



INTERBASIN COMPACT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted by the Colorado Water Conservation Board October 31, 2020



A MESSAGE FROM
RUSS GEORGE

General Assembly, Basin Roundtable and Interbasin Compact Committee Members,

Since the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) members attended the Interim Water Resources Review Committee (WRRRC) last October and provided the IBCC annual report the same month, it has been a tumultuous year for the water community and Colorado as whole. During that WRRRC I noted that “no one could have foreseen what would come this year” and that has certainly been true for 2020.

Extreme drought, fires (including the three largest in Colorado’s history), the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn stand out amidst the backdrop of the good work that has continued. It is foundational to who we are, to the spirit of the Colorado Water Plan, that we will come together and find our way through, no matter the challenge.

Few issues are currently as prominent in statewide water conversations as ongoing concerns regarding Colorado River issues and specifically, the question of whether it would be feasible from Colorado’s perspective to establish a Demand Management (DM) program. The purpose of such a program would be to protect Colorado’s water users and provide additional security with respect to Colorado’s ability to meet its Colorado River Compact obligations. This issue is clearly in the purview of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), and ultimately the Upper Colorado River Commission, but is informed by public input. The IBCC has sought to assist in evaluating whether or not a DM program, if developed, could be fair. This concept of “equity” and whether or not a future DM program could avoid creating disproportional impacts to any one geographic region or sector as noted in the CWCB’s policy statement, is something the IBCC continues to consider.

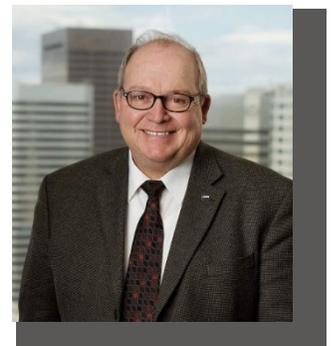
Across past reports and directors, it has been noted that the IBCC has operated most broadly as a think tank that generates critical feedback – that is true. However it is also true that inherent in the 2005 Water for the 21st Century Act that created the IBCC (and the basin roundtables), the IBCC also provides a feedback loop to elevate basins’ interests and concerns on a broad range of issues. The IBCC has been deliberate about strengthening that communication through thoughtful roundtable integration and engaging the education and outreach liaisons in each basin.

This year we celebrate the 5th anniversary of the Colorado Water Plan as well as 15 years of the IBCC and the basin roundtables. In the face of many of Colorado’s greatest challenges, the time for the IBCC and the roundtables has never been more important. These are forums that help us evaluate, educate, align and advance our common interests. Spaces where we can have the hard conversations that we must have in order to stake out a shared path forward. Places where we can address our challenges head-on and know that we will be better for having done so.

In this tradition, the IBCC continues to do its part to help keep Colorado strong – not because it can always find immediate solutions to these discussions, but because it allows room for those discussions to occur. Because in that space, with good intention and honest dialogue, it is possible to find workable solutions that better meet our collective needs and better serve Colorado.

Sincerely,

Russ George
Director of Compact Negotiations



IBCC BACKGROUND:

Since its inception in the 2005 “Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act” the IBCC has provided an important, diverse, and balanced forum for policy input from across Colorado. Built on the vision of Russ George, Diane Hoppe, and Jim Isgar, the IBCC has helped shape numerous planning initiatives through a focused discourse on the major policy challenges within and across the basin roundtables. Formed at a critical time, the IBCC has helped to rise above polarization in an attempt to simultaneously address statewide and local issues in a cooperative, transbasin manner.

