



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Russ Sands, Section Chief - Water Supply Planning

DATE: November 16, 2021 Board Meeting

ITEM: Agenda Item #13 - Colorado Water Plan Update

Staff Recommendation

- A) Staff recommends the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Board approve the identified sideboards and approach for addressing comments and finalizing the 2023 Colorado Water Plan by late December 2022. The plan would be formally adopted at the January 24, 2023 Board Meeting.
- B) Staff recommends the board approve the CWCB Board letter for inclusion into the introduction to the 2023 Colorado Water Plan.

Introduction and Background

The work of updating the Colorado Water Plan (Water Plan) effectively began immediately after the conclusion of the 2015 plan and never stopped. This included the Analysis and Technical Update to the Water Plan (Tech Update), updating the Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs) and developing the 2023 Water Plan. The process took about seven years to complete in total. The CWCB has collected feedback on the Water Plan throughout these updates, and the process for writing the 2023 Water Plan included time for extensive stakeholder outreach during the scoping phase. With the release of the 2023 Water Plan draft, staff launched an unprecedented outreach process that included attending or hosting events in all 64 counties in Colorado and yielded an array of comments gathered through an online portal tool, four listening sessions, from staff engagements, and from letters submitted via email. In total, the public comment period yielded 1,517 suggested edits to the plan and more than 2,000 observations. Public comments included everything from general thoughts and water priorities to specific text edits that CWCB has sorted and evaluated. This memo covers the full background of stakeholder involvement (Part I), context and summary of comments received (Part II), offers a proposed approach for incorporating applicable edits into the draft document using sideboards (Part III) and discusses the inclusion of a board letter and plan for finalizing the 2023 Water Plan update (Part IV).

PART I - Iterative Stakeholder Engagement

The 2023 Water Plan can be celebrated as the longest-running and most robust stakeholder engagement effort in Colorado. The 30,000 comments received on the 2015 Water Plan came in and the stakeholder engagement never stopped. Through grants, roundtables, Interbasin Compact Committee meetings, Technical Advisory Groups, and more the Water Plan continued to gather comments that helped refine successive steps in its update process. This cemented the realization that the Water Plan update is not one thing; it's the sum of a multi-year effort to update key components that build to a holistic plan.

The Cycle of Public Engagement

- **Technical Update Activities** - Following the launch of the Water Plan and BIPs in 2015, CWCB initiated the process of updating the underlying water supply and demand analyses, which culminated in the 2019 Technical Update. The work began with the input of Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs)—representatives from across the state, including water stakeholders, subject matter experts, and basin roundtable members who provided expertise and advice on assumptions and methods for the Technical Update analyses, Project Costing Tool and Flow Tool.
- **BIP Update Activities** - An Implementation Working Group composed of 27 Roundtable Members (including one IBCC member from each basin) helped develop the scope of the BIP updates, refine basin water use/supply data, and conceptualize the Project Database to better track basin water projects. The 3-month public comment period allowed local water stakeholders within each basin to provide feedback and help prioritize future basin projects.
- **Water Plan Update Activities**
 - **Initial Scoping and Outreach (2020-2021)** - The [Water Plan's scoping phase](#) took place from October 2020 to June of 2021. It aimed to proactively gather input and to create a shared vision for what the stakeholders wanted to see in the update. That effort included:
 - **New Website** - the engagewcb.org website is a stakeholder engagement platform that CWCB utilized to collect input and share information (e.g. events, timelines, etc.)
 - **Survey** - A survey opened from January 27, 2021 - June 30, 2021 to collect stakeholder input, collecting 31 responses.
 - **Information Sheets** - a suite of [five information sheets](#) describing the plans for the Water Plan update were posted for comment on engagewcb.org along with a survey.
 - **Workshops** - From January 27 through June 30 of 2021, CWCB staff organized an array of 15 [scoping outreach events](#) covering a range of important topics for the Water Plan update. Workshops collectively covered 30 hours, hosted 50+ speakers, and gathered input from over 1,200 stakeholders. This period included the [Riverside Chat](#) event on January 27, 2021 and a [Riverside Chat II](#) event on June 8, 2021.
 - **Additional Outreach (2021-2022)**
 - **Task Force Meetings** - Staff also conducted informal interviews and hosted regular meetings with key stakeholder groups including members of the Water Availability Task Force, and the Agricultural and Municipal Impact Task Forces, that served in part to inform the update.

A Water Equity Task Force was also convened during the scoping phase to provide specific input on a set of guidelines that could be incorporated into the Water Plan update. The Task Force included 21 diverse Coloradans blending

traditional water stakeholder groups and new voices. The task force included two members from each of the legislatively-defined “basins” across Colorado (representing each of the eight major river basins as well as the metro area) with both a water-focused representative and a community representative. The Task Force also included one member from each of Colorado’s two federally recognized Native American Tribes - the Southern Ute and the Ute Mountain Ute tribes, and a member representing the acequia community.

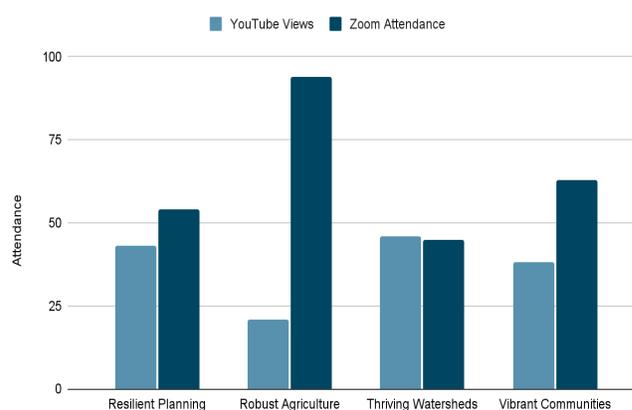
- **Continued Basin Roundtable Outreach** - Staff continued to liaise with the roundtables both around the conclusion of the Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs) and the Colorado Water Plan draft roll-out.
- **Water 2022 and Basin Mini-tours** - Staff worked with and funded Water Education Colorado to both help brainstorm concepts for the rollout of Water 2022 (Water ‘22) as well as an effort to celebrate the Water Plan and BIPs with basin “mini-tours” in each basin. The latter focused on engaging new community voices to celebrate local water projects and infrastructure, and bring light to local water challenges and solutions. The mini-tours, working with the local Public Education Participation and Outreach (PEPO) basin liaisons, reached over 150 residents in the Arkansas, Colorado, Gunnison, Metro, Rio Grande, South Platte, Southwest, and Yampa/White/Green basins.
- **Public Comment Period Outreach**
An infographic that summarizes outreach highlights can be found in Attachment A and details are also captured below.
 - **Draft plan release and information sheets** - The draft Water Plan was made available in English and Spanish via engagecwcb.org. The public comment period was open from June 30 - September 30, 2022. During this time the site recorded over 3,100 visits to the pages containing Water Plan documents. The English language version of the Water Plan was downloaded 1,053 times, and the Spanish language version of the Water Plan was downloaded 48 times. Videos posted by CWCB that briefed stakeholders on the Water Plan were viewed 100+ times.
 - **Ongoing web based engagement** - The engagecwcb.org website was used to collect input and share information about the Water Plan. The site was designed to be user-friendly and was updated ahead of the Water Plan public comment period to include built-in language translation widgets (available languages included Somali, Vietnamese, Amharic, and Spanish), tracking, and opportunities for stakeholders to register for updates on issues of interest to them. Additionally, CWCB’s Water Talk podcast about the Water Plan was heard 165 times, and CWCB posts on Twitter about the Water Plan garnered 12,845 impressions.
 - **Events in 64 counties** - During the Water Plan public comment period, a thorough outreach effort was made to raise awareness and share information about the Water Plan to communities and stakeholders across the state. This effort kicked off with a presser event that led to media coverage estimated to

have reached 4.2 M viewers based on newspaper circulation. It also included staff attending or hosting over 100 events across all 64 of Colorado’s counties. It also included making printed copies of the draft Water Plan available in each county library seat, at events and online. These staff-led efforts reached approximately 2,000 people.

