



## 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  
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**DATE:** November 20-21, 2024

**ITEM:** 18. CWCB Guide Update

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This is an informational item to update the Board on the status of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Guide. No Board action requested.

### Overview

The CWCB Guide was created to offer a baseline for understanding the ways the CWCB (Board and Staff) interacts with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and key stakeholder groups - chiefly the Basin Roundtables and the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC). The CWCB Guide provides a one-stop-shop for understanding the rules that pertain to each group helping to serve as both an onboarding document and an ongoing reference document. The CWCB's goal is to maintain this document, reviewing it annually and updating it as needed. The CWCB Guide will be finalized and printed in January 2025 and CWCB has worked to incorporate input received over the last year during presentations to the Basin Roundtables and through an online review process.

### Background

The Colorado Water Plan (Water Plan) Agency Action 4.2 called for a “universal handbook” to help onboard roundtable and Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) members and provide answers to common stakeholder questions. The CWCB had previously maintained a *CWCB Board Member Orientation Packet* (CWCB Handbook) that was used to onboard new CWCB Board members. Then, in 2023, the DNR released a *DNR Policy Handbook for Boards and Commissions* (DNR Handbook), which applies to boards, committees and roundtables. During the CWCB's Operational Planning process in late 2023 and 2024, the Water Plan goal, the DNR Handbook and the earlier CWCB Handbook converged to form a new and more comprehensive CWCB Guide that could combine information in ways that serve all these purposes.

The CWCB Guide recognizes that the CWCB Board, IBCC, and roundtables often have similar questions, especially as it relates to open meeting laws, how the Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) works, how these groups interact, as well as other funding and process questions. Providing one reference document for all interested parties helps create greater alignment between these groups and supports the original vision of the Water for the 21st Century Act (HB 1177). However, the CWCB Guide also recognizes that HB-1177 is but one of many pieces of legislation, state legal opinions, agency policies, procurement rules and other inputs that collectively inform rules of operation. In fact, HB-1177 does not mention many of the things the Board, IBCC and roundtables now rely on, such as the Water Plan, Basin Implementation Plans, basin Public Education Participation and Outreach (PEPO) coordinators, PEPO grants, WSRF grants and more. The CWCB Guide puts all of these efforts in context.

The CWCB Guide orients CWCB board members, stakeholders and other interested parties on how the CWCB functions broadly, and how it interacts with key constituents. It is designed to be complementary to the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Policy Handbook as well as IBCC and roundtable bylaws. However, it also recognizes the hierarchy that results from legislation to DNR to CWCB and to the stakeholder groups it funds (e.g. IBCC and roundtables) - recognizing the collective rules apply to all of these groups.

#### **CWCB Guide Rollout and Draft Input**

Starting in March of 2024, CWCB staff started a series of presentations about the CWCB Guide. This included presenting to each basin roundtable and to the IBCC. The CWCB Board was also given an advanced copy of the guide to comment on and give feedback before the public draft was released in June 2024 and any input that CWCB received was included. Shortly after, the draft CWCB Guide was posted online through [engagecwcw.org](https://engagecwcw.org) to allow for basin roundtable members, IBCC members, and the public to read the document, provide input, submit questions or give feedback to CWCB staff. This was not considered to be a formal public comment period and was not described as one, given the fact that the references and rules noted in the guide are not subject to change at the discretion of CWCB and/or DNR. However, staff felt that creating a process for providing input and asking questions would facilitate getting feedback on anything that could have been said more clearly, a question that was not answered, etc.

CWCB staff held a meeting in August with all nine roundtable chairs to discuss various aspects of the guide and solicited continued feedback at every roundtable meeting from June - October 2024. During this time the CWCB received some written input as well as some anecdotal feedback that the guide was helpful and added value/clarity. The range of comments and questions mostly focused on edits for clarity, typos, questions to be added to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of the guide, and the process for finalizing it.

CWCB staff has incorporated all comments received during the draft period and have posted an updated version online. The newer version will retain the "draft" title through the end of the year while staff lead a final internal review including copy editing and Governor's Office review. The final document will be put online with the "draft" removed in January of 2025 in time for the January Board Meeting. Limited printed copies will also be made available to the board, roundtables and the IBCC.

#### **Future Updates**

The CWCB Guide will be reviewed annually and edited as needed as part of ongoing strategic operation planning. CWCB staff will suggest any edits annually in September to the CWCB Board based on input or questions it has received from stakeholders and the board.