

Appendix F: Summary of Outreach, Education, and Public Engagement Activities Completed during Development of Colorado's Water Plan

Outreach, education, and public engagement efforts during development of Colorado's Water Plan were unprecedented and built on a decade of stakeholder involvement. Between September 2013 and September 2015, the CWCB received and responded to over 30,000 comments before it released the final plan in December 2015. Because Colorado's Water Plan rests upon stakeholder engagement, it is critical to highlight education and outreach efforts. This was a grassroots effort, and this appendix outlines the high level of local and volunteer efforts used to involve the public in the process.

Statewide Outreach, Education, and Public Engagement Activities

Public engagement, coupled with consistent and clear communication, was crucial throughout the development of Colorado’s Water Plan—and these activities built upon the strong foundation of outreach efforts the CWCB and basin roundtables (through the Public Education, Participation, and Outreach (PEPO) Workgroup) conducted over the past 10 years. Both statewide and within each basin, the CWCB, basin roundtables, and stakeholder groups distributed information to the water community, interested stakeholder constituencies, and the general public. In September 2013, the CWCB developed an outreach and communication plan around four clearly defined goals to provide a cohesive strategy and structure for all communication and outreach activities associated with the development of Colorado’s Water Plan. Table F-1 provides a review of the methods the CWCB used to achieve those goals. Following the table is an analysis of the over 30,000 comments these activities generated.

The outreach and communications plan goals were:

1. To engage the public and create general public awareness and dialogue about Colorado’s Water Plan and its role in ensuring a secure water future for Colorado.
2. To build support within the water community for Colorado’s Water Plan and increase the level of understanding of the plan and its components.
3. To proactively identify and address issues that may create barriers to success for Colorado’s Water Plan, and mitigate and manage negativity.
4. To share the responsibility of implementing and executing communication about Colorado’s Water Plan across CWCB leadership and key stakeholders to foster a collective voice.

TABLE F-1	OUTREACH METHODS
Basin Roundtable Engagement	The CWCB and basin roundtables (through PEPO and BIP consultants) developed communication materials and messaging about Colorado’s Water Plan and BIPs.
Grassroots Stakeholder Group Outreach	The CWCB established and used a database of key community, civic, and water organizations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Colorado Municipal League, Water Congress, and regional advocacy groups, among others) with established communication networks (e.g. websites, newsletters, and email updates) to distribute Colorado’s Water Plan materials. The CWCB engaged these groups in the development of the plan and distributed information to their constituents. These groups also provided important speaking opportunities at various meetings and gatherings.
Public Input and Response	The CWCB solicited public input for all communication materials related to Colorado’s Water Plan. The agency built a public comment form into the Colorado’s Water Plan website, and established a new email account (cowerplan@state.co.us) to receive public input. It also created guides for submitting public input. All public comments and staff responses are available for review online. At each CWCB board meeting from September 2013 to September 2015, the CWCB provided an opportunity for public input to encourage comment regarding Colorado’s Water Plan. The CWCB also encouraged members of the public to engage directly with their basin roundtables.
Media Relations	The CWCB worked with the press to clearly articulate Colorado’s Water Plan development process and to establish a foundation of knowledge and awareness among members of the media.
DNR/CWCB/IBCC Leadership Presentation Circuit	Meetings with DNR, CWCB, and IBCC leadership helped enhance understanding of and build support for Colorado’s Water Plan in the water community. The CWCB met and worked with over 100 key organizations and individuals listed in Appendix G. In coordination with the IBCC and the basin roundtables, the CWCB identified representatives from geographically diverse areas who spoke about Colorado’s Water Plan in various forums across the state. This included engaging key partners, such as agricultural and municipal water providers. The CWCB arranged speaking engagements, and developed materials and training sessions for spokespeople. As appropriate, staff conducted targeted pre-event outreach and follow-up activities to increase stakeholder attendance at important events, and created opportunities for additional interaction and dialogue.
Materials and Branding	The CWCB developed an overarching brand—including a logo, templates, and consistent look-and-feel—that reflected Colorado’s Water Plan purpose and values. The CWCB also developed a suite of printed materials, which are available for download on the Colorado’s Water Plan website, and which the CWCB distributed to communities at speaking engagements and conferences.

Digital Engagement – Web and Social Media

The CWCB developed a robust online presence for Colorado's Water Plan that served as a hub where stakeholders and the public could obtain information, subscribe to updates, provide input, and get involved with the process. The strategy included the development of Colorado's Water Plan website, social media channels, and targeted email campaigns tied to key milestones, such as the release of the BIPs. The website included a master calendar of events to promote existing opportunities to reach key stakeholders. The CWCB also created Facebook and Twitter accounts and integrated them into the Colorado's Water Plan website. The CWCB launched and promoted the accounts through a variety of channels, including the website and email campaigns. These social media tools continue to provide an informal and interactive venue for dialogue and the exchange of ideas. The CWCB staff monitor and administer these accounts and regularly post relevant information, answer questions, and participate in the conversation.

Input Generated on Colorado's Water Plan Between September 2013 and September 2015

Between September 2013 when the CWCB began work on the first draft of Colorado's Water Plan, and September 2015, it received, reviewed and responded to over 30,000 comments for consideration in the final plan. Those comments included over 7,000 unique submissions and over 22,000 form letters. Comments came in from every basin in Colorado and were submitted by individuals, organizations, students, state, and federal agencies across all interest groups. The CWCB reviewed nearly 500 documents, in addition to all of the emails and webforms. CWCB staff members engaged with over 150 organizations, agencies, and other partners statewide regarding their involvement in the development of Colorado's Water Plan. Appendix G includes a list of those organizations.

Pursuant to SB14-115, the Water Resources Review Committee (WRRRC) held public hearings in every basin to gather comments on Colorado's Water Plan during summer 2014 and summer 2015.¹ Input submitted to the CWCB on November 1, 2014 included over 200 public comments. Input submitted to the CWCB on September 15, 2015 included nearly 70 comments.

How Public Comments Were Incorporated During Development of Colorado's Water Plan

Comments received from the public and interested stakeholders shaped every single chapter and section of Colorado's Water Plan throughout the development process. Members of CWCB's staff read input the public submitted by email to cowaterplan@state.co.us or through the web form on Colorado's Water Plan website. CWCB staff members then identified which section of Colorado's Water Plan each comment addressed, incorporated where appropriate, and drafted a tailored response. CWCB catalogued all input and presented it at the subsequent CWCB board meeting, as well as posted it to www.coloradowaterplan.com under the "Get Involved" tab on the "Record of Input Received to Date" page. CWCB staff members considered public input as they prepared each draft of Colorado's Water Plan and the final plan. The final public comment period ended September 17, 2015.

Colorado's Water Plan Website

The CWCB launched Colorado's Water Plan website on November 1, 2013 to provide outreach and educational resources about Colorado's Water Plan. The CWCB promoted the website through social media, CWCB staff presentations, and publications related to Colorado's Water Plan. The number of people visiting the website each month rose steadily, and through October 2015, the site had received over 16,000 unique visitors.

TABLE F-2**CODES FOR COLORADO'S WATER PLAN INPUT TOPICS**

Pro Nonconsumptive Needs
Municipal Conservation and Efficiency
Increase in Conservation Target
Anti-Transmountain Diversion
Agricultural Conservation and Efficiency
Agricultural Transfer Methods
Climate change concern
Watershed health
Reuse
Anti-dam
Land use management
Funding
Legislation
Streamflow Management (plans)
Preserving water for future generations
Preserving Agriculture
Pro-storage / Regarding storage
Need better water quality
Pro- Instream Flow program
General
Education and Outreach
Lawns
Compact compliance issues
Permitting efficiency
Water / Energy Nexus
Anti- Land Development/ Municipal growth/sprawl
Groundwater
Anti- Fracking
Anti Population Growth
Pro- Tiered Rate
Local Control
Anti-extractive industries
South Platte / Metro BIP
Pro- Rainwater harvesting
Pro- Transmountain Diversion
Tribal interest
Pro- Fracking

The website will continue to be the primary access point for accessing the final draft of Colorado's Water Plan. Other documents and information will continue to be available on the site, including the BIPs, all input the CWCB directly received about Colorado's Water Plan through 2015, and the formal responses the CWCB provides to commenters.

Input Received – Data and Analysis

The CWCB analyzed and coded the over 30,000 comments received between September 2013 and September 2015. Comments received were coded according to over 40 different topics, which are all listed in Table F-2. The comments were also coded based on the water values driving Colorado's Water Plan including vibrant and sustainable cities, viable and productive agriculture, a robust skiing, recreation and tourism industry, and a thriving environment that includes healthy watersheds, rivers, streams, and wildlife.

Comment coding data for the more than 30,000 comments revealed each of the values driving the plan had strong representation in the comments. The data also shows that a great majority of commenters believe the environment is an important part of Colorado's Water Plan and that a lot of Coloradans care about that aspect of the plan. However, the coding data alone does not necessarily tell the whole story. For example, just because the CWCB did not receive the same number of comments from the agricultural community as it did from the environmental community does not necessarily mean that agricultural interests are not an equally important value that should be reflected in the plan. When drawing conclusions around public perceptions and attitudes about water topics it's important to include analysis from a range of reports, such as scientifically valid surveys.

For example, in 2013, when the CWCB worked with BBC Consultants to complete a statewide survey of water awareness, the survey showed conflicting results in terms of what values are most important to people in Colorado. The data from that survey showed that the amount of water available for Colorado's farms and ranches was the second most important water-related issue to the public. The first was the quality of water in their homes. That survey also revealed that when asked what should be done to address Colorado's most important water concerns, the public answered "develop more new projects and

build new dams” nearly as often as they answered “prioritize environmental needs.” In general, these types of surveys will be more accurate indicators of public attitudes, while comments indicate the public engagement approach that different interests take, and the level of interest from environmentally oriented Coloradans to participate through comment letters. Colorado’s Water Plan includes recommendations and actions that will allow for additional analysis of existing surveys, and possibly updates to add to existing data in the future. These actions will help guide the strategy for water education moving forward.

For comparison purposes, one of the reasons the comments sent to the CWCB on Colorado’s Water Plan show a lot of interest in environmental issues is that there were a large number of environmental advocacy groups stimulating individual comments on those topics. The agricultural groups submitting comments used different methods that resulted in their comments representing a smaller percentage of the comments received. For example – the Colorado Agriculture Water Alliance’s two comment letters, which were very substantive in nature, represented the voice of their constituencies all over the state, who met with each other several times to craft their letters.

The most important take away from coding the comments received by the CWCB on Colorado’s Water Plan is to understand that Colorado’s Water Plan incorporated these comments after careful consideration of each one by the CWCB.

Basin Outreach, Education, and Public Engagement Activities

This section provides an explanation and summary of the basin roundtable and PEPO outreach efforts throughout the development phases of the BIPs and Colorado’s Water Plan.

Each basin’s PEPO education liaison and roundtable leadership supported the collection of information and input. The scope of these efforts far exceeds any other period of voluntary, roundtable-driven outreach activities—resulting in a significant increase in public engagement and, ultimately, an inclusive, comprehensive, deliberative, and community-supported water supply planning process.

During the BIP process, the roundtables captured data that have provided quantification on:

- ❖ The number of technical outreach meetings each roundtable, the BIP consultants, and stakeholder groups held to identify specific water needs and projects.
- ❖ The number of dedicated public meetings these groups organized to obtain responses to the BIP goals, needs assessments, and proposed projects.
- ❖ The number and type of attendees at each stakeholder and public meeting.
- ❖ The type of input communities provided to the roundtables.
- ❖ The way in which the BIPs factored in the input.
- ❖ Other roundtable outreach activities.
- ❖ A summary of future planned outreach activities.

Between February 2014 and April 2015, the basin roundtables collectively hosted over 150 dedicated public meetings in addition to regular basin roundtable meetings. All in all, nearly 4000 participants engaged in those meetings (among roundtables that collected data on attendance). Each BIP summarizes those meetings. In addition to hosting public meetings, the roundtables employed innovative approaches to education and outreach. They published hundreds of local newspaper articles, participated in radio shows, developed and maintained websites to share BIP information, produced printed materials to distribute at local events, gave presentations at various community events, surveyed basin residents about BIP issues, solicited public input, incorporated comments into BIPs, and engaged diverse stakeholder groups and individuals basin-wide. The final BIP documents incorporate a total of 954 public comments from the three reporting basins that tracked that data. Most basins did not have the capacity to report on this level of detail.²

Sustaining Long-Term Strategies

In addition to receiving assistance from the BIP consultant teams while drafting its respective BIP, each basin roundtable used its PEPO education action plan to guide outreach strategies, and used the \$2000 available annually (which increased to \$6500 annually beginning fiscal year 2016) through the PEPO Workgroup. Many roundtables used current

funds and staff to implement outreach activities, while others sub-contracted this work out to the BIP consultants or relied on external partnerships. Some basins used WSRA grants to fund more comprehensive education and outreach programs. Regardless, all of the roundtables collaborated with their outreach teams more than ever before; it will be imperative to consider ways to sustain this momentum into the future.

The BIPs contain information about the extent and detail of each basin’s education and outreach efforts. A comparison of the commonalities among the basins’ long-term strategies shows that all basins articulated the need for building an active roundtable membership, coordinating partnerships, defining critical audiences, and building relationships with key constituencies. The following section features unique activities the basins incorporated into the BIPs and outreach strategies they identified as critical in moving forward.

Arkansas River Basin

Featured Activity

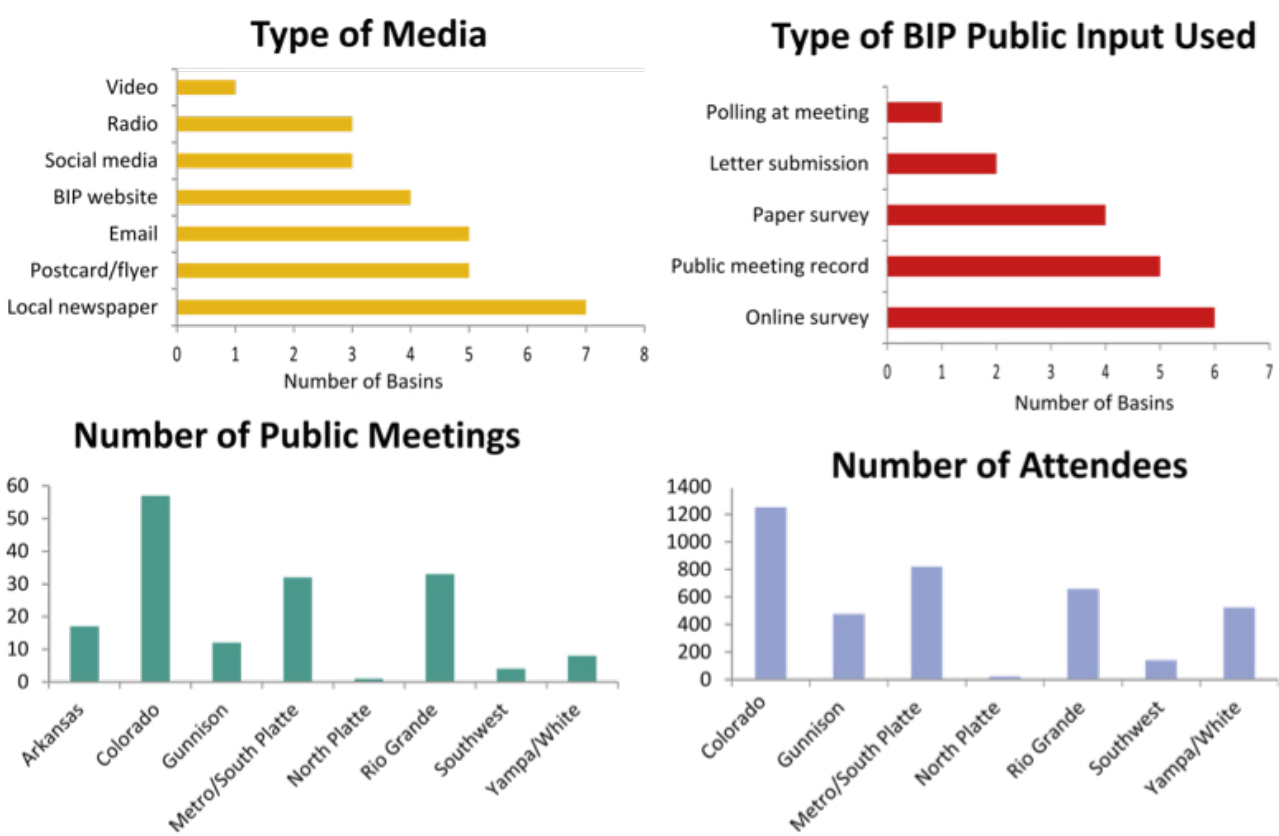
In partnership with Colorado Springs Utilities and with funding from an WSRA grant, the Watershed Health

Working Group conducted outreach efforts to bring together basin roundtable members, representatives from federal and state natural resource agencies, NGO stakeholders, and local government officials. The group developed strategies to improve communication and collaboration between entities that respond to watershed health-related threats and events, and developed value maps and an action plan for the basin. An outcome of this internal capacity-building process was the creation of the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative.

Featured Strategy

The basin plans to undertake a structured public relations effort to maintain and improve partnerships and relationships among community leaders, media outlets, and active citizen groups while enhancing efforts to educate stakeholder groups about the purