
Basin Implementation Plan Status Update – May 2014

This status update was prepared by the Colorado Water Conservation Board in order to update stakeholders statewide on recent developments related to Colorado's Water Plan. Please check the Colorado's Water Plan website (www.coloradowaterplan.com) often for additional updates and email cowaterplan@state.co.us with any questions.

Arkansas Basin Implementation Plan

- The Arkansas Basin Roundtable (BRT) has been greatly involved in many of the intra-basin discussions that have been happening, particularly related to spearheading the recent watershed health and roundtable chairs discussion on “new supply.”
- The Arkansas BRT is also doing a great job focusing on conservation and the agricultural economy.
- The Arkansas BRT made their biggest charge for public input and information at the annual Arkansas River Basin Water Forum, April 23-25, with over 175 attendees. The Arkansas BRT is also hosting 8-9 public meetings and doing proactive outreach over the next few months.

Colorado Basin Implementation Plan

- The Colorado BRT is very focused on meeting their environmental and recreational needs and how these values are heavily dependent on the senior agricultural rights being pulled down the river. Thus the Roundtable is concerned about the sustainability and survival of Western Colorado agriculture.
- The Colorado Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) team has undertaken an extensive survey of the Colorado River basin, interviewing all 54 water providers in the mainstem area in order to get ideas for Identified Project and Processes (IPPs) and further engage them. The Colorado BRT consultant team has compiled an extensive list of proposed and potential projects, which will provide basin planners with a suite of options for meeting identified gaps.
- The Colorado BRT has been working within the following subcommittees: Municipal, Nonconsumptive, Agriculture, and Policy. Both BRT members and members of the general public comprise the subcommittees.
- SGM and Colorado Mesa University's Water Center have lead education and outreach efforts, including many town hall meetings, public meetings, and educational forums with Colorado's Water Plan and the BIPs as the focus. The Colorado also meets more than any other basin to work on their BIPs, having two full BRT meetings a month.

Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan

- The Gunnison BRT and its consultant team are focused on refining project data for inclusion in Section 4 of the Gunnison BIP.
- The Gunnison BIP Report will include project-specific discussions of constraints, implementation strategies, and effectiveness at meeting BIP goals.

- Gunnison BRT members are conducting public outreach meetings. The consultant team has conducted targeted technical outreach to identify operational and project data for the BIP.
- The Gunnison BRT has identified statewide principles in addition to basin goals for inclusion in Section 1.
- The Gunnison BRT has refined agricultural shortage information and is working to target future nonconsumptive efforts by identifying nonconsumptive focus areas.

North Platte Basin Implementation Plan

- The North Platte BRT is one of only two basins looking to expand their agricultural use (along with the Yampa/White/Green).
- Consumptive and nonconsumptive technical workshops were held to identify projects for the the BIP and potential new irrigated acreage. Projects are currently being refined for inclusion in the BIP.
- The North Platte BIP seeks to maximize allowable use and irrigated acreage under the equitable apportionment decree and the Three States Agreement with Wyoming and Nebraska
- The North Platte BIP will incorporate process elements documenting important operational aspects related to the decree, such as irrigated acreage delineation, a storage protocol, and irrigation season protocol.

Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan

- The Rio Grande Compact limits the ability to develop new supplies and therefore the Rio Grande BRT must look inward to water management strategies to meet future water needs.
- An important goal of the Rio Grande BIP is sustained watershed resiliency.
- Post-wildfire impacts and species of special concern (e.g.; Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout) are emerging issues that will be addressed in the Rio Grande BIP.
- Sustaining agriculture, which is the largest contributor to the economy of the basin is also a major goal.
- Maintaining and restoring aquifer levels and providing for augmentation of well pumping via groundwater management subdistricts are critical to sustaining agriculture in the basin.
- Meeting municipal and industrial water needs, although representing a minor portion of total basin demand, will also require augmentation of well pumping, most likely through the groundwater management subdistricts.
- There are multiple environmental and recreational goals that can potentially be met through the development of multi-benefit projects that meet agricultural, M&I, augmentation, environmental and recreational needs.
- The Rio Grande BRT has placed a high priority on public education and outreach.

South Platte / Metro Basin Implementation Plan

- The South Platte Basin and Metro Roundtables' (the BRTs) goals and measurable outcomes have been extensively reviewed by the BRTs and will be reaffirmed when the BRTs review the draft BIP.
- A key theme being considered for the draft BIP is that "A Good South Platte Solution = A Good Solution for Colorado."
- The BRTs continue to pursue the "4 Legs plus Storage" approach to meeting future M&I needs:
 - The BRTs plan to continue to emphasize the efficient use and management of water, including conservation, reuse, and cooperative infrastructure.

