

Thematic Summary: Board Member Interviews

CWCB Operational Planning Project

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Background: The recently adopted Water Plan has roughly 50 actions to be implemented over 10 years. One of these actions is the development of a CWCB operational plan. The operational plan will help the Board refine its operations and focus its energy on those items that are within its control. The plan will also help maintain consistency and continuity as Board members transition onto and off the Board.

Process: As part of the CWCB operational plan development process, GPS interviewed 14 voting and ex officio board members to gather individual perspectives related to the Board’s purpose, boundaries, roles, strengths, and opportunities. Below is a high-level summary of themes and supporting details followed by numbered options for action (34 total) that will inform discussions during upcoming workshops.

July Meeting: During the next Board meeting, we will spend 90-minutes to

- Discuss the summary of themes (*45 minutes*)
 - Gain clarity where necessary and rectify any misstatements
 - Discuss additional Board member ideas (*space provided below*)
 - Debate the merits of ideas Board members find interesting
- Conduct a poll to highlight important actions (*30 minutes*)
 - Ask Board members to select (7) ideas they believe will be most impactful
 - Discuss results of the poll (*consider marking your favorites as you review*)
- Review the objectives and agenda for the 1-day workshop in August/September (*15 minutes*)

Themes, Support, and Options for Action:

1) This is a time of growth and change for the Board and the timing of this operational plan is perfect.

- a) Scarcity, increasing demand, national interest, and the new water plan serve to focus attention.
- b) Increasing diversity in terms of age, affiliation, experience, and expertise are proving beneficial.
- c) Splitting the Upper Colorado River commissioner role from the CWCB director role is viewed as a positive step.
- d) Several recently-appointed Board members bring fresh energy and additional expertise, and the new agency director will continue this.
- e) Each Board member has their own “pushes, pulls, and local responsibilities” but they recognize the importance of rallying around shared benefit for ALL of Colorado.
- f) There are commonly-held values like collegiality, openness, mutual respect, professionalism, preparedness, having fun, cede unneeded time, etc, but these are not written down and will be needed if/when the issues tackled become more contentious.

- g) The four new Regional Water Plan Grant Program coordinators are proving effective, enabling Board members to be connectors without having to coach on specifics of project and application development.
- h) Agency leaders and staff are viewed as universally strong and respect for their talents is high.

Options for Action:

- 1.1 Memorialize current behaviors and norms as ‘operating principles’ and use these to ensure continued function when discussions veer into challenging territory.
- 1.2 Create robust orientation, on-boarding, and off-boarding processes and assess whether these processes are meeting needs; ensure new members learn from outgoing ones.
- 1.3 Periodically highlight high-functioning team skills (communication, listening, etc) to break up meetings and continually remind Board members to build their skills.
- 1.4 Develop a shared, positive vision of the future and use this to focus activities and also consistently reinforce the importance of collaboration over competition (“we can and WILL all win together”) in all Board messaging.
- 1.5 Continue to invest in Board relationships via field trips, team building and maybe a retreat, but try to schedule during the 2-day windows to avoid conflict with other commitments.

My other ideas here:

2) The Board’s purview is not defined consistently by all members.

- a) [Title 37, Article 60, Part 1](#), section 106(1) and 106.3(2) define the duties of the Board and section 109(1) defines the authority of governor-appointed compact commissioners.
- b) The Board’s stated mission “to conserve, develop, protect and manage Colorado’s water for present and future generations” is powerful and also very broad, running the risk of a “rhetoric to reality” gap.
- c) Borders between CWCB the agency and CWCB the Board are sometimes blurry. When we say “CWCB does...”, are we discussing the agency, the Board, or both?
- d) Colorado River and other inter-state issues are a “gray area” and consume a fair percentage of the Board’s time, but some issues exceed the Board’s authority as advisors.
- e) The CWCB’s major policy product is the water plan and boundaries related to other policy positions are less well defined—“How should we be conducting ourselves related to compact negotiations? It’s easy to overstep and get out of alignment and yet we have a great ability to move the ball with and for the commissioner.”
- f) Interaction between Board and staff members is free-flowing with no “firewalls”, which can result in both strong relationships and unintended overwork of staff.

