



INTERBASIN COMPACT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted by the Colorado Water Conservation Board

October 28, 2024



A MESSAGE FROM

THE CHAIR

Members of the General Assembly,

Given my dual roles as Chair of the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) and Commissioner on the Upper Colorado River Commission, I view Colorado's water challenges through two distinct lenses. While I continue to collect input on Colorado River issues, I've asked IBCC to consider the strains our farms, ranches, watersheds and cities face from ongoing threats of warming temperatures and drought that are increasing risk inside our state. I will fight to protect the full extent of Colorado's water rights on the Colorado River, but we can work to do things that build Colorado's resilience under any future. In short, as larger interstate conversations continue, we have to get our own house in order.

As IBCC Chair, I have been asking IBCC to consider how we can help build resilience in our water community as things get warmer and dryer. More frequent droughts followed by higher intensity wildfires and flooding in burned areas are increasing risk to Colorado communities. These risks on top of the potential for a 740,000 acre foot per year gap in need for municipal water demands by 2050 are explained in the Colorado Water Plan. We must build a stronger water future for Colorado and the IBCC can help us think about drought resilience strategies. IBCC members have an opportunity to serve as integrators engaging the roundtables, fellow IBCC members, and ultimately the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) in building consensus on potential solutions. Past IBCC efforts like the Conceptual Framework and the original No and Low Regrets Action Plan have proven the model. That's why in 2024, I asked the IBCC to help develop a new Drought Resilience Action Plan - Low regrets for the next decade.

This won't be an easy or short process. It will require tough conversations, compromise language, and time. I believe IBCC is up to this task but it requires IBCC to be aligned on what it means to be an IBCC member and where the committee can provide its highest value. That's why I worked with IBCC to create a foundational document that they can reference to stay the course. The *Qualities of Successful IBCC Members and Projects* (now included in the [CWCB Guide](#)) helps anchor the IBCC in the qualities they need to embody when they show up for meetings around the state. It also provides a reference for knowing when ideas they are bringing forward are primed for healthy debate and when they may go further and become actionable. I've also worked hard to remind IBCC that the ideas they bring forward should represent what their basins think are important to discuss - encouraging them to workshop ideas for the Drought Resilience Action Plan and utilize the time between IBCC meetings to advance good thinking.

The intent behind IBCC has always been to create a space for thoughtful discussions where we can find common ground and agreement across basins that can inform the CWCB Board decisions. That requires two things: 1) we have to find the right people in the room who are willing to compromise and, 2) we have to find the topics that will allow us to make progress. This year the IBCC took strides toward both efforts through the documents it's worked to develop. It also helped CWCB build collaboration across CWCB Stakeholders by participating in the Colorado 9 Basin Summit (C9 Summit) to foster feedback and dive deeper into Colorado's major water challenges. I look forward to building on our 2024 efforts and exploring solutions that can help build a stronger water future for Colorado.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Mitchell
Interbasin Compact Committee Chair
Colorado's Upper Colorado River Commissioner



COLORADO
Department of
Natural Resources



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 a forward-thinking vision that Coloradoans can work together collaboratively to address the water needs for the state. Over nearly the last 20 years, the IBCC has helped shape numerous planning initiatives through a focused discourse, both within and across the basin roundtables, on the major water challenges facing Colorado. The IBCC has consistently helped to rise above regional and basin divisions 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.

Some past examples of IBCC discussion and work products include:

- **2024** – IBCC members began efforts to update the IBCC’s 2013 Low & No Regrets Action Plan, and to create a Drought Resilience Action Plan. Once completed, this statewide strategy document, created with basin roundtable and CWCB Board support, will serve as a tool for opening up conversation around how Colorado can create a more drought resilient future. IBCC also refined its criteria for membership and what projects are ready for IBCC consideration in a document called *Qualities of Successful IBCC Members and Projects*. As in 2023, IBCC also supported CWCB staff in providing ideas and participating in planning the C9 Summit.
- **2023** – IBCC members led efforts to advance projects in their respective basins as a response to Director Gibbs’ 2022 Project Advancement Challenge. IBCC also worked to support and participate in the 2023 C9 Summit.
- **2022** – IBCC refined its work plan to facilitate collaboration among the basins and leverage more readily available State and Federal water project funding for Basin Implementation Plan project advancement.
- **2021** – The IBCC prioritized developing stronger links between PEPO and the IBCC to facilitate communication within the roundtables by reactivating the PEPO subcommittee and naming Lisa Darling the IBCC PEPO representative.
- **2020** – The IBCC acted as a de facto working group on equity in Demand Management (DM) as part of the CWCB board’s DM feasibility study. IBCC produced the [*Demand Management Equity Summary document*](#), included in the July 2020 CWCB Board packet.
- **2018** – IBCC members and the precursor to the *For the Love of Colorado* campaign team coordinated to identify critical funding areas and possible funding opportunities for the Colorado Water Plan.
- **2014** – IBCC carefully negotiated the Conceptual Framework that was included as a guidance document in the Colorado Water Plan to evaluate a pathway or discussion for any new Transmountain Diversions (TMDs).
- **2013** – IBCC compiled smart near-term actions that support Colorado under any future scenario, known as the *No and Low Regrets Action Plan*.
- **2009** – Evaluated the *Portfolio and Tradeoff Tool* and initiated the scenario planning framework documented in the 2015 Colorado Water Plan that now serves as a foundation for technical analysis.
- **2006** – Created by-laws and charter documents for the IBCC.



