

December 16, 2024

Kevin Reidy
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Submitted Electronically

Subject: Final Grant Report for Denver One Water Plan – Implementation Phase 1

Dear Mr. Reidy and CWCB Board Members and Staff:

Pursuant to the purpose of the Colorado Water Plan grant to support the initial implementation of the Denver One Water Plan (OWP), the One Water Leaders interagency working group (OWLs) has carried out numerous efforts to foster collaboration between entities responsible for managing each aspect of Denver's urban water supply and waterways.

The work completed under this grant has fostered a capable and enduring program that continues to support the goals and objectives of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) and the Colorado Water Plan, as recognized by CWCB in its recent award of a second grant for continued implementation of the OWP.

This final report describes the successful execution of the tasks and associated deliverables described in the scope of work for the grant from August 2022 through early 2024. OWP Tasks 1 through 8 were associated with the development of the OWP prior to this grant. The numbering beginning with Task 9 reflects implementation activities, as used in the scope of work for the Implementation Phase 1 grant.

Task 9 – Meeting Support and Project Coordination for Initial Implementation Phase

Under Task 9, the project team facilitated ongoing OWL dialogue and conducted project coordination and management activities. This included:

- **OWL Meetings:** scheduled, organized, facilitated, and documented monthly OWL meetings.
- **One Water Steering Committee Member Meetings:** provided materials for OWL members' use in briefing their Steering Committee representatives and management teams.
- **Project Coordination Calls:** Conducted project coordination calls monthly or as needed with the Project Managers from the City and County of Denver Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DOTI) and the Mile High Flood District (MHFD).
- **Document Sharing Platform:** Maintained the OWP Teams site including the "OWL Connection" SharePoint site (Figure 1) as a central repository for project document sharing and collaboration.
- **Project Management:** Conducted ongoing project management activities: Monitored and managed scope of work, schedule, budget, project staffing, and subconsultants. Prepared monthly invoice and monthly progress report. Prepared this final report at conclusion of the work.

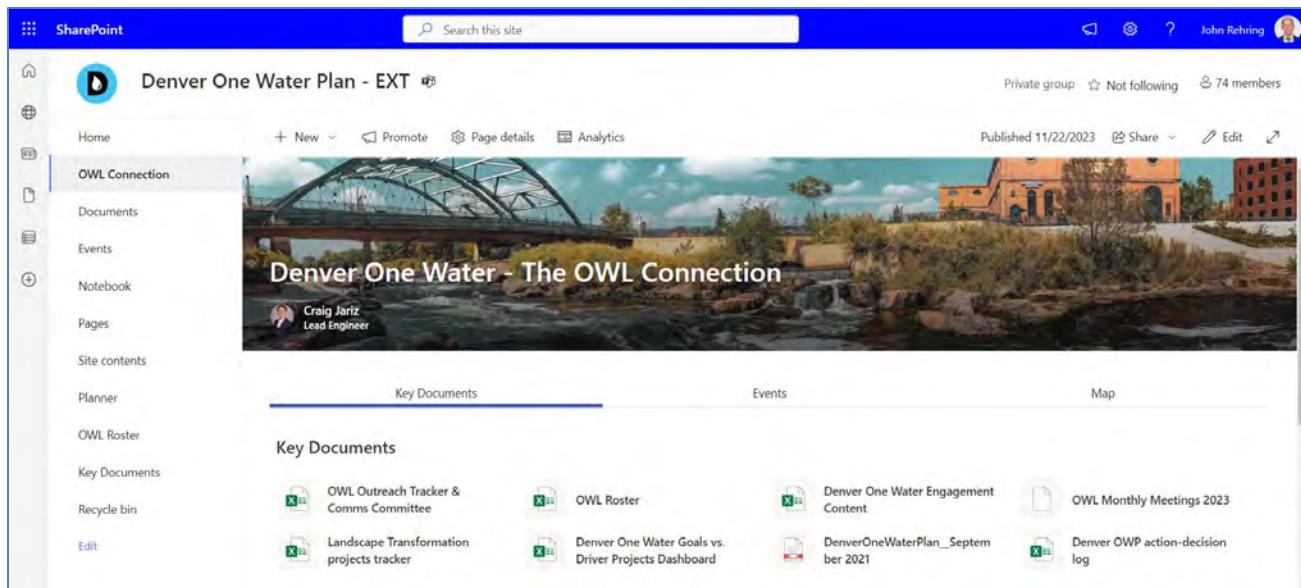


Figure 1 "OWL Connection" SharePoint Collaboration Site

As part of this task, OWL membership was maintained and expanded to include representatives of:

- City and County of Denver
 - » DOTI
 - » Climate Action, Sustainability, and Resiliency
 - » Community Planning and Development
 - » Department of Aviation (Denver International Airport/DEN)
 - » Department of Public Health and Environment
- MHFD
- Denver Water
- Metro Water Recovery
- The Greenway Foundation
- State of Colorado
 - » CWCB
 - » Department of Local Affairs

Deliverables for this task included monthly meeting agendas, materials, minutes, and action item summaries, as well as monthly invoices and progress reports.

Summary of Work Performed

Monthly OWL group meetings supported by this grant were held in September 2022 through June 2024. The 2-hour monthly meetings were held at a variety of locations (Denver Water, City & County of Denver, Mile High Flood District, etc.), with a limited number of monthly meetings cancelled due to coincident conferences or holidays. Monthly meetings (Figure 2) are open and collaborative, with OWLs representing all OWP agencies, including CWCB, multiple City departments, and others.



Figure 2 [OWL Monthly Meeting, August 2023 at Denver Water](#)

OWL group meetings typically entailed the following:

- Check-in on communications and engagement activities, including coordinating OWL involvement in and activities at community events to advance awareness of One Water initiatives and benefits.
- Coordination of ongoing OWP implementation activities to:
 - » Advance the goals, strategies, and implementation actions documented in the September 2021 OWP report
 - » Identify and facilitate ongoing OWL collaborations (e.g., landscape transformation initiatives and planning for the June 2024 One Water Day event).
- Special topic presentations and discussions (typically 30-60 minutes) on initiatives related to the OWP and its goals. Recent examples include presentations by the City and County of Denver on the Waterways Resiliency collaboration with the US Army Corps of Engineers (South Platte River restoration and flood mitigation), a presentation by Denver Water about their geospatial analysis of irrigation use, a presentation by the Pacific Institute on stormwater capture and use in Colorado. In each case, new connections are made between the OWLs and the presenter, and the group identifies ways the OWLs can engage in and support the initiative.

One Water Steering Committee members were briefed periodically by the primary OWL representatives for each organization. The project team developed materials to support those briefings, and presentations were tailored to the unique needs of each organization's Steering Committee member and management team.

Coordination calls and meetings between the DOTI and MHFD project managers and the consulting team were conducted periodically. Project management activities such as invoicing and reporting by the consultant were conducted each month. The project team maintained an OWP Teams/SharePoint site, and periodically revised the site to add functionality to enable easier collaboration by OWLs by highlighting key documents and tracking events.

Task 10 – One Water Plan Initial Implementation Support

Task 10 facilitated action by the OWLs towards furthering and implementing specific objectives and actions identified in the September 2021 OWP report. This has primarily focused on:

- Tracking progress on short-term Implementation Actions,
- Identifying, tracking, and implementing specific medium-term One Water Project Opportunities (OWPOs), and
- Tracking long-term effects of the Implementation Actions and OWPOs toward meeting OWP goals.

Deliverables for this task included the Implementation Action prioritization criteria/protocol, Implementation Action fact sheets for prioritized actions, OWPO screening and prioritization criteria/protocol, OWPO database, tabular assessment of how OWL collaborations support each of the OWP Goals and Strategies, and coordination, facilitation, and documentation of several ongoing OWL collaborations.