- **Working with CREA Results to diversify outreach** - In addition, CWCB contracted with the local organization, Community, Research, Education and Awareness (CREA) Results (CREA hereafter). CREA specializes in broader outreach and engagement with communities of color and marginalized and underserved communities through trusted community connectors around the state. This effort reached 7,500 Coloradans in-person, and over 130,000 Coloradans via media and communications. It included attendance at 43 events and four canvassing days to reach over 185 businesses and homes throughout the metro Denver region and beyond. CREA also led a media campaign to raise awareness about the Water Plan that included two radio programs on La Onda 1050 am reaching estimated 10,000 listeners each week, four columns in El Comercio de Colorado, a biweekly digital news publication reaching 25,000 per issue, and two CREA Results monthly newsletter inclusions, reaching over 1,000 each month.

- **Listening Sessions -**
During the public comment period staff held online listening sessions in each of the four Action Areas of the Water Plan ([Thriving Watersheds](#); [Resilient Planning](#); [Vibrant Communities](#); [Robust Agriculture](#)).

Listening Sessions Participation



- **Water Congress Legislative and Attendee Outreach** - CWCB staff

are required to update the Colorado legislature’s Water Resources Review Committee (committee) when changes to the Water Plan are made. The committee held a session at the Colorado Water Congress (CWC) Summer conference where CWCB presented to the legislature and a room full of attendees. Staff received feedback and questions about the process.

CWCB also conducted a survey during the CWC Summer Conference to gather feedback from attendees about the Water Plan. Responses indicated that 73% of respondents felt that this Water Plan improved upon the 2015 plan. Additionally, respondents indicated that a variety of elements made the plan successful including that it balances municipal, environmental, and agricultural water needs; is written in clear language; it contains clarity around actions;

contains progressive water measures without being prescriptive; and maintains a clear vision without rigid numeric targets.

PART II - Summary Analysis of Public Comment Period

The CWCB received an array of feedback during the 90 day public comment period. This included verbal communications gathered at meetings and listening sessions, emails, event polling (i.e. Water Congress Survey noted above) and the formal Water Plan Public Comment survey CWCB posted on CWCB. The survey allowed for overarching comments, chapter-by-chapter comments or uploads of letters. It should be noted that all the public comment input is still being analyzed and final numbers may shift slightly when final numbers are listed in January.

Data Evaluation

- **Analysis of Suggested Edits** - In total, 1,172 submittals were made including 73 letters and 10 emails which yielded more than 510 pages of input (after removing duplicates and erroneous submissions) and over 2,000 observations. After sorting through the feedback to identify where changes were suggested, staff have identified that there are approximately 1,500 suggested edits.
- **Analysis of General Tone** - The majority of responses were overwhelmingly neutral (85% of submittals). Some were positive (11%) and some were negative (3%). While not an exact measure, most letters tended to be complimentary and balanced with potential improvements (neutral) compared to those that were generally supportive (positive) or those that were generally unsupportive (negative).
- **Analysis of Responses by Sector** - The responses spanned various entities, with the majority of responses from the general public (78%). Other entities included environmental and recreation non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at 8%, trailed by Government at 3%, Education at 3% and other groups such as private companies (2%), agricultural NGOs (2%), Other NGOs (2%), Water Conservancy Districts (1%) and Municipalities (1%).
- **Analysis of Signatories and Petition Signatures**- While the public comment period yielded nearly 1,200 unique submittals about the Water Plan via survey, letters submitted, and in person feedback at events, letters from several organizations included multiple signatories. Letters with multiple signatories were counted as one submittal for the purposes of editing the document. For perspective, 17 of the 73 letters, (23%) had additional signatories, however many of the signing organizations overlap in their support for each other and are co-signed on several letters (e.g. Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership - 8 letters, Conservation Colorado - 4 letters, Western Resource Advocates - 4 letters, American Rivers - 4 letters).

Four of the 73 letters (5%) had petition signatures attached with some duplication of those attached lists of signatures across the letters. All signature attachments came from Environmental and Recreation nonprofit organizations. There were no petitions attached from agricultural or municipal groups. While the 5,137 petition signatures help show support for the petitions written, the petition is still counted as one submittal.

