

WILDLY IMPORTANT GOALS & THE

COLORADO WATER PLAN

Each year the Governor establishes a set of bold goals which focus attention towards a selection of priority efforts that are important to the state. These “Wildly Important Goals” (WIGs) outline measurable outcomes towards advancing these goals in hopes of emphasizing their importance and ensuring they stay on track. This fiscal year, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) are excited to have one of the Governor’s WIGs focus on the importance of local water projects across the state. This water WIG builds upon the Colorado Water Plan’s call for basins to enhance project data (and cost, specifically) as basins update their local plans. The WIG also builds on existing work that basins are doing to prioritize (or Tier) projects with a standardized tool that will help better define which projects are truly ready to launch, meaning they have quality data and are supported by the basins.

WILDLY IMPORTANT GOAL:

The WIG calls for staff to work with the nine basin roundtables to create a prioritized database that identifies accurate costs for 500 projects across the state. In addition to tracking the percentage of projects that are multi-purpose and multi-benefit, these projects are expected to represent all the values and goals in the water plan including meeting environmental, agricultural and municipal needs. Through June 30, 2021, the CWCB will work with basins to identify 500 critical water projects - including 160 Tier 1 (ready to launch) and 340 Tier 2 (priority projects in need of further evaluation, phasing and/or data collection).

WHY THE WATER WIG SUPPORTS THE WATER PLAN & BASIN EFFORTS:

- Builds on a key goal of the Colorado Water Plan update to have better project data, especially around costs.
- Recognizes the uncertain budget future due to repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to be looking at long-term funding options. Now is the time to make the business case that supports water funding.
- With limited funding available for the next few years, the water WIG will allow the state and other funders to stretch available resources to fund the projects that will provide the most benefit.
- The WIG challenges each of the eight basins to identify at least 20 projects that have sufficient data- including cost estimates- that are ready to launch (known as Tier 1) as well as a pipeline of critical basin projects that are moving forward (Tier 2).
- This is not an effort to rank projects or prioritize one basin over another. This is about creating a group of projects that represent Colorado’s collective needs that would be ready to implement if funding were available.
- Shovel-ready projects may not always have a physical shovel - projects that enhance stream flows, education, or planning efforts are just as critical as just infrastructure projects. Shovel-ready means they are ready to launch.
- Having strong project data and prioritizing which projects are ready to implement is critical to the success of the Colorado Water Plan and ultimately to position ourselves to make a better case for long-term funding.

“Water is the lifeblood of our economy and this WIG sets a state goal to identify 500 ready or near ready projects, backed by strong data and representative of our Colorado values. From our vibrant cities to our growing suburbs to our thriving agriculture, and for our quality of life and protecting our rivers and watersheds, this goal advances the Colorado Water Plan.”

- Governor Jared Polis

“The Colorado Water Conservation Board is thankful to have the Governor’s support for meeting a need identified in the Colorado Water Plan - to get better cost data for identified projects. Now is such a critical time for us all to be working together to make a strong business case for the projects that are so important to local communities across the state who all depend on water for cities, watershed health and farming and ranching.”

- Director Rebecca Mitchell



HOW THE GOVERNOR'S WATER WIG SUPPORTS PAST AND FUTURE EFFORTS

Updates to the Basin Implementation Plans (BIP) are set to be completed by the end of 2021. That information will roll-up into the next version of the Colorado Water Plan which is set to be completed by the end of 2022. Colorado is celebrating the 5th Anniversary of the Water Plan and 15th Anniversary of establishing the basin roundtables, as directed by the Water for the 21st Century Act. As we move forward with the BIP updates, it is critical to have the best data possible in order to define costs, water yield, location, project proponents, and other details needed to support local water efforts. The water WIG will allow the State to more effectively prioritize projects that support all the areas in the Colorado Water Plan.

FY20/21

Colorado Governor Jared Polis shows major support of existing basin efforts by establishing a water-focused Wildly Important Goal of identifying 160 Tier 1 projects and 340 Tier 2 projects across the state.

2019

The Analysis and Technical Update to the Colorado Water Plan is published. It recommends enhancing project data, establishing key data fields, tiering projects, and utilizing the new Cost Estimating Tool and Environmental Flow Tool.

2017

A status report on the success of the Colorado Water Plan, called Ripple Effects, is produced. The report identified a lack of sufficient data as a barrier to measuring progress.

2014

The basin roundtables created 8 tailored Basin Implementation Plans used as a guide to identify projects.

2020

The nine basin roundtables begin work to update their Basin Implementation Plans, including a major focus on improving project data.

2018

A Basin-led Implementation Working Group identifies needs for the coming Basin Implementation Plan and Water Plan updates- namely, cost. This Group vets a "Tiering Matrix" that will help categorize project readiness:

Tier 1 = Ready to launch

Tier 2 = Ready to pursue

Tier 3 = Not ready yet/conceptual

Tier 4 = Not being pursued

2015

The Colorado Water Plan is published. It identifies funding needs for state projects and directs Basins to improve project data- specifically costing data- prior to updating BIPS.

Learn more at cwcb.colorado.gov/colorado-water-plan



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Colorado Water
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