Summary of Work Performed

The OWL group continuously refined and made progress toward the Implementation Actions. In alignment with the range and timeline of the Implementation Actions detailed in the September 2021 OWP report, the OWLs developed a system to further prioritize the Implementation Actions. Through that process, the OWLs prioritized the following ten Implementation Actions for initial focus:

- Action 1.1A: One Water Mandate
- Action 1.1B: Management Meetings
- Action 2.2A: Multi-Benefit Prioritization Framework
- Action 5.3A: Enforceable Policies
- Action 5.6A: Water-Conserving and Climate-Resilient Landscaping
- Action 5.6B: Update on Water use and Landscaping Standards for New Development
- Action 5.8A: Alternative Water Supplies
- Action 5.9A: Expand Reuse
- Action 5.9B: Encourage Reuse
- Action 5.10A: Uniform Policy Language

The project team prepared a brief fact sheet for each of the prioritized Implementation Actions, which serve as living documents that are updated as new achievements or activities are identified for each action. The fact sheets include a synopsis of:

- Action details
- Items in progress
- Next steps
- Related documents and files (where applicable)
- Contact information for the lead OWL member(s)
- Working draft information (where applicable)

Separately, the OWL group maintained and regularly updated an OWPO database. The OWLs devised a structure by which each OWPO is screened based on a consistent set of criteria for determining whether the project/initiative will be tracked by the OWLs. Screening criteria include:

- Supports/consistent with the five OWP Goals,
- Offers multiple benefits,
- Is at a stage of development where OWP strategies can be integrated,
- Requires collaboration, alignment, and support from multiple agencies/stakeholders, and
- Is visible in the community / provides education opportunities / community impact.
-

Each OWPO that passes screening is then ranked and prioritized for OWL engagement based on a system comprising six criteria that assign numerical scores for:

- **Funding Availability:** focusing on projects with ready funds available,
- **Ability to Influence Project:** Ensuring at least one OWL has the authority and ability to incorporate One Water elements in the project,
- **Implementation Timeline:** prioritizing projects that would happen within the next few years,
- **Multi-benefit Profile :** focusing on projects that had multiple One Water elements and community benefits,
- **Water Equity:** aiming for projects which help keep water safe & clean, provide access to green and blue space, serve historically underserved communities, improve affordability of water access, etc., and
- **Education and Outreach:** prioritizing projects which involve opportunities to educate and increase water awareness of stakeholders in one or more ways.

Each OWL entity contributes projects to the OWPO database as they are identified and keeps the other OWL members aware of changes in these opportunities through regular database updates. This has led to OWL collaboration and participation in several OWPOs.

The OWLs continued to conduct work aligned with and in support of the “indicators” for measuring success, as defined in the September 2021 OWP report. The project team periodically measured progress against the five primary OWP Goals by evaluating the degree to which ongoing OWL collaborations support each of the five Goals and their associated Strategies (Figure 3).

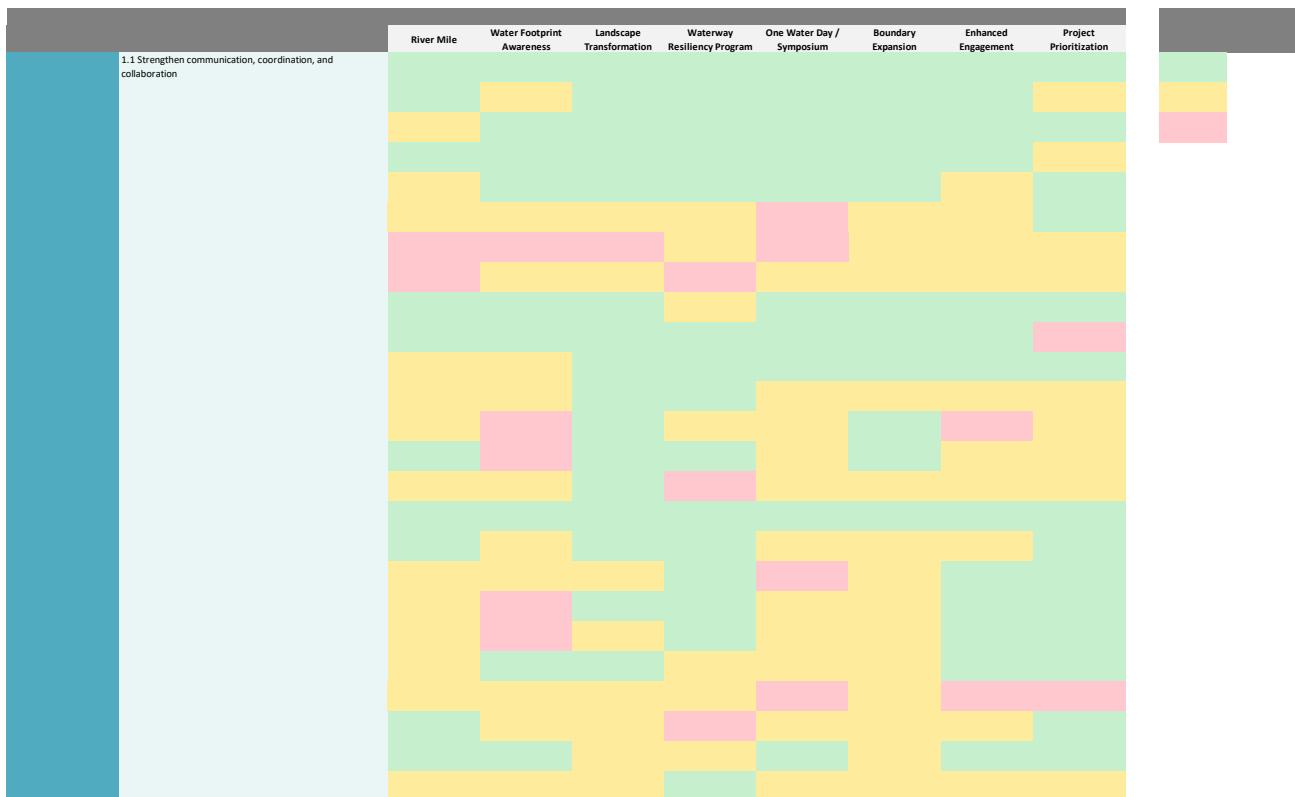


Figure 3 [Assessment of How OWL Collaborations Support Each of the OWP Goals and Strategies](#)

In addition, the OWLs collaborated on a range of initiatives related to the OWPOs and Implementation Actions over the time period supported by this grant. Examples include:

- Tours of key water projects and infrastructure (Figure 4), to increase cross-agency awareness and collaboration between OWL agencies (e.g., CSU Spur campus facilities such as sewer heat recovery, green roofs, and Technology Acceleration Platform lab; Metro Water Recovery phosphorus recovery system, Denver Water Recycling Facility).
- Coordination of OWL agency efforts to support large-scale development projects in Denver, such as the River Mile.
- Stormwater capture and use opportunities, including project briefings on Colorado-focused research initiatives.

- Development of criteria and structures for prioritizing capital improvement plan (CIP) projects for OWL agencies, to include one water strategies and multi-benefit outcomes.
- Knowledge-sharing and linking initiatives related to regional salinity management.
- Coordination of green infrastructure programs and projects between OWL agencies.
- Coordinating and tracking landscape transformation projects in Denver by OWL agencies and others.
- Communication and coordination related to state legislative initiatives between OWL agencies.
- Supporting the World Bank “Water Secure and Livable Cities” program in early 2024, including presentations and facilitation of participant breakout sessions by OWL members in two workshops (January 18 and February 12, 2024).
- Undertaking a water footprint awareness initiative, ultimately resulting in a partnership with Water Education Colorado (WEco) to integrate water footprint concepts into draft documents associated with WEco’s “Caring for Colorado Water: One Drop at a Time” program.



Figure 4 OWLs Tour of CSU Spur Hydro Building Facilities, May 2023

The OWLs periodically reassessed priorities for OWL collaborations. The most recent example (February 2024, Figure 5) shows the OWLs’ relative priorities, which is being used to guide further collaborations and project work through the remainder of 2024. Based on this initiative, the OWLs chose to focus near-term efforts on items with scores higher than 2 (the midpoint between “low” and “high” priority), which in turn informed the development of the scope of work for the CWCB Water Plan Grant application in March 2024 for Implementation Phase 2.