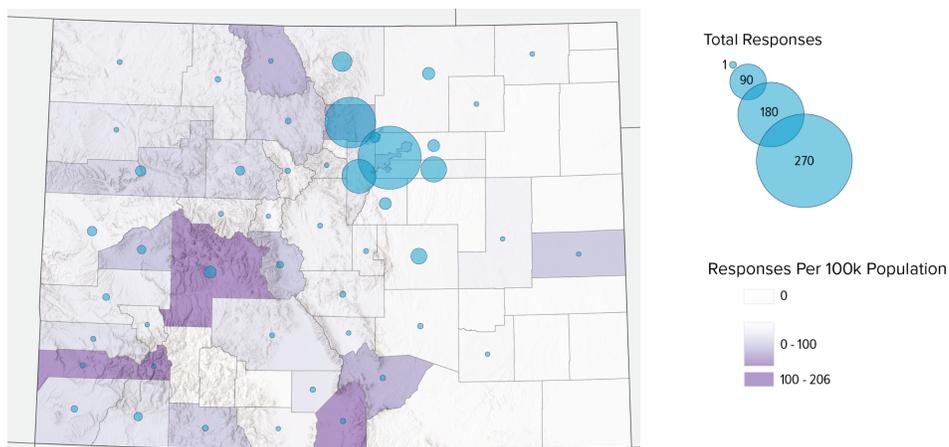
Staff do not weigh the importance of comments by signatory, petition signature or otherwise

value the importance of one comment over another. CWCB’s approach to responding is driven by its statutory authority and its stated sideboards for the update (see Part III of this memo; *process for incorporating edits into the final Water Plan*).

- **Analysis of Language** - Of the total submittals, 89% of the responses were in English and 11% were in Spanish (11%). The engagecwcb.org survey was available in Spanish, comments were made in Spanish at the listening sessions, and Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting and the Outdoors (HECHO) and Latino community members across Colorado submitted letters in Spanish.
- **Analysis of Frequently Occurring Comments and Themes** - An array of topics were discussed in public comments, and several themes arose. The word cloud below represents the relative levels of responses for each of the general themes. “Water Conservation” was the most used, and it included responses across a wide range of entities that spanned the general public, non-profit organizations, government, municipalities, private companies, and water conservancy districts. “Ecological Impacts” was the second most used. A world cloud provides an example of key themes that dominated comments.



- **Analysis of Comments by Action Areas** - Furthermore, responses encompassed the four action areas in the Water Plan update. There were 1,349 responses on the action areas with Thriving Watersheds having the highest number (643), followed by Resilient Planning (317), Vibrant communities (256) and Robust Agriculture (129).
- **Analysis of Comments by Geographic Area** - Responses were received from across the state. The map below highlights the geographical nature of the responses by county.



Evaluation of Content

- **Examples of Opposing Views** - In some cases the input received was contradictory. For example comments that focused on agriculture being highly efficient were sometimes offset by comments that agriculture needed to be more efficient. Similarly, comments that discussed removing regulatory barriers for storage projects were offset by comments of those not wanting additional storage. Lastly, comments calling for greater metrics were offset by those who appreciated the plan being less prescriptive and having rigid numeric targets. The Water Plan strives to balance the viewpoints of all the stakeholders across the state.
- **Examples of General Alignment** - In many cases, input converged across letters including leading with water conservation as a first choice, promoting local tools that utilities and counties have (e.g. 1041 powers; financing tools), ensuring support for prior appropriation while recognizing the need for flexibility, and better identifying recreational benefits.
- **Observations on Public Comments** - Commenters, letter authors and signatories cover a spectrum of those who have never read the update to those who have read the update in depth. In at least one CWCB poll during a water event, as much as 24% of the respondents cited they had not read the Water Plan draft at all. The Water Plan survey was designed to address this by allowing for broad input asking “What do you want water leaders to know?” Certainly, those submitting letters clearly display a greater familiarity with the Water Plan draft and/or previous Water Plan and CWCB.

Yet even for those familiar with state planning, the Water Plan and the CWCB, there are still common threads of confusion around what the CWCB can do, require, enforce, advocate for and track. For those who are less familiar with the scope and authority of CWCB and Water Plan, there is even more confusion. For example, there are many comments asking for the Plan to cover something that is already addressed (i.e. climate change). Given this broad spectrum of commentary, CWCB’s assessment of comments revealed three general categories; those that are arguably already captured in the Water Plan draft, topics that could be more thoroughly addressed or emphasized, and topics that are beyond the scope of the Water Plan and cannot be addressed. Examples follow:

- **Input on topics that are already captured in the Water Plan**
 - Make the Water Plan shorter and more digestible
 - Support agricultural innovation and collaborative water sharing agreements
 - Highlight the need for urgent action on climate and drought resiliency, especially with respect to the Colorado River
 - Include a focus on equity
 - Emphasize the importance of water conservation and efficiency
- **Input on topics that can likely be better addressed, emphasized or clarified**
 - Reinforce support for Colorado’s system of water rights and administration.
 - Prioritize water conservation and efficiency over development of supplies
 - Tell a more complete story about the benefits of irrigated agriculture (e.g., ecological benefits, return flows)
 - Foster the implementation of nature based solutions
 - Focus on water-based recreation benefits and actions

- **Input on topics that cannot likely be addressed**
 - Retain and update measurable objectives
 - Add more details, timelines, and priorities to Agency Actions
 - Hire staff to focus on equity or recreation
 - Increase budgets/spending and create a detailed plan for capturing available federal funding
 - Develop new legislation or regulations

In many cases there is an emphasis on doing “more” in some of these areas. Sometimes that is a general statement (e.g. “be bolder”) and in some cases there are specifics. To respond to all comments, CWCB staff realized they needed to refine a set of sideboards that stem from and codify CWCB’s approach. This process is described in the following section.

PART III - Process for Incorporating Edits into the final Water Plan

CWCB staff have reviewed the submissions and comments received on the Water Plan and developed a proposed approach for incorporating suggested edits into the final Water Plan. This approach takes into account comments that conflict with CWCB’s general approach to updating the Water Plan, do not align with lessons learned from the first Water Plan (i.e. what worked less well), and/or confusion over what CWCB can actually achieve, require, track and enforce as an agency. While refined, this work builds from months of conversations with the CWCB Board which included an initial set of sideboards

- **Initial Guiding Sideboards** - Early in the Water Plan update process, staff considered how to define actions and discussed with the Board several “sideboards” that help define them. These sideboards have been discussed at various board meetings and during the January 2022 board workshop on the Water Plan update. The sideboards discussed at that time were that actions should be:
 - Within CWCB’s direct control or direct sphere of influence
 - Do not speak for other agencies or groups but embrace them as partners
 - Do not create legal problems
 - Achievable within 8-10 years
- **Additional Clarifying Needs** - Through reading public comments, it became clear that additional details needed to be clarified including:
 - What CWCB has the legal authority to do as an agency and in the Water Plan
 - How CWCB counts and tracks success
 - That the Colorado Water Plan supports the Prior Appropriation Doctrine
 - When new analysis, methodologies and data could be reconsidered
- **Applying a Revised Set of Sideboards to Public Comments** - CWCB staff have built from the early sideboards developed during drafting to create a list of 9 modified sideboards (See Attachment A for full details). An overview of the 9 sideboards follow:
 - **Using Non-prescriptive Language**
Generally using “should” not “must” language.
 - **Creating Adaptive Plans (actions, tools, language, etc)**
Maintaining flexibility in action language and timing recognizing funding, input, acute

issues, new research, and other issues may shift specific needs/timing.

- **Substantive Changes Are Made During Subsequent Cyclical Updates**
Noting that data, analyses, methods and research will not be evaluated as a part of the final draft Water Plan but can be discussed in future updates processes (e.g. Technical Update).
- **Tracking Progress Through Actions**
Noting that partner actions are tracked through projects, Agency Actions are tracked by completion and trends are analyzed during Technical Updates.
- **Working Within CWCB's Specific Authority**
Noting that CWCB has specific duties given by the legislature, that the CWCB cannot direct other agencies and that the authority to change statute or funding resides with the legislature.
- **Striving for Brevity and Readability**
Making only minor edits that keep the document short and accessible rather than adding significant text or jargon.
- **Finding Creative Solutions Within Colorado Water Law** - Affirming CWCB is working within the bounds of prior appropriation recognizing the need for flexibility within the legal framework.
- **Acknowledging Local Control Drives Implementation**
Recognizing water projects and policy are often driven at local scales. The Water Plan supports them but needs local stakeholders to advance the Water Plan as CWCB does not build projects and has no regulatory authority to enforce locally.
- **Advancing Continuous Improvement through Iterative Engagement**
The CWCB is constantly working with stakeholders, taking in input and evaluating new tools/research and will continue to do so even as specific details or contentious items may not be addressed in the plan - it does not mean they are not supported if they conform with the Water Plan's values and visions.
- **Process of Applying Sideboards** - Pending the adoption of these sideboards, CWCB staff will immediately work to make Water Plan edits. This includes:
 - ***Comment Noted*** - Comment is logged but no action is taken; sideboard referenced.
 - ***Already Captured*** - Comment is arguably captured in the text already; sideboard may be referenced to address a particular aspect of the comment.
 - ***Text Modified*** - Comment will result in a text change, addition of text, possible call-out box and/or inclusion in the executive summary; Sideboard may or may not be referenced.