Options for Action

- 2.1 Complement the statute and mission with specific language declaring action-based duties (Advise on..., Oversee..., Act as a resource to..., Fund...).
- 2.2 Conduct discussions around advisory duties to help shed light on “gray” areas, while understanding that drawing strong lines may make the Board less impactful.
- 2.3 Define boundaries for taking positions on policy. When taking up an issue, ask the Board to decide whether to be reactive, responsive, and/or proactive.

2.4 Adopt guidelines for quantifying “asks” and gaining approval if significant work is required.

My other ideas here:

3) Board meetings are generally viewed as effective, but there are opportunities to improve efficiency in both preparation and conduct.

- a) Based on Agency and legislative milestones, there is a natural, annual rhythm to meeting topics and deadlines, but this is not documented.
- b) Large portions of Board meetings are sometimes spent reviewing grants and loans without questions or concerns from the Board, suggesting that time could be better spent.
- c) Hot button topics garner focus but some of these are outside the Board’s control.
- d) Utilization of executive session can be disruptive and reduce public trust.
- e) Board members are at different points in their careers and have varying professional obligations; roles are viewed as time consuming by some while others want to contribute more.
- f) Board packets can exceed 1000 pages and can be challenging to digest within available time.

Options for Action:

- 3.1 Develop an annual calendar with milestone driven topics aligned with legislative, budgetary, and program deadlines; use time during “lighter” periods for other activities and consider rotating annual topics (e.g., by-agency-section updates, by-basin overviews, etc.).
- 3.2 Ensure each Board meeting agenda segment has a specific objective and appropriate time allocation; move on when that objective is achieved, or a decision is made.
- 3.3 Build agendas that have the most critical discussions in the mornings when people are fresh.
- 3.4 Curtail the use of executive session except for very specific purposes.
- 3.5 Define the rules for sharing privileged information; “it is tough to contribute to the advancement of an initiative when you cannot share openly information that you know.”
- 3.6 Maintain and increase public trust by reducing barriers to participating in public comment (Change usage of Zoom or otherwise eliminate a handoff).
- 3.7 Adopt methods to make meetings more interactive including via polling, etc.
- 3.8 Reduce burdens on the Chair by appointing either a facilitator or a person to manage the Zoom and navigate documents.
- 3.9 Expand the use of executive summaries and increase the usage of hyperlink links to enable easier digestion and reference.
- 3.10 Offer additional project-driven or issue-driven work in off months and potentially fund conference attendance for Board members who want it.

My other ideas here:

4) There is a hunger for measurement of not only activity but also impact.

- a) Decomposing the water plan into specific annual goals is viewed as critical.
- b) Several Board members highlighted the importance of having focus areas with costed options.
- c) There is concern over ‘greenwashing’, giving credit for activities that do not make significant, measurable impact on watershed health (environmental health).

- d) There is desire to spend more time on post-mortems to distill the lessons that will drive greater impact for Colorado. What can we learn from the final report and how can this be propagated?
- e) Board members want to do both the “big things” and the small things that together make an impact.

Options for Action:

- 4.1 Develop an annual list of priorities and specific goals and plans; design meetings around advancing these targets and spend less time on discussions where no decision is needed (“let’s do the most we can as quickly as possible”).
- 4.2 Consider having third-party verification of proposed environmental impacts and/or augment current measures to include more proven impact on environmental health.
- 4.3 Conduct regular (quarterly/semi-annually/annual) progress updates and replanning based on honest assessment of what did and did not occur (note: Many water plan actions are years long and require partners to execute them, so stated goals must reflect this reality).

My other ideas here:

5) There is desire for additional, innovative impacts and avoidance of subsidizing operations.

- a) The Board’s changing composition (fewer water buffaloes) increases receptivity to new ideas.
- b) Current loan and grant programs yield high-quality, proven projects aligned with current criteria but do not incentivize innovative, less-proven methods; there are exceptions to this pattern (e.g. alternative crops, ag innovation grant, grants that support entrepreneurial efforts to address water & climate issues, others) that are a source of not only impact but also pride.
- c) Our current measures of cost effectiveness (\$/acre foot stored) might be short sighted when we consider long-term forecast (we might look back and say “wow, it was cheap then”).
- d) Some grant dollars go to purposes (e.g., ditch maintenance) that should be funded by applicant operations, not state dollars.

Options for Action:

- 5.1 Ensure that priority selection includes innovative topics where Board effort can drive an outsized impact and/or set the stage for growth of new modes.
- 5.2 Use regional representatives to make applicants aware of other federal dollars (NRCS—natural resource conservation service under the department of AG—EQIP—ranchers can apply for loans and grants) that can be used for their purpose while freeing capital to be deployed ways that are closer to the Water Plan’s intent.
- 5.3 Encourage ideas from staff members (and potentially those at collaborating agencies—DWR, WQCD, etc) to submit ideas for innovation for consideration by the Board.
- 5.4 Use Grants for one-time things like pilots; invent new vehicles where no current program exists (“don’t just consider options that exist on a spreadsheet”).

My other ideas here:

6) Relationships and division of duties between Basin Round Tables (BRTs), the agency, the IBCC, and the Board generally “work” but are not codified which can impact community building.

- a) The BRT structure is viewed as an ingenious structure, and each has its own culture, with some more collaborative and others more combative (“bring sword and shield to some meetings”).
- b) Some Directors are very active in their local BRT, while others are less so. Feedback from a short survey of BRT members was positive (see appendix 2).
- c) There is an opportunity reinforce common direction to the water plan and investigate “sticks” (enforcement) to complement “carrots” (monetary incentives)
- d) There is a strong desire to engage more stakeholders in this work (e.g., smaller users, associations, others), in partnership with other groups.

Options for Action:

- 6.1 Clearly document the purpose and authority of each group in the water ecosystem vis-à-vis CWCB.
- 6.2 Demonstrate solidarity and trust by considering joint IBCC/BRT/CWCB meetings, if practicable, or Director attendance at RTs other than their own.
- 6.3 Improve our abilities as storytellers to help combat small thinking and replace it with the “can do” ethic the Board has.
- 6.4 Continue to invest in cost-free events like the Drought Summit and C-9 Summit to “widen the tent”, raise awareness’ of vision and plans, and engage more people in our mission.
- 6.5 Increase available modes of recognition to reinforce positive behaviors and raise the profile of those people who exhibit them.
- 6.6 Consider joint outreach and messaging with other stakeholder groups to maximize both reach and comprehension; mix modes (e.g., in-person, social, web, press, etc) to better meet the needs of all audiences and better.
- 6.7 Invest in additional roadshows and cross-state community building—“Get out into communities, pull people together, be an ambassador for what the state is doing, and amp up excitement.”
- 6.8 Set clear expectations of the Director role vis-à-vis the BRTs and ensure Board members are equipped with the information and skills to play that role.

My other ideas here:

Appendix 1: Thoughts on measurement

Board members shared thoughts on measurement along this flow 1) Do we have plans in place? 2) Are we executing the plans? 3) Are people engaged? 4) Are the actions and engagement delivering the impact? Ideas included:

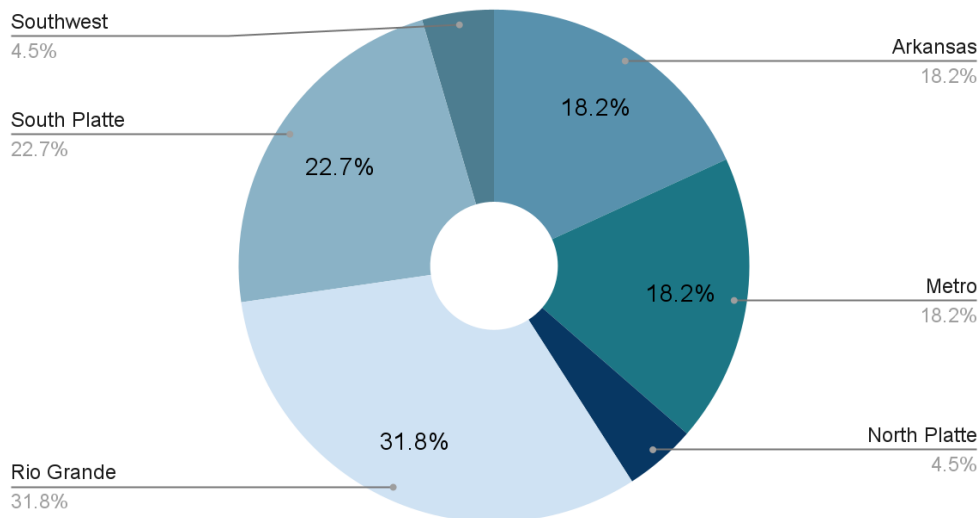
- 1) Accomplishment of a water plan activities (this is the WIG)
- 2) Number of stream miles restored
- 3) Number of stream gauges implemented
- 4) Impact on closing the demand v. supply gap
- 5) Dollars distributed v. dollars available
- 6) Environmental impacts
- 7) Instream flows
- 8) Public awareness and perception

9) Participation in water activities (meetings, summits, public comments, etc)

Appendix 2: Unfiltered Inputs from Basin Roundtable Survey

Question: Which Basin Roundtable do you participate in?

Basin Roundtable Affiliation



Question: What is the main function of the CWCB Board as a whole?

- Safeguarding Colorado's water resources
 - preservation of streams and lakes
 - flood management
 - protection of watersheds
 - restoration of streams
 - planning for drought conditions
 - formulation of water supply strategies
- Promote initiatives that support efficient water use
- Strategies that support collaboration among environmental, recreational, agricultural and municipal users.
- Educate public on water issues
- Design and support partner projects
- Oversee and implement conservation and innovation
 - projects and actions within each basin
- Ensure the implementation of the Water Plan.
- Make resources available for the beneficial use of water in the state for all needs/sectors
- ISF
- Project Funding
- Lead discussion and establishment of policy and legislation
 - Water planning
 - Management
 - Development

Question: What role do you see your Basin's CWCB Director playing in the development of legislation and other policy?

- Plays a crucial role in shaping legislation and policy development
 - actively participating in discussions
 - providing expertise on water related issues specific to their basin
 - offering recommendations
 - advocating for sustainable and equitable water management practices
 - highlighting the needs and concerns of the Basin
 - Providing ideas from basin up to Denver
 - Work with senators and representatives
- Fostering cooperative/collaborative decision-making
 - Basin specific issues
 - Collaborates with stakeholders and policy makers
 - Collaborations with other agencies
- Making decisions that are best for all stakeholders in the Basin and hearing from all stakeholders regarding their needs and ideas
- Inform Basin community about emerging legislation
- Make resources available to basins for Water Plan/BIP Implementation
- Act as a conduit between Board discussions and Roundtables

Question: How could the CWCB Director from your basin communicate better with the basin roundtable?

- Our director provides outstanding communication with the SPBRT.
 - He has a written report on CWCB meetings
 - Attends a variety of other water and agriculture meetings
- Does a great job already
- Attend local, major water meetings and report.
- Providing feedback on Roundtable activities.

Question: What other expectations do you have for your basin's CWCB Director?

- Sharing the issues of interest in the basin
 - Policy issues
 - Watershed health issues
- Opportunities to collaborate across sector/uses
 - Municipal
 - Agriculture
 - Environmental
 - Recreational
- Always a need to educate legislators!
- Represent the vested water interests in their respective areas
- Updates and solicitation of input on CWCB initiatives
- Enable Roundtable(s) to take direct action on implementing Water Plan and BIPs.