



# Colorado's Water Supply Future

## Interbasin Compact Committee Annual Report

October 31, 2016



Fall colors Trail Mountain Grand County—Mike Wagek

*To the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Energy*



## From John Stulp

*Special Policy Advisor to the Governor for Water  
Director of Compact Negotiations Interbasin Compact  
Committee*

This year I have been greatly encouraged by the spirit and energy of the CWCB, IBCC and basin roundtable members as they have focused on getting water project implementation underway within their respective basins. It was less than a year ago when, thanks to the tireless efforts of the CWCB, IBCC, basin roundtable members, and countless stakeholders, the first Colorado Water Plan (CWP) was completed last November, about one month ahead of schedule. This unprecedented and historic effort brought over 30,000 Coloradoans into a stakeholder-driven water planning process while fully incorporating years worth of work from the IBCC and basin roundtables. Now that we are well underway with the implementation of Colorado's Water Plan it is exciting to promote and document the ongoing progress.

Much of the progress in implementing water projects has continued in spite of an ongoing downturn in available severance tax revenues. In light of the reduced revenues and the priorities set by Colorado's Water Plan the IBCC and basin roundtables provided valuable input this year to inform the revision and approval of new Criteria and Guidelines for the Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) Program. These efforts help to target available funding towards the most strategic and impactful projects, providing a sort of silver lining in the funding limitations. As we continue to reexamine our long term project and funding goals, this year the IBCC also began to explore various possibilities for funding sources beyond severance tax that could help to address the \$3 billion need for water projects identified by Colorado's Water Plan. These efforts included initial discussions of concepts from funding action items in Colorado's Water Plan, as well as approving a draft funding proposal to support various programs per CWP recommendations while partially offsetting severance tax reductions.

As we welcomed a few new faces to the IBCC table this year it was encouraging to see new leadership being developed and emerging from the basin roundtables. This stakeholder process has proven to be an invaluable forum for advancing water policies and projects throughout the state. For example, at the February IBCC meeting, members shared and learned from each other how their local basins were moving forward with various aspects of

implementation in their own unique ways. It is also encouraging to see many of the basin roundtables move forward jointly on the Colorado River Development and Curtailment Risk Study. This study, seeks to develop a common technical platform to inform fruitful discussions about the Colorado Water Plan Conceptual Framework.

In the coming year we anticipate a full workload for the IBCC and basin roundtables as we continue pursue various aspects of implementing Colorado's Water Plan. We will further explore creative supplemental funding sources as alternatives to relying on volatile severance tax revenues. As this process moves forward I encourage basin roundtable members and other stakeholders to consider statewide efforts that they could support, while continuing to be increasingly strategic with available funding. In addition, we will continue our efforts with education and outreach, focusing on finding strategic ways for people to get involved in ongoing implementation efforts. Now more than ever, the IBCC serves a critical role as a brain trust and think tank to discuss statewide water issues and provide recommendations to the CWCB.

The IBCC is currently preparing for our upcoming Ag Water Summit on November 29<sup>th</sup> to be held at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. This meeting will be jointly hosted by the IBCC and the Colorado Ag Water Alliance (CAWA) and will focus on exploring alternative transfer methods (ATMs) to help alleviate the traditional buy-and-dry of irrigated agriculture. Discussion at the meeting will provide a dynamic summary of the most promising ATM projects and tools to help promote further successes in the field that result in measurable water deliveries to meet multiple needs.

After many years of working with the IBCC and basin roundtables I know that one of the best kept secrets in the water community is the untiring work of CWCB staff members in supporting the evolving efforts of the roundtables, IBCC, and CWCB. This work, combined with your ongoing input and involvement, is critical in advancing towards a water future that meets the needs and values of all Coloradoans.

I am truly grateful to partner with you in this effort,





## Colorado's water plan anniversary and ongoing implementation

This November we celebrate the one year anniversary of the completion of Colorado's Water Plan (CWP). This milestone provides a perfect opportunity to share a snapshot of numerous ongoing activities involved in its implementation. The CWCB, IBCC, basin roundtables, and other stakeholders have been hard at work advancing the implementation of various components of CWP, as well as the Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs). At the same time, we have been updating our tracking and communication methods in an attempt to keep up with the many evolving activities.

In addition to this abbreviated summary, you will find a more thorough fact sheet on Colorado's Water Plan implementation on the website, along with forthcoming updates that involve innovative new website display technologies. Tracking efforts include an extensive shared internal list with layered activities and responsible staff that ties back to the plan's measureable outcomes, goals, and critical actions, along with ongoing updates and discussion at every CWCB board meeting. The CWCB's new Confluence Newsletter, published after each board meeting, is also a valuable resource for updates about implementation efforts.

### *Snapshot of Progress on Implementation Milestones by Category:*

#### **SUPPLY DEMAND GAP**

- The CWCB, IBCC, and basin roundtables revised the Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) criteria and guidelines to explicitly link funding requests to the goals and measureable outcomes identified in the BIPs and CWP.
- The CWCB distributed \$7.4M in WSRF grants in FY 2015-2016 to meet numerous needs and goals identified in the BIPs and CWP.
- The CWCB Board awarded a grant for the Colorado River Development and Curtailment Risk Study that involves to the four Western Slope basin roundtables, along with Front Range roundtables, the Colorado River District, and Southwestern Water Conservation District. This study aligns with CWP by taking actions that seek to identify and minimize the risk of a Colorado River Compact curtailment.
- The CWCB is currently updating the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) to provide accurate and current technical data about the supply and demand gap to better inform CWP implementation.

#### **STORAGE**

- The CWCB Board approved dedicating 600 acre-feet of CWCB-owned storage space in the Chatfield Reservoir Reallocation Project for environmental and recreational purposes as part of a larger environmental pool. The project is a multi-objective, multi-benefit arrangement that supports CWP goals by addressing various needs.
- The CWCB is financially supporting a variety of storage efforts and innovations, including studying storage options in the South Platte (per HB 16-1256), exploring groundwater storage technology, and conducting a spillway analysis to identify existing storage that could be expanded.
- Earlier this year, state and federal partners, as well as community stakeholders, completed a Lean event on the water project permitting process. The Lean team is focused on implementing its recommendations to streamline the permitting process while maintaining rigorous environmental protection.

#### **CONSERVATION AND LAND USE**

- The CWCB and DOLA are developing a variety of trainings for local governments, utilities, and land use planners to increase water-saving actions and the integration of land use and water planning. To date, three trainings have been held with a total of over 135 participants.
- The Colorado Water and Growth Dialogue is demonstrating how the integration of water and land use planning can be used to reduce water demand from projected population increase. Two exploratory scenario planning workshops were held this summer among land use and water planners from across the state, with qualitative and quantitative results to be summarized and disseminated by early 2017.
- Since November 2015, the CWCB has granted \$444,825 in water efficiency planning and implementation projects that assist in attaining the CWP measurable objective of 400,000 acre feet of conservation savings by 2050.

Colorado water plan continued

**AGRICULTURE**

- The IBCC is co-hosting an Ag Water Summit in partnership with the Colorado Ag Water Alliance (CAWA) on November 29. The meeting will explore alternative transfer methods (ATMs) to help alleviate the traditional buy-and-dry of irrigated agriculture.
- Statewide water representatives and several basin roundtable members participated in a workshop in October at the Colorado Department of Agriculture on meeting the Alternative Transfer Methods (ATM) goal in CWP. The Ditch & Reservoir Company Association, CAWA, Colorado Cattlemen’s Association, Colorado Water Institute, and the Getches-Wilkinson Center are also working on ATM education and development.

- The CWCB created a bimonthly e-newsletter, the CWCB Confluence, to update stakeholders on CWP implementation and the work of the CWCB Board and staff, IBCC, basin roundtables, and local communities.

**FUNDING**

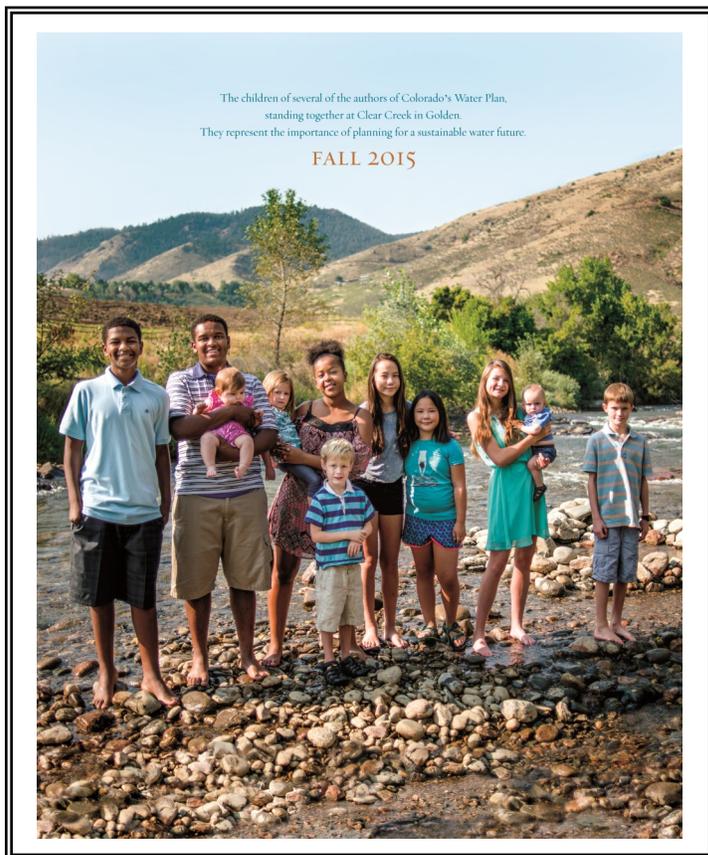
- The CWCB will continue to align funding decisions with CWP. The CWCB developed a 3-5 year funding plan, which will seek approvals from the CWCB Board and the Colorado legislature through the annual Projects Bill. If approved, the funding plan will create a repayment guarantee fund, bolster the WSRF program, and support several education, conservation, reuse, and agricultural viability actions called for in the plan.