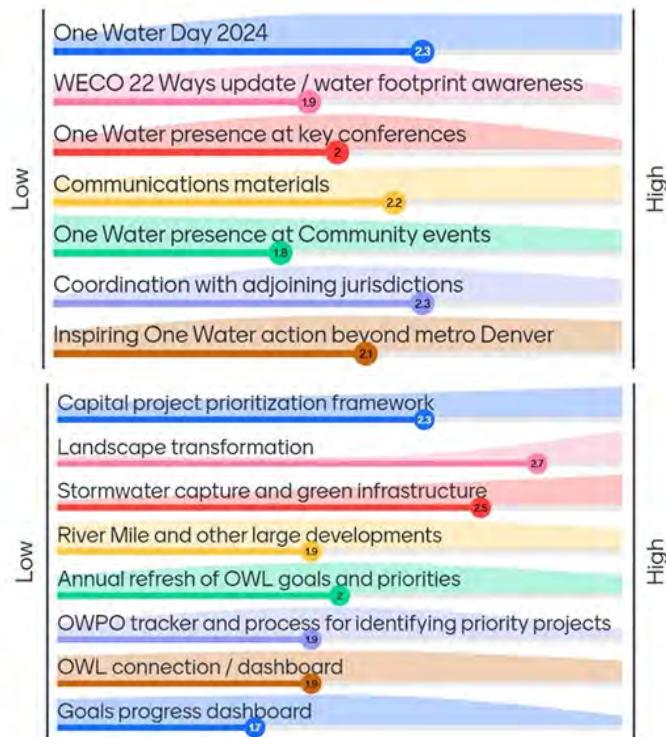


Figure 5 OWL Collaboration Priorities – February 2024

Task 11 – As-Directed Communications and Outreach Support

Under Task 11, the project team provided communications and outreach support related to the One Water Plan. This included efforts such as:

- Preparation of a map showing the service areas of each OWL agency, to be used in community education efforts regarding water management roles and responsibilities in Denver.
- Developing social media and other public-facing content for OWL members and communications staff to use for community events like “Imagine a Day Without Water” and Earth Day.
- Developing public educational materials such as bilingual versions of the One Water Plan fact sheet, which is hosted on the City & County of Denver’s One Water Plan website (Figure 6).
- Development and acquisition of OWP-branded materials for use at events, including a One Water Plan canopy and tablecloth (Figure 7) and giveaway items such as seed packets with links to more information on the OWP.
- Development of a communications toolkit for use by the OWL agencies and their public communications teams.
- Development of and coordination with a Communications Subcommittee, generally made up of communications & public relations staff from the OWP entities.
- Supporting and attending public events to promote the One Water Plan and water literacy in the community.

- Supporting the development of content for the WEco Headwaters Fall 2023 issue on One Water (Figure 8), which prominently featured the Denver OWP and serves as an information source and One Water inspiration to communities throughout Colorado.
- Initiating planning and coordinating logistics for the inaugural One Water Day, to be held June 21, 2024 at Denver Botanic Gardens in partnership with the 2024 Colorado Watershed Summit.
- Initial development of an online One Water quiz, to be used at community events to enhance water literacy and address community water-knowledge gaps identified through the community survey conducted as part of OWP development.
- Development of OWP presentation materials and delivery of those presentations at regional and national conferences (Figure 9) to promote awareness of the benefits of one water planning and management (e.g., Colorado Association of Stormwater and Floodplain Managers (CASFM), WateReuse Annual Symposium, Sustaining Colorado Watersheds, Rocky Mountain Water Conference, and others).



DENVER
ONE WATER PLAN

While water knows no boundaries, how we manage and regulate water is historically siloed. Creating more equitable, sustainable, and resilient cities requires creative inter-disciplinary solutions.

This collaborative effort offers an innovative and exciting approach to integrated water management in Denver – a strategy that considers all aspects of the urban water cycle as “One Water.”



Denvergov.org/OneWater | OneWater@DenverGov.org | Call Denver 311

The Denver One Water Plan provides a framework for implementing holistic and resilient water management and land use strategies.

Through collaboration and strong policies, it promotes healthy watersheds in an equitable, economical, and environmentally beneficial manner.