As former Director John Stulp said, “*The IBCC has served many specific roles over the years, but the most broadly, has stood as a united think tank to bring the self-interests of basins and stakeholders back to the statewide lens—where most of our self-interests are, in fact, common to the great state of Colorado.*” The IBCC’s statewide perspective and ability to function as a think tank has generated critical feedback to the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), basin roundtables, and broader water community. As such, the work of the IBCC has largely contributed to the success of those roundtables, the creation and implementation of the Colorado Water Plan, Basin Implementation Plans, and many other notable efforts. Some past examples of this important work include:

- 2020 – Holding a joint DM workgroup and IBCC meeting in March as well as updating the CWCB board on a range of Demand Management equity/fairness concerns and questions as noted in the *Demand Management Equity Summary* document that was included in the July CWCB Board packet.
- 2018 – Coordinating with IBCC members and the pre-cursor to the For the Love of Colorado campaign team to identify critical funding areas and possible funding opportunities for the Colorado Water Plan.
- 2014 - Carefully negotiating the Conceptual Framework that was included in the Colorado Water Plan in 2015 to evaluate a course for discussion around potential new Trans Mountain Diversions (TMDs).
- 2013 - Compiling a No and Low Regrets Action Plan to identify smart near-term actions that support Colorado under any future scenario as well as beginning discussions around the Conceptual Framework.
- 2009- Evaluating the Portfolio and Tradeoff tool and initiating the scenario planning framework documented in the Colorado Water Plan that now serves as a foundation to the Analysis and Technical Update to the Colorado Water Plan.
- 2006 - Creating carefully articulated by-laws and charter documents for the IBCC.

HIGHLIGHT OF IBCC’S 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2020, despite the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19, the IBCC continued to meet. IBCC accomplishments in 2020 advanced the discourse around two key issues including:

- Equity & Demand Management - IBCC’s first and last in-person meeting prior to the outbreak consisted of a two-day meeting on March 4 and March 5 that focused on DM. The first day invited the other DM workgroup members to attend but focused on IBCC discussions with emphasis on identifying what “equity,” broadly defined as a sense of fairness, might mean for any potential DM effort. The second day focused on the eight DM Workgroups with IBCC, acting as a de facto 9th workgroup, providing additional insight through the lens of equity.

These and other IBCC conversations about equity were initially captured in a DM workgroup summary to the CWCB Board in July, 2020. The IBCC continues to see DM as one topic of great interest and is exploring how to best coordinate with the CWCB to provide ongoing input as the discussion evolves.

- IBCC & Basin Communication – As IBCC worked to evaluate its main goals it identified several issues (see goals below) that IBCC would like to continue exploring through a thoughtful dialogue with the nine basin roundtables to identify what roundtables wanted the IBCC to discuss. This intentional process highlighted the basins’ desires to better understand and coordinate with IBCC and that IBCC goals are largely in line with basin aspirations of what the IBCC might address.

Through this process, the IBCC renewed its role in formally establishing a Public Education, Participation and Outreach (PEPO) working group as originally called for in the 2005 HB-1177. The IBCC will now have a strengthened connection to roundtables through the PEPO coordinators in each basin. This also supports the enhanced flow of communication between the IBCC, PEPO and roundtables.

HIGHLIGHT OF IBCC’S 2020 GOALS

Through a series of conversations with IBCC and roundtables, the top issues that the IBCC and the basin roundtables collectively want the IBCC to explore include:

- Drought and Climate Change Impacts
- Equity and DM
- Colorado River Issues
- Forest Health
- Regional Planning and Projects
- Funding and Sustainable Funding Sources

Other items that continue to be of interest to the IBCC include but are not limited to Alternative Transfer Methods (ATMs) and providing input into the Colorado Water Plan update. Some of these conversations have more immediate pathways for the IBCC to make advancements while others may require additional input. Ongoing conversations with roundtables on roundtable interests and enhanced communication, like the DM conversations with the CWCB Board, will require thoughtful interaction to identify where the IBCC can best support ongoing conversations in these areas. In either case, the IBCC’s dual approach to advancing efforts allow it to move forward seamlessly by tackling the items it can most immediately advance at each subsequent meeting.

As in past years, the IBCC has identified that it will continue to meet three times a year unless special meetings are needed.

RESOURCE QUICK REFERENCE:

[CWCB Website](#)

[IBCC Webpage](#)

[CWCB Board July 15 DM Update](#) (including the Summary of IBCC Discussion Regarding Equity)

CONTACT INFORMATION:

To learn more or if you have questions please email waterplan.info@state.co.us, call 303-866-3441, visit the CWCB website (www.cwcb.state.co.us) or see how we’re working to engage the public at engagecwcb.org.