HIGHLIGHTS OF IBCC 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2024 marked a busy year for IBCC including a transition in leadership with the new IBCC Chair, Becky Mitchell. The IBCC continued to meet in person with a virtual option during the February meeting in Golden and June meeting in Durango. The IBCC also helped CWCB staff with content ideas and day-of support at the October C9 Summit in Crested Butte. Like the C9 Summit in 2023, this year the C9 Summit included an interactive activity that paired IBCC and board members with roundtable members and other attendees. This year the activity was geared to support ideas for the Drought Resilience Action Plan.

Chair Mitchell led the IBCC in this effort to chart a path for IBCC work for the coming years through the development of two key documents explained below:

- **Qualities of Successful IBCC Members and Projects** - The 2024 IBCC conversations centered on outlining the *Qualities of Successful IBCC Members and Projects*. The document created a structure for how IBCC ideas move from discussion to action. This document is now included in the [CWCB Guide](#) and also serves as a frame of reference for electing new IBCC members (both basin representatives and Governor's appointees).
- **Drought Resilience Action Plan: Low Regret Strategies for the Next Decade** - The IBCC started to use the structure for IBCC action to begin discussing an update to their previous work, the 2013 Low and No Regrets Action Plan, to create a new Drought Resilience Action Plan. The IBCC is working with the basin roundtables and the CWCB Board to build consensus around strategies that will create a more drought resilient Colorado. The new Drought Resilience Action Plan will serve as a tool for advancing conversations, projects, and other actions that can help strengthen Colorado's Water future.

In addition to the conversations surrounding IBCC member and project qualities, the Drought Resilience Action Plan, and the C9 Summit, IBCC discussed forest health, funding, basin capacity, and a busy 2024 Legislative Session. The IBCC continues to receive updates on Colorado River issues from CWCB's Interstate and Federal Water Information section and Chair Mitchell in her role as Colorado's Upper Colorado River Commissioner. In keeping with their rich history of being a diverse and balanced forum, the IBCC welcomed new members from across the state and created opportunities for cross-basin collaboration.

The IBCC also continued its support of creating cross-basin discussions both at IBCC meetings and roundtable meetings. In particular, the IBCC PEPO workgroup has been influential in developing ideas for, promoting and encouraging IBCC participation in the C9 Summit across the basins. Additionally IBCC PEPO Subcommittee members, Lisa Darling and Ken Brenner, participated in the PEPO Basin Coordinator workshop, hosted by CWCB in May.



HIGHLIGHT OF IBCC DISCUSSIONS & INTERESTS

While much of the IBCC discussion in 2024 was focused on IBCC projects and member qualities, the IBCC continued to host expert seminars on a wide array of topics. In 2024, the committee welcomed a new chair, new members and heard presentations from areas of interest identified in past years. Examples include:

- **Public Education, Participation, and Outreach (PEPO)**– The IBCC's PEPO subcommittee led discussions of topics proposed for the annual C9 Summit and was involved in planning the event. The PEPO subcommittee also facilitated discussions at roundtables for stakeholder input on the C9 Summit proposed agenda and encouraged roundtable member participation in the event.
- **Colorado River Updates** – Colorado's Upper Colorado River Commissioner and CWCB staff provided multiple updates to the IBCC over the year.
- **Legislative Session** – Noting the IBCC's interest in the legislative session, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff updated the IBCC on bills that the DNR was tracking and the budget details that impacted DNR.

These updates focused on funding and staffing for CWCB and DNR, and detailed the many water-related initiatives that were passed in 2024 for species recovery, water resource protections and permitting, and numerous funding opportunities for water projects around the state.

- **Forest Health Updates and Water Plan Scenarios** – The IBCC has a continued interest in exploring forest health as it relates to water supply and quality challenges in Colorado. The IBCC heard a presentation from Chris Sturm (CWCB Staff) and Christina Burri (Deputy State Forester) about ongoing forest health efforts. The discussion centered on how water quantity and quality efforts could be integrated with forest health efforts to help create a more resilient Colorado. The IBCC continues to lead the state in building connections across statewide policy leaders. The IBCC also heard presentations from Russ Sands (CWCB Staff) about CWCB’s efforts to update the Water Plan scenarios with the most up to date climate and basin data. The effort to update the scenarios and data will be an ongoing CWCB effort as the next iteration of the Analysis and Technical Update to the Water Plan approaches.



RESOURCE QUICK REFERENCE

- [CWCB Guide](#)
- [Engage CWCB](#)
- [CWCB Website](#)
- [CWCB webpage for IBCC](#)
- [CO Water Funding Opportunity Navigator](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

The IBCC is funded through the CWCB and supported by CWCB staff. To learn more, explore the CWCB Guide. If you have questions please email waterplan.info@state.co.us, call 303-866-3441, visit the CWCB website at www.cwcb.state.co.us or at engagecwcb.org.