



Colorado Agriculture in the Classroom (CoAITC) • Colorado Foundation for Agriculture (CFA)

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June 18, 2024

Colorado Water Conservation Board
1313 Sherman Street, Room 718
Denver, CO 80203

RE: Final Report – CWCB Grant Project: Water-Focused Reader for Colorado Classrooms

Dear Colorado Water Conservation Board,

Project Summary and Completion

The Colorado Foundation for Agriculture (CFA) successfully completed the Water-Focused Colorado Reader project for Colorado classrooms, funded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). This project aimed to produce and distribute an educational Colorado Reader on water, targeting upper elementary students (grades 3-5), and utilized by teachers across all K-12 grades.

The key objectives of this project were to increase appreciation of Colorado's complex water system, strengthen knowledge about Colorado's river basins and the efforts of Roundtables, boost understanding of agricultural water use and conservation practices, encourage water conservation methods, and raise awareness of the Colorado Water Plan.

The Reader was titled, "Every Drop Counts!" The PDF version is attached to this report and the digital flip-book version can be found in the CFA Digital Library at www.CoAgClassroom.org or directly through this link: <https://joom.ag/jlkd>.

Project Reach and Distribution

The project resulted in the printing of 75,000 copies of the Colorado Reader, 5,000 more copies than originally anticipated, and 15,000 more copies than previous years. These were distributed as follows:

- 58,170 copied were directly mailed in 1,939 classroom sets (30 copies each plus an Educator Guide) to 1,136 individual educators. This is an increase of 264 classroom sets and 161 educators from previous years.
- 395 subscribers accessed the digital flip-book version.
- The direct mailing of the Reader reached educators and youth in 61 Colorado counties across urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- 5,210 copies were distributed to students/teachers attending these six various Community Youth Water Festivals:
 - 2400 copies for the Greeley (April 2024) and Fort Lupton (October 2024) Water Festivals
 - 1500 copies for the Trinidad Water Festival (May 2024) – New to CFA
 - 500 copies for the Montrose Natural Resource Festival (May 2024) – New to CFA
 - 210 copies for the Aurora Water Festival (May 2024)

- Will send 600 copies for the Lower South Platte Festival (September 2024)
- To date, 1,100 additional copies have been sent to the following partners for their use:
 - 100 copies to Colorado Water Assembly
 - 500 copies to Water Education Colorado
 - 500 copies to CSU CAM's On the Road Ag Academy for use at 12 county fairs – New to CFA
- CFA plans to have copies available at the following events:
 - Rocky Mountain Homeschool Conference (June 2024)
 - National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference (June 2024) – New to CFA; will have a table set up at the event with CoAITC resources including the water Reader, plus presenting a workshop entitled “The Headwaters of the West: Where Does Our Water Come From?”
 - CFA Summer AgriCULTURE Institutes (July 2024)
 - Colorado State Fair (August-September 2024)
 - Colorado Science Conference (October 2024)
 - Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Annual Convention (November 2024)
 - Colorado Farm Bureau Annual Convention (November 2024)
 - National Western Stock Show (January 2025)
 - Colorado Social Studies Conference (March 2025) – New to CFA
- To date, 564 copies of the Reader have been ordered from the CFA Online Store.

Task 1: Creation of the Colorado Reader, Educator's Guide, and Evaluation

CFA developed, designed, and proofed the Colorado Reader, corresponding Educator's Guide, and an evaluation form. The content was created in collaboration with program partners and water experts, including the CWCB, Colorado Water Assembly, and Water Education Colorado to ensure alignment with the Colorado Water Plan and other water education initiatives.

Method/Procedure

- The content, activities, and initial layout/design of the Reader, Educator's Guide, and evaluation were completed.
- Materials were reviewed and edited by the CFA education committee, partners, and water experts.
- Final documents were prepared and sent to Prairie Mountain Media for printing.

Deliverable

- On April 2, 2024, the drafts were provided to CWCB, CWA, WeCO, and CFA education committee.
- On April 8, 2024, the final files were sent to the printer for the production of 75,000 copies of the Reader and 2,300 copies each of the Educator's Guide and evaluation.

Task 2: Distribution Management

CFA managed the distribution of the printed and electronic versions of the Colorado Reader. This included direct mail, uploading to the CFA digital library, and widespread dissemination through various channels and events.

Method/Procedure

- Mailing lists were sent to the printer.
- The direct mail process was overseen to ensure timely delivery.
- Electronic files were uploaded to the CFA digital library and distributed through the e-newsletter and social media.
- Additional orders are continued to be processed through CFA's online store.
- The Reader is continued to be distributed at various educational and public events.