**WATERSHED HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT & RECREATION**

- The CWCB is looking at ways to provide an additional \$5 million to the Watershed Restoration Program to help develop watershed restoration and stream management plans and projects for priority streams in support of the CWP measurable objective.
- The CWCB helped conduct workshops on Stream Management Plans at the Colorado Water Congress and Sustaining Colorado Watersheds conferences.

**EDUCATION**

- The Public Education, Participation, and Outreach (PEPO) Workgroup had a workshop to share ideas, resources, successes, and challenges in education, and outreach across the basins to foster more collaboration statewide.
- The CWCB is working with the Colorado Foundation for Water Education and the One World One Water Center at Metropolitan State University of Denver to develop a proposal for a Water Education Assessment that will help align funding with the education goals and objectives in CWP.





## Public education, participation, and outreach

The statewide PEPO workgroup was created through the Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act in 2005. It is responsible for creating a process to inform, involve, and educate the public on the IBCC’s activities and the progress of the interbasin collaboration; creating a mechanism by which public input and feedback can be relayed to the IBCC and basin roundtable members about water issues. The statewide PEPO workgroup is comprised of representatives from the IBCC and education liaisons and members of the water education community from each of the nine basin roundtables.

Each basin roundtable has an Education Action Plan that guides the work of the basin PEPO group. The action plans are created for three-year cycles and detail the education and outreach goals and tasks to engage the public in the work of the roundtables, IBCC, and Colorado’s Water Plan and to educate the roundtable membership and local basin about important water issues. The CWCB supports these efforts with grant funding.

In fiscal year 2015-2016, the nine basin PEPO workgroups focused on implementing their Education Action Plans.

A few examples of the FY 15-16 tasks completed in each basin include:

### ARKANSAS

- Created a PEPO Workgroup Arkansas River Basin website and Facebook page to serve as a portal for all PEPO activities and events, provide educational resources about the Arkansas Basin Roundtable, Ark BIP projects, IBCC, and CWCB activities and progress, and stay connected across the basin.



### COLORADO

- Partnered with basin watershed groups to inform the public and other stakeholder groups about Colorado’s Water Plan and the Colorado Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan and activities. Examples included a presentation about Colorado’s Water Plan to 200 Glenwood Springs Middle School students participating in the *Snow to Flow* program and Watershed Wednesdays adult education programs.

### GUNNISON

- Developed a handout on Colorado’s Water Plan and the Gunnison Basin Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan for use by roundtable members and partner organizations to conduct education and outreach.

### METRO/SOUTH PLATTE

- Hosted a joint meeting on June 7, 2016 for the purpose of exploring and identifying specific actions that both roundtables can work on together. The main goals of the meeting were to 1) identify specific actions in response to recent developments such as the HB16-1256 South Platte Storage Study; 2) to build consensus around next steps for preparing WSRA grant applications, to hire a BIP coordinator and Outreach coordinator; and 3) to further develop the priorities for allocating WSRA funds.



Metro/South Platte joint meeting visualization

Public education, participation, and outreach continued

**NORTH PLATTE**

- Creating a video highlighting aspects of the North Platte Basin Implementation Plan. The goal is to feature all seasons of the water year, as well as a broad overview of the North Platte Basin water use history, challenges, and solutions developed to meet their diverse consumptive and non-consumptive needs into the future. The North Platte’s video will be released in the late fall of 2016.

**RIO GRANDE**

- Created a series of video vignettes about important topics specific to the basin including the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan, well rules and regulations, sub districts and groundwater management, and the Rio Grande Compact. Videos are used to educate residents, civic groups, water entities, and local governments.



**SOUTHWEST**

- Supported a work session, *Integrating Water Usage Needs & Land Use Planning*, for water utility personnel, planners, local governments, and other interested parties in October 2015.

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**COLORADO**  
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