Denver One Water Goals

- Promote inter-agency collaboration
- Implement multi-benefit projects
- Develop community support
- Increase resilience to climate change
- Establish integrated and innovative water management solutions

One Water Purpose

The Denver One Water Plan provides regional leaders, elected officials, staff, and the community with a guide for developing and implementing effective water strategies. The partner agencies are using the plan to:

- Provide a framework and common goals for water planning and management
- Guide water policy decisions
- Inform regulations, resource, and budgeting decisions
- Evaluate and measure progress towards regional One Water goals

One Community, One Future, One Water



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Figure 6 One Water Plan Fact Sheet



Figure 7 One Water Plan Booth Materials

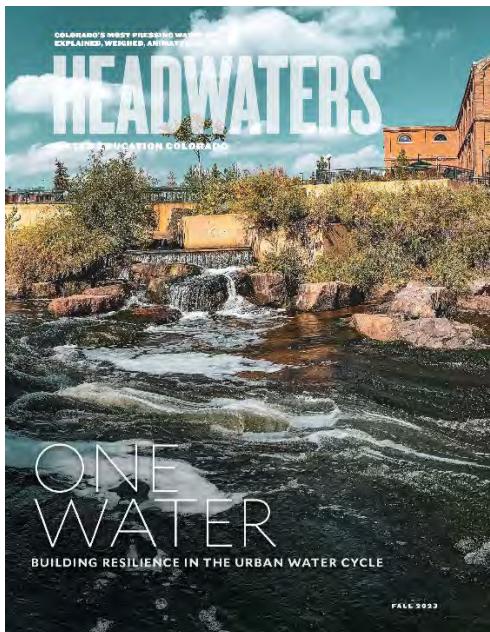


Figure 8 Fall 2023 Issue of WEco Headwaters Journal



Figure 9 [Presentation of OWP by OWLs at September 2023 CASFM Conference](#)

Deliverables for this task included the service area map, social media and other communications toolkit materials, One Water “road show” presentation and support for tailoring the presentation to meet individual OWLs’ needs, OWP fact sheet, OWP booth materials (canopy and tablecloth), community event support and materials, draft One Water quiz platform and content, and OWP presentations for conferences.

Obstacles Encountered and Lessons Learned

The global COVID-19 pandemic affected development of the OWP from early 2020 through completion of the OWP report in September 2021, requiring a shift to online meetings and tactics. As pandemic restrictions began to ease in 2022, OWL meetings were held in hybrid format to foster in-person collaboration while also facilitating remote attendance as an option for each meeting.

The pandemic also impacted public engagement components of the OWP. Public events where OWLs could engage with and educate members of the public about the OWP did not return to their normal pace until 2023. The public has engaged with OWP content such as the fact sheet, but surveys conducted during the OWP’s initial development showed that there was a more fundamental lack of knowledge about Denver’s urban water cycle and the organizations involved in it that indicate an opportunity to enhance water literacy in the community.

To that end, the OWLs have focused on more robust public engagement, including appearances as representatives of the OWP itself (as opposed to representing their own organizations) at public events such as the Crosscurrents River Festival that occurs during the summer. The OWLs are also collaborating on sharing and expanding their inventory of interactive content to better attract and retain the public’s attention at such events.

Finally, the nature of this unprecedented collaboration between Denver's water management agencies inherently brings change at a slow pace. Each OWL organization has demonstrated its commitment to working collaboratively with others. That said, changing the fundamental paradigm of working in silos is a slow process. Turnover in the OWL group membership over time, at both the OWL representative and Steering Committee level, has brought a mix of new ideas and challenges in bringing new participants up to speed on OWL collaborations, goals, and successes.

We continue to overcome these challenges by carefully documenting OWL meetings, action items, and decisions, and by managing expectations within the group of the feasible pace of progress. That said, there is clear evidence the process is working. OWLs are regularly forming new subgroups to address topics with interagency overlap, such as green infrastructure, landscape transformation, and capital project prioritization. With the foundation now firmly established in Denver, the OWLs seek to expand the reach of the Denver OWP to neighboring jurisdictions and inspire communities beyond the metro area to adopt One Water principles and strategies. This will be among the focus areas for Phase 2 of implementing the OWP through the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.

Fulfillment of Matching Commitment

With the Colorado Water Plan grant of \$100,000, we provided cost-matching funds from the following entities to carry out the tasks and deliverables associated with this grant:

- Mile High Flood District: \$50,000
- City & County of Denver: \$50,000

We are grateful to CWC and each of the OWL member agencies for this opportunity to support a resilient water future for Denver.

Sincerely,
MILE HIGH FLOOD DISTRICT



Colin Haggerty, P.E.
Watershed Manager
on behalf of the Denver One Water Plan and the One Water Leaders