



## COLORADO

### Colorado Water Conservation Board

Department of Natural Resources

1313 Sherman Street  
Denver, CO 80203

P (303) 866-3441  
F (303) 866-4474

John Hickenlooper, Governor

Mike King, DNR Executive Director

James Eklund, CWCB Director

**TO:** Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

**FROM:** Rebecca Mitchell, Jacob Bornstein, Taryn Finnessey, Craig Godbout, Kate McIntire, Brent Newman, Kevin Reidy, Ben Wade, Tammy Allen (CDPHE), Linda Bassi, Tom Browning, Tim Feehan, Ted Kowalski, Steven Miller, Nicole Rowan (CDPHE), Chris Sturm, Kaylea White, and all other CWCB staff

**DATE:** November 4, 2015

**AGENDA ITEM:** 22. Colorado's Water Plan

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**Staff recommendation:** Staff recommends the board adopt Colorado's Water Plan and authorize Director Eklund to deliver the first final of Colorado's Water Plan to John W. Hickenlooper, Governor of the state of Colorado.

#### Background

In the spring of 2013, Governor John Hickenlooper directed the Colorado Water Conservation Board to develop Colorado's Water Plan, a roadmap that would put the state and its eight major river basins on a more collaborative and cooperative path to managing water in the face of constrained supplies and growing population.

Thirty months, eight Basin Implementation Plans, and three draft plans later, the first final version of Colorado's Water Plan is being delivered to the CWCB Board the Governor November 19. The Plan reflects grassroots discussions spanning a decade, beginning with a formal process of conversations within and between river basins in 2005, as well as thousands of public comments throughout those years and 30,000 more public comments geared specifically to Colorado's Water Plan since 2013.

The completed Plan represents the consensus view from this process that unless Colorado takes a strategic, proactive, statewide approach to water, we will face a more difficult future and risk leaving the fate of our water to decisions and actions from outsiders, the federal government, and other states within the Colorado River Basin.

Colorado's Water Plan grapples directly with the challenges facing our state and reflects agreement from water interests statewide on broad, near-term actions needed to secure our water future. These include efforts to conserve and store water, additional re-use and recycling of water and providing more options to agriculture to avoid the permanent dry-up of our invaluable farm and ranch operations.

The final version of the plan, building on comments across interests and geography, includes a set of measurable objectives that help us move forward together and provides goals Colorado must meet regarding water for farms, for the environment, and for cities and industries.

Those goals include numerical benchmarks of 400,000 acre feet for both urban conservation and new storage by 2050; identifying 50,000 acre-feet of agricultural water for voluntary



alternative transfers that do not result in permanent dry up of farmland; having 75 percent of the state's population reside within communities that have incorporated water saving options by 2025, and extending management plans to cover 80 percent of locally prioritized streams and watersheds by 2030.

Colorado's Water Plan doesn't prescribe specific projects. Instead it outlines how various interests across basins can attain locally driven, collaborative solutions, and how balanced approaches can garner the broad support needed to accelerate projects and shorten the federal regulatory process often associated with water-related actions in Colorado.

The Plan will honor and respect Colorado water law and continue to rely on the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation, an approach that has guided water use in our state since its earliest days.

It safeguards Colorado's water by vigilantly protecting our interstate compacts and decrees. These provide certainty to Colorado - and our neighbors - on allocation of supplies.

At the same time, Colorado's Water Plan avoids dogmatic thinking, and encourages openness to new opportunities to evaluate and strengthen our water laws so we are better positioned to meet our needs and incorporates Colorado's values.

Colorado's Water Plan represents the next great step in our long history with water. Over the last decade we have moved away from the adversarial approaches that have dominated the past. Instead, through Basin Roundtables, the Interbasin Compact Committee and productive conversations between West Slope and Front Range, and collaborative projects between once-competing water districts, we are shifting to a Colorado Way of collaboration and cooperation on water that benefits all partners.

Our water challenges demand our united focus. Colorado's Water Plan, a product of people and organizations throughout our state, provides a framework on how we create a sustainable water future that will benefit generations to come. As implementation begins, the plan will continue to be a living document that will adapt to changing circumstances.

During this agenda item, the final version of Colorado's Water Plan will be made available electronically at [www.coloradowaterplan.com](http://www.coloradowaterplan.com).

## Discussion

Staff and board will discuss the following items:

1. Colorado's Water Plan Overview
2. Colorado's Water Plan Final Content
3. Public Input Summary
4. Staff Recommendation and Board Discussion

As part of this agenda item, there will be a press conference about Colorado's Water Plan with Governor Hickenlooper.

