

# STATE OF COLORADO

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## Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

1313 Sherman Street, Room 721  
Denver, Colorado 80203  
Phone: (303) 866-3441  
Fax: (303) 866-4474  
www.cwcb.state.co.us



TO: CWCB, Roundtable, and IBCC members  
FROM: John Stulp, IBCC Director  
Jennifer Gimbel, CWCB Director

DATE: 2/26/2013  
SUBJECT: **2013 Roadmap**

Dear Basin Roundtable, IBCC, and CWCB Members,

First and foremost, thank you for all the time, resources and brain power you have donated to planning for Colorado's water supply future. Although we have accomplished much, we still have more to do. This letter lays out some of those accomplishments and provides a roadmap for our work this year and beyond.

### **Accomplishments**

During the past seven years the CWCB, IBCC and Basin Roundtables have participated in numerous discussions based on studies, meetings and workshops throughout the state focused on addressing our water supply future. These efforts have resulted in the following accomplishments:

- **CWCB's completion of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) 2010 and Implementation of the Water Supply Reserve Account Grant Program.**
  - SWSI 2010 summarized the Basin Roundtables consumptive and nonconsumptive needs assessments, water availability, municipal and industrial gaps, and projects and methods to address future water needs. The SWSI 2010 recommendations resulted in a work plan that was adopted by the CWCB and is referenced in the CWCB's Strategic Plan.
  - CWCB granted nearly \$40M for over 220 projects and studies across the state, leveraging over \$72M in matching funds. These funds have preserved or enhanced more than 107,000 acre-feet of storage, restored or protected 30 miles of stream, restored more than 40,000 acres of habitat, built or improved over 22 miles of pipe or canal, and produced efficiency savings of over 64,000 acre-feet.
- **IBCC Letter to Governor Ritter and Governor-Elect Hickenlooper.** In 2010, the IBCC also developed a report to Governor Ritter and then Governor-Elect Hickenlooper that focused on a future mix of solutions to meet the water supply gap in Colorado including: conservation, identified projects and processes (IPPs), agricultural transfers, and new supply development, while also protecting Colorado's significant water-dependent ecological and recreational resources.

- **Scenario Planning and Adaptive Management.** The Basin Roundtables' portfolio development and the IBCC's scenario planning efforts have resulted in the following conclusions:
  - Colorado must plan for a variety of possible futures, and thus should continue with scenario planning and adaptive management.
  - There are no easy solutions or silver bullets, and we need to pursue all types of projects and methods concurrently in order to balance the tradeoffs.
  - An initial set of activities, called as "no regrets actions" should be pursued. These actions are beneficial regardless of whatever water supply future, or scenario, may arise.
- **Other Activities.** In addition to SWSI 2010 and recent IBCC activities, the following items have been successfully completed:
  - Coordinated by the Colorado Foundation for Water Education and many of the PEPO members, Water 2012 reached over 500,000 Coloradans with the help of the Roundtables, local efforts, and a large coalition of water organizations throughout the State.
  - Water providers have joined together to move forward several collaborative and multi-purpose projects, such as Grand Junction, Ute Water, Clifton, and Palisade's DRIP (drought response information project) program; the Colorado River Cooperative Agreement; Denver Water, Aurora, and South Metro Water Supply Authority's WISE (Water, Infrastructure and Supply Efficiency) partnership, several alternative transfer method pilots funded through CWCB's ATM Grant Program, and many other projects and methods.

These accomplishments and the relationships built through these efforts lay the foundation for future work.

### **Planned Future Work**

The process of identifying consumptive and nonconsumptive needs and moving forward with the implementation of identified projects and processes has been a significant accomplishment, and roundtables will continue to work with project proponents to support their implementation. The legislative charge of the Water for the 21st Century Act is to also identify projects and methods beyond those already planned by project proponents to meet Colorado's gaps for municipal, industrial, agricultural, environmental, and recreational water needs.

Through your efforts, this work has begun to take shape. The IBCC and Basin Roundtables have concluded that the status quo will result in the transfer of too much agricultural water, which will negatively impact the state's agricultural economy and the environment for many of our river basins. We have identified water supply options to meet our water supply future. The Basin Roundtables developed several portfolios that allowed us to understand the trade-offs and evaluate options. Using that work, the IBCC through a scenario planning process has begun to create an Adaptive Management Framework. The first element of this framework is a "No Regrets/Low Regrets Action Plan". "No regrets/low regrets" actions could be taken in the near-term regardless of longer term future conditions (i.e. any future scenario that may arise).

Our planning efforts must focus on a variety of methods, some of which are outlined below and include risk management strategies.

1. *No Regrets/Low Regrets Action Plan* – The IBCC has started to identify and refine what actions are needed in the immediate future, no matter what that future may be, and how those actions will be implemented.
2. *Adaptive Management Plan* – Beyond the no regrets, the IBCC and Basin Roundtables have identified several possible futures. Depending on the future, different portfolios will need to be

implemented to better balance the needs of the state. Adaptive management provides a framework to understand which future we are entering and which portfolios should begin to be developed.

3. *New Supply Development* – Colorado must balance the risks associated both with overdevelopment and underdevelopment of Colorado’s compact entitlements. Various activities are underway to help us assess risk, such as the Water Banking Study, Aspinall Water Bank Study, Colorado River Water Availability Study Phase 2, and Colorado’s discussions with the other Upper Basin States. These actions explore how to prevent or manage compact curtailment through demand management options.
4. *Protection of Nonconsumptive Values* – Several processes have been developed that allow for the protection of environmental and recreational needs. A nonconsumptive toolbox is being prepared for public review to help roundtables develop projects and methods to meet their identified needs. In addition, several methods exist to benefit environmental and recreational values, such as the alternative to wild and scenic designation process, programmatic biological opinions, instream flows and recreational in-channel diversions.
5. *Basin Implementation Plans* – Basin Roundtables will begin to identify what local actions may be necessary, within each basin, above and beyond consumptive and nonconsumptive IPPs previously identified, and how these actions will be complimentary to regional and statewide needs alike. Opportunities for cooperative infrastructure and multi-purpose projects should be explored.
6. *Update of SWSI*– The CWCB will continue to refine methodologies to determine present and future consumptive and nonconsumptive needs, water availability, and resulting water supply gaps. Potential changes for the next update may include incorporation of climate change into demand and supply analyses, hydrologic variability, agricultural gap, environmental gap, and inclusion of basin implementation plans.
7. *Implementation of SWSI 2010 Recommendations* – The CWCB Board will continue to implement SWSI 2010 Recommendations.

### **Future Water Planning**

The success of our efforts rests not only on the great work by water leaders and stakeholders across the state, but also on the planning steps and technical elements described above. SWSI (2010 and future updates) will be the key building block in forming the common technical platform for those discussions. These discussions will include the individual Basin Roundtables, the CWCB, and the IBCC, as well as other entities looking at creative ways to meet Colorado’s water needs. We continue to encourage the interaction among the Basin Roundtables, as we have seen in the past. In that light, we will have another Statewide Roundtable Summit this year. An Adaptive Management Implementation Plan will assist in plotting a course for guiding future actions. It will also identify short-term implementation actions through the development of the No Regrets/Low Regrets Action Plan.

We know that Colorado continues to face a significant water supply challenge. This year's lack of precipitation is an increasingly urgent reminder of the importance of our task. Building collaborative solutions is hard work and takes time. It will take a concerted effort by all parties to accomplish the important work before us over the coming months and years.

Thank you once again for your continued commitment to Colorado's water supply planning process, and for all you are doing to build a secure water future for all Coloradoans. Together we can help to secure Colorado's water supply future.