- **Expected Modifications Based on Comments** - Based on initial analysis of applying these sideboards to the suggested changes, about 50% of the suggestions appear to be either *Already Captured* or *Text Modified*.

PART IV - Process for including a Board Letter and Finalization Process

- **Board Letter** - The CWCB Board had discussed providing a letter to include in the introduction of the Colorado Water Plan. The letter was drafted with individual board member input and is included as Attachment B. Many overarching themes that relate to input heard in public comments are also captured in the draft CWCB Board letter.
- **Finalization Process** - Upon board approval of the recommended sideboards (Attachment A) and the Board letter (Attachment B), CWCB staff will apply the sideboards to the public comments and modify the text as appropriate. Staff will have the final Water Plan draft and Executive Summary completed by December 2022 to meet the CWCB's current Wildly Important Goal (WIG) to finalize the Water Plan by the end of December 2022. In January 2023, staff will make a final review for copy edits, translate the final plan and print copies of the Executive Summary in time for the official approval of the final Water Plan draft on January 24, 2023 at the CWCB Board meeting. The final PDFs will be posted on CWCB's website the same day and the new Water Plan will be in effect.

ATTACHMENT A: Colorado Water Plan Public Comment Sideboards to be Applied

1. **USING NON-PRESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE** - CWCB uses terms like “should” and “can” in the Water Plan, rather than more rigid or prescriptive terms that suggest a regulatory or other requirement where one does not exist. The CWCB is not a regulatory agency, cannot enforce regulations and is careful not to imply requirements where they do not exist. The Water Plan provides a vision for the state to follow, and the CWCB supports stakeholders as they take actions and implement projects pursuant to the vision. The CWCB supports stakeholders by providing funding, fostering collaboration, and developing supportive tools and research. The CWCB does not attempt to overly constrain stakeholders or discourage participation.
2. **CREATING ADAPTIVE PLANS (actions, tools, language, etc.)** - The CWCB worked with collaborating agencies to draft the Water Plan’s *Agency Actions*. The actions have cross-agency buy-in and provide a high-level description of the activities that will take place, knowing that they must be adaptive to changing conditions. The flexibility within the actions recognizes that agencies need to be responsive to acute issues/changing conditions, are dependent on funding requests, may have staffing changes, and may experience other variables that are often outside of an agency’s control. As a result, *Agency Actions* are intended to create accountability without undue constraints. Details describing staff leads, start dates, budgets and discrete tasks are often intentionally not specified for these reasons. Knowing that project needs may change in the future, the detail provided is appropriate for a 10-year plan that will need to reevaluate budget, stakeholders and scope when actions are implemented. For similar reasons, the plan only identifies collaborating state agencies who have committed to “leading” or “collaborating” on an Agency Action. Additional agencies may participate and may adopt a more prominent role in the future and can always be consulted as actions develop.
3. **MAKING SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES DURING SUBSEQUENT CYCLICAL UPDATES** - The CWCB will not conduct new analyses, revise data sets, include new methodologies or reference new analyses CWCB has not fully vetted before the Water Plan is released. The CWCB has funded numerous projects, analyses, and products with grants or loans, but the CWCB does not necessarily agree with, endorse or will adopt the end product or research. Analysis or research that is included in the Water Plan has been carefully referenced. Similarly, the methodologies and data were vetted by the CWCB Board, staff, consultants and stakeholder involvement - particularly during the 2019 Technical Update. The next Technical Update (2025-2029) offers the next, best opportunity for reevaluating the approach. This work ultimately folds into the next round of basin implementation planning (2029-2031) and will inform the 2033 Water Plan update. These three pillars form the major milestones of the Water Plan and agency actions sequence around them. With each milestone, many associated stakeholder engagement efforts and the public comment periods will provide time for reevaluation and adjustment. To that end, the CWCB does not plan to make changes that alter the work of the Technical Update or BIPs at this time.
4. **TRACKING PROGRESS THROUGH ACTIONS** - The updated Water Plan emphasizes tracking progress through more clearly defined actions. The goal of this update is to maintain the visionary character of the Water Plan while making it more actionable and transparent and also be accountable and honest about what the CWCB can and cannot do. The Water Plan provides clear vision statements, project-level examples of partner actions, and adaptive agency actions

that acknowledge future uncertainty while still making the plan significantly more accountable. Three explicit ways CWCB will track progress and trends include:

