions about whether the focus of education and conservation should be getting people to be more efficiency or striving for a fundamental shift in how people use and understand water, and the State statute (SB 05-133) that conservation cannot be grounds for water rights abandonment.

Afternoon Session: Small-Group Discussion

Meeting participants sat at discussion tables that included roundtable members from around the state, as well as additional interested parties with knowledge of conservation issues. Table discussions were framed by questions (attached) and managed by moderators. The notes below indicate topics that emerged from multiple tables and unresolved issues that could serve as a basis for further discussion. Although some tables achieved consensus in their discussion, there was no effort to achieve consensus among tables, so the themes below reflect common views but not consensus views.

Topic 1: Conservation and New Supply

Ideas Common to Multiple Tables: 1) Importers of water from another basin should be held to a higher conservation standard. 2) Conservation is not the most important issue when negotiating a water project; there is no *quid pro quo* linking conservation to support of a new supply project. 3) Any new supply project will require collaboration between the Front Range and the West Slope and across different interests. There is no other way to build a project in Colorado.

Unresolved Issues: It takes a long time to move a water project forward, and providers should be conserving water during that time. Early discussions on a new supply project could include a preliminary agreement about conservation, but specific negotiations around a new project would have to wait until such a project was ready to be developed.

Topic 2: Statewide Conservation

Ideas Common to Multiple Tables: 1) A base level of conservation should be required for all water providers, regardless of size or location. 2) Increased levels of conservation beyond that base level could be applied to "covered entities." 3) The 2,000 acre-foot level should be applied to those communities expected to grow into a 2,000 acre-foot water system, even if they are smaller than that now. 4) Any legislation should allow lead-time for implementation and should be built on dialogue and consensus before moving forward.

Unresolved Issues: There was quite a bit of discussion about what "statewide conservation" means and what it would look like. Options discussed included: 1) a legislative action similar to the failed "toilet bill," which would impact retail sellers and not water providers directly; 2) coordinated outreach efforts to help local jurisdictions adopt ordinances and/or conservation best practices; 3) encourage a culture of water conservation similar to the ethic of recycling that currently exists through local education; 4) either a legislated or IBCC/BRT-adopted statewide water use standard that could be regionalized (e.g., residential gallons per capita per day, size and number of water taps, localized evapotranspiration rates); 5) legislation focused on new construction meeting certain conservation standards; and 6) either legislated or IBCC/BRT-adopted standards based off which water conservation best practices have been implemented by the local utility/community (e.g., tiered rates, metering, and leak detection for all water providers, and a higher level for covered entities). By definition, these could be adapted to meet local needs.

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Topic 3: Current Status Statewide and Statewide Goal for Conservation

Ideas Common to Multiple Tables: 1) While conservation trajectories may look like providers are on the path to achieve medium conservation levels described in SWSI 2010, without statewide support, medium levels will not be achieved. The nearly 20% savings statewide may not be fully maintained, predicted passive savings may need support to accomplish this, and local or statewide ordinances/legislation that would help meet medium or high conservation levels are not being widely adopted and require additional statewide support. 2) Statewide participation in conservation is important, but blanket policies and mandates overlook the diversity of communities and water providers throughout the state and may meet resistance. 3) Additional funding, training, or other support from the state and/or larger water providers could help support and advance water conservation in smaller communities, particularly on the West Slope.

Unresolved Issues: While there is agreement that the state is not a path to achieve medium conservation levels, there was not agreement that either the medium conservation level should be achieved or that achieving it was worth legislative solutions. Several tables discussed achieving the maximum reasonable amount of conservation possible, with local variations. This could be based on activities, rather than on water amounts conserved.

Suggested Potential Next Steps

At the end of the meeting, participants volunteered suggestions for next steps for the conservation dialogue. There was not time to discuss these suggestions or reach consensus. The ideas, listed below, will be discussed by the roundtable chairs and staff who organized this meeting.

- 1) This roundtable-based group could:
 - a. Discuss and decide how to achieve base levels of conservation for everyone (how this should be done, by whom, and by when)
 - b. Further discuss what the gap is and how it relates to “safety factors” for providers and other interests
- 2) The IBCC Conservation Subcommittee should further work on the topics raised at this meeting, learning from the ideas and discussion of this diverse group.
- 3) As this dialogue progresses, it will be important to:
 - a. Prepare and distribute a report and executive summary from this meeting
 - b. Bring local elected officials in quickly to help determine how we proceed
 - c. Build statewide support and leadership for legislation and/or other actions
- 4) The goal should be to do one significant item related to conservation statewide every year.

Attachments

1. Meeting agenda
2. Morning session presentations
3. Transcribed chart notes from afternoon discussion