Deliverable

- On April 22, 2024, classroom sets were directly mailed to all existing subscribers.
- On April 28, 2024, the digital flip-book version was publicly shared.
- Enhanced distribution continues through CFA outreach efforts as documented above.
- Additional orders and event distributions will be managed for the next 12-18 months.
- The Colorado Reader on water is reaching new audiences through CFA's partnership with Water Education Colorado and CSU CAM's On The Road Ag Academy. WeCO is distributing copies at tabling events they attend as well as to families who visit CSU Spur. CSU CAM's Ag Academy will have copies for fair goers to pick up as part of their education efforts at 12 county fairs across the state.
- CFA staff made a new contact with the Pikes Peak Children's Water Festival in Colorado Springs. Unfortunately, their event was the same day as both the Aurora and Trinidad Festivals, so CFA was not able to participate this year. However, there are plans for CFA to be involved next year and to send a Colorado Reader on water (either this 2024 issue or potentially a new issue published in 2025) to be included in teacher/student packets.
- The most significant increase in the number of classroom sets directly mailed occurred in Adams County, El Paso County, Elbert County, Huerfano County, Montrose County, Montrose County, Pueblo County, Saguache County, and Yuma County. CFA specifically targeted schools in Colorado Springs and Pueblo this year for our Literacy Project, which has generated interest in other CFA programs/resources from those teachers, including the Colorado Reader. CFA has been working the last two years to increase outreach to the San Luis Valley and are seeing some slow progress.

Task 3: Data Collection and Evaluation

CFA solicited evaluations from educators to assess the impact of the Colorado Reader on students' awareness, attitude, knowledge, and behavior regarding water-related topics.

Method/Procedure

- A PDF of the Reader Evaluation is attached.
- Evaluations were solicited and received from educators.
- Comments were reviewed, and data was compiled.
- A teacher from El Paso County received the Amazon Gift Cards.
- The evaluation results are listed below.

Deliverable

Evaluation Results

Demographics

- 1136 educators were sent the evaluation; 133 completed forms were received back.
- Evaluations were received from teachers in 31 counties, with the most coming back from teachers in Pueblo County (29), El Paso County (20), Weld County (18), Mesa County (8), Adams County (7), and Jefferson County (7).
- The evaluations represented 6,805 students who used the Reader.
- The response rate for the Educator Evaluation is somewhat low, which can most likely be attributed to fact that teachers may not have had sufficient time complete the Reader with students or submit the evaluation form before the end of the school year. Also, teachers may have simply sent the copies home with students rather than completing it during class time, therefore they would be unable to properly evaluate what students learned. As CFA evaluates our Colorado Reader schedule going forward, we will want to make sure the last issue of the year is sent out towards the beginning of April. The Reader on Water did get unexpectedly delayed as CFA saw a tremendous increase in our Literacy Project (131%

more classes and students participating over the previous year), thus requiring more staff time to complete the Literacy Project and taking staff time away from other projects.

Change in Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge, and Behavior

- 85% of students showed increased appreciation for Colorado's complex water system.
- 78% of students demonstrated strengthened knowledge about Colorado's river basins and Roundtables.
- 82% of students exhibited a better understanding of agricultural water use and conservation practices.
- 76% of students indicated an intention to practice water conservation methods.
- 70% of students became more aware of the Colorado Water Plan.

Distribution Summary

- Total issues distributed to date: 65,044 of the 75,000 copies.
- New audiences reached through direct mail (noted above) and digital distribution (through CoAITC social media).
- Significant reach at major educational events and water festivals (noted above).

Opportunities for Expansion and Lessons Learned

- Expansion opportunities include increasing digital outreach and partnerships with additional water-related organizations (promoting any existing water-education videos that teachers can use in the classroom; virtual field trips on water; virtual workshops or webinars for teachers; cross-promoting water education programs and resources on social media).
- Content development benefited from close collaboration with water experts, ensuring accuracy and relevance.
- There is a continued need for comprehensive water-related education across all grade levels, emphasizing conservation and sustainable practices.
 - The CoAITC water-related printed resources are the first ones that people pick up at tabling events, so making sure those printed resources are available is important. Therefore, we need to make sure we do a water-focused Reader either yearly or every two years.
 - A future project for consideration would be to develop units for the different grade bands specifically on Colorado water (problem-based learning units and science lessons done in the Next Generation Science Standards style).

Matching Commitments

All matching commitments and funds were fulfilled as outlined in the grant agreement.

Conclusion

The Water-Focused Reader project achieved its objectives, significantly impacting student and teacher knowledge and awareness of Colorado's water resources. The successful completion of this project underscores the importance of ongoing water education and the vital role it plays in fostering informed and responsible future stewards of Colorado's water resources.

With sincere appreciation,



Jennifer Scharpe