- a. Partner Actions funded by CWCB will be tracked through CWCB's investment in the Grant and Loan Portal and needed future projects will be tracked through the recently developed Project Database.
 - b. Agency Actions will be tracked by their completion and pivot around the major milestones of the Technical Update, the BIPs and the Water Plan; other actions generally have to sequence around these timelines as many of the actions in the Water Plan build off of one another and need to be completed for prior to each milestone.
 - c. The action to complete the next Technical Update (Agency Action 5.1) marks the initiative by which CWCB tracks state trends and evaluates data.
5. **WORKING WITHIN CWCB'S SPECIFIC AUTHORITY** - CWCB is bound by its statutory authority that governs its mission, board, funding, the roundtables, the Interbasin Compact Committee, and the Water Plan. Only the legislature has the authority to create new staff positions and funding. The CWCB Board can and does fund certain programs, but only where statutorily authorized. Neither the CWCB or the Water Plan are authorized to direct other branches of government and it cannot require other agencies to staff, fund, or implement the Water Plan unless otherwise identified in statute (e.g. permitting coordination with Colorado Parks and Wildlife). The CWCB can encourage inter-agency coordination, process development, fund projects and support policy, but it has little if any enforcement authority. The CWCB board makes decisions about funding from the Severance Tax Operational Account, transfers from the Perpetual Base Fund to the Water Supply Reserve Fund, and recommends funding programs and projects to the legislature through the annual Water Projects Bill. \ At least annually the CWCB board reviews budget needs at the finance committee and at the September board meeting, and it consistently reviews funding opportunities.
6. **STRIVING FOR BREVITY AND READABILITY** - Shortening the Water Plan to improve accessibility was a major goal of the current update. CWCB strives to use plain language, reduce acronyms, and limit technical detail to the extent practical. Acknowledging comments that the plan is still lengthy, CWCB will limit additions to the Plan to those that clarify and add context. This is especially true where new technical terms and jargon may add confusion, be divisive and/or where definitions are not always agreed-upon by practitioners. In reviewing comments, CWCB will attempt to capture the general spirit of the comments that lend themselves to text modifications, but will likely not make verbatim edits in most cases. The Water Plan update is intended to be short, consumable and readable for those with basic water knowledge seeking to learn more, as well as the general public.
7. **FINDING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS WITHIN COLORADO WATER LAW** - The updated Water Plan, like the original 2015 plan, definitively supports existing Colorado Water Law and the Prior Appropriation doctrine. The Water Plan highlights the certainty and flexibility our water rights system provides. Many water users would like increased flexibility, which can be found within our existing water law and legal processes. The Water Plan encourages stakeholders to develop system-supported innovative and creative solutions and collaborate on issues that are sometimes contentious. The Water Plan encourages stakeholders to develop innovative and creative solutions that work within the system and to find middle ground on issues that are sometimes contentious. Finally, the Water Plan was drafted in concert with the Attorney General's office and does not seek to unnecessarily complicate or weigh in on legally-sensitive

issues nor is it intended to be used in legal proceedings.

8. **ACKNOWLEDGING LOCAL CONTROL DRIVES IMPLEMENTATION** - While compacts and interstate decisions are noted in context, the Colorado Water Plan focuses on Colorado's intrastate challenges. In fact, the primary purpose of the Water Plan as defined in legislation is to "determine state policy regarding the optimal conservation and development of Colorado's water resources." The Water Plan is a policy document led by an agency that does not build projects. Colorado is a local-control state, and "optimal" levels of conservation and development must ultimately be decided and implemented at the local level. The Water Plan serves as a framework or guide for thoughtfully supporting local and regional water conversations regarding what is optimal - backed by funding for Partner Actions (local projects) and supported by Agency Actions (helpful tools and research). Local projects and policies ultimately move the Water Plan forward and the Water Plan is meant to support those efforts. The plan's vision and actions, along with CWCB funding programs, are meant to support local tools that can minimize impacts and maximize benefits to all sectors and the greater Colorado economy.

9. **ADVANCING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ITERATIVE ENGAGEMENT** - The CWCB board and agency staff continually engage with stakeholders and evaluate opportunities for improving processes, programs, and projects. The CWCB works on a broad array of initiatives under its statutory authority including but not limited to the Agency Actions described in the Water Plan. The CWCB seeks to engage new stakeholders in inclusive ways that reduce barriers. The Water Plan is meant to support varied discussions that advance creative projects and solutions, which are often proposed by local grass-roots organizations. Some topics or issues may need more consideration or stakeholder input before being included in the Water Plan but the Water Plan is broad enough to accommodate future innovations and shifts. Just because a specific idea or detail isn't explicitly covered in the Water Plan doesn't mean it isn't supported if it generally conforms to the visions and values of the Water Plan.

ATTACHMENT B: CWCB Board Letter Introducing the Colorado Water Plan

Fellow Coloradan,

Thank you for opening the Colorado Water Plan. With this document, the Board and Staff of the Colorado Water Conservation Board seek to respond to this historic moment in time with a plan for thoughtful and bold initiative.

Much has changed since 2015, when the first Colorado Water Plan was finalized. The impacts of widespread drought coupled with a global pandemic challenged our communities with far-reaching uncertainties that shaped new water management realities. The pandemic pushed our stakeholders to begin meeting virtually, bringing a new way for people to connect, learn and get involved with the work of planning for water. These experiences also highlighted the ways in which Colorado is connected by water. Towns and farms on the Front Range are tied to high mountain streams on the West Slope through the complicated plumbing that brings water through the Continental Divide. The fresh produce, meat, and beer enjoyed in restaurants and kitchens around our state are supplied by farming and ranching families with diverse backgrounds and, often, multi-generational and historical ties to the land they steward. The rivers that drive robust recreation economies provide important corridors for fish and wildlife, drinking water for cities and towns, and spaces for people to connect with nature. Colorado is the state we know and love because of its lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and aquifers. Because water inextricably links people across Colorado, our water management challenges must be faced together.

The West is experiencing growth in population and demand for water while our hydrology is becoming less predictable. Our temperatures have warmed and the timing and amount of precipitation has changed, causing shifts in runoff and streamflows. It is clear this is not a temporary phenomenon, but rather a permanent trend toward aridification of the West. This has changed the way we think about water planning and shifted our collective approach to swift action.

The Colorado Water Plan was informed by robust stakeholder input and complex modeling that provides a data-driven understanding of our current water supply and potential future scenarios. The plan also highlights Colorado's values and follows four fundamental themes of Thriving Watersheds, Resilient Planning, Vibrant Communities, and Robust Agriculture through discussions of each of our major river basins. Most importantly, the plan sets forth ambitious yet attainable actions that will help Coloradans do more with less water, increase resiliency in the face of a changing climate, and ensure broad and diverse voices are included in future water management conversations

The CWCB cannot do this important work alone, which is why the actions take into account close working relationships with sister agencies and the critical efforts of partner organizations, water users, and water managers across the State. Significantly, the plan outlines a 10-year update process that allows flexibility for the board to work through annual operations plans that can adapt to shifting conditions and priorities.

Colorado has always been a place where the adversity of the landscape has been tempered by its ability to inspire. While our challenges are great, our natural and human resources are too. We have a long and celebrated history of innovation in water management, and we are confident the people of Colorado will continue to rise to the occasion and take on the critical work of protecting our water supply future. The Colorado Water Plan offers a light through dark and uncertain times, bringing together wide-ranging interests and voices into a collective vision, and more importantly, a plan for

action over the next ten years for both the Colorado Water Conservation Board and local communities across the state.

The collective actions we take today across every corner of the State will increase water resilience for Colorado and our downstream neighbors. We hope you will consider your own role in Colorado's water future and get involved - now is the time for action.

On behalf of the staff and the current and past board members of the CWCB, thank you for reading Colorado's Water Plan.