- The BRTs will support effective development of Identified Projects and Processes as a critical factor to minimize the water use gaps.
 - The BRTs share a goal of preserving agricultural production in the South Platte basin.
 - The BRTs support the ongoing state-wide new supply discussions for additional water supplies for Colorado.
 - The BRTs support surface and underground storage development as part of Colorado's Water Plan.
- The BRTs recognize the importance of preserving and improving the environmental and recreational attributes of the South Platte Basin and the State as an integral part of the water supply discussion.
 - The BRTs recommend that climate change be considered in developing Colorado's Water Plan.

Southwest Basin Implementation Plan

- The Southwest BRT is focused on developing and determining consumptive and nonconsumptive IPPs for their BIP.
- The Southwest BRT recently circulated a document listing several factors and principles necessary to consider a new transmountain diversion (TMD). The principles are informing the IBCC, Roundtable, and BRT Chairs' discussions moving forward.
- The Southwest BRT has had a major focus on conservation, and been very active in recommending statewide conservation approaches that are directly linked to reducing agricultural dry up and the need for a new TMD.
- The Southwest BRTs most recent work focuses on reducing outdoor residential lawn irrigation by tying it proportionately to indoor water use. They are focused on outdoor use because it is largely consumptive. They have presented this to the IBCC and are beginning to share it with other BRTs.
- The Southwest BRT has nine sub-basins, and all of their work is divided into these subbasins, including technical outreach meetings.

Yampa/White/Green Basin Implementation Plan

- A key focus of the BRT is protecting existing uses, while also seeking to provide for future development.
- The Yampa /White/Green BRT is one of only two basins seeking to increase their irrigated acres.
- The BRT is focused on clarifying how agriculture supports environmental and recreational needs.
- The BRT is incorporating climate change, the ongoing White River programmatic biological opinion process for the endangered fish, and potential large amounts of energy extraction.

BIP Work Thematically Presented Statewide

Protect Private Property and Water Rights: Every BRT in Colorado is working hard to move forward with their Basin Implementation Plans, determining projects and methods to meet their municipal, agricultural, environmental, and recreational needs. At the same time, each one wants to do so in a way that protects private property and water rights.

Interstate Compacts/Agreements: Every basin in Colorado must grapple with interstate compacts or agreements and seven of the nine basins (Colorado, Gunnison, North Platte, Rio Grande, South Platte/Metro, Southwest) are dealing with this explicitly in their Basin Implementation Plan.

Agriculture: Every basin is concerned about the continued viability of Colorado's agriculture, however different basins are handling the issue differently. In general, the Arkansas, Colorado, Rio Grande, and Southwest BRTs are approaching agricultural needs from an economic and productivity stand point. The North Platte and Yampa/White are looking to increase their irrigated acres, while several basins, such as the Gunnison and Colorado, are looking to reduce agricultural shortages. Some basins are also focused on agricultural efficiencies and/or modernizing water infrastructure. These include the Arkansas, Colorado, Gunnison, North Platte, Southwest and Yampa/White BRTs. The South Platte and Metro BRTs are more concerned about maintaining agriculture against the pressure of agricultural transfers and urbanization, and are therefore exploring alternative options.

Conservation and Reuse: The Arkansas, Colorado, South Platte / Metro, and Southwest BRTs have been especially focused on conservation, although all of the basins have expressed the importance of conservation.

Meeting M&I Gaps: Every basin is interested in meeting their municipal and industrial needs, many of which, such as the Southwest and South Platte / Metro BRTs are focused on implementing already identified projects and processes.

Environmental and Recreational Needs: Every basin recognizes the importance of meeting their environmental and recreational needs, and they are approaching this differently. The Colorado BRT has the most goals related to environmental and recreation needs, ranging from recovering imperiled and endangered species, protecting wetlands/riparian areas, protecting recreation, and being strategic about their work. The Arkansas BRT has a similar number of goals, but does not explicitly discuss how they are going to approach this strategically. Wetland and riparian areas are also important to the North Platte, Rio Grande, South Platte Metro, and Southwest BRTs. Similarly, recreation was also explicitly incorporated into the goals of the Rio Grande, South Platte / Metro, and Southwest BRTs. While several basins have already quantified nonconsumptive needs, the Gunnison BRT also expressed interest in doing so as well. Lastly, the Arkansas, North Platte, Rio Grande, and Southwest BRTs are the most focused on watershed health.

Balance All Needs and Reduce Conflict / Multi Purpose Storage and Projects: Every basin has stressed interest in multipurpose projects and approaches. Some, like the Arkansas, Colorado, and North Platte BRTs are interested in how agriculture supports nonconsumptive needs. The Arkansas, South Platte / Metro, Rio Grande, and Southwest BRT's goals also explicitly discuss the need for multipurpose projects.

Education and Outreach: Every BRT has active education and outreach activities. Summary documents are produced regularly to outline these activities, however recently the BRTs are moving from a focus on delivering and documenting outreach and public engagement activities during the planning process to developing long-term strategies and plans for education and outreach over the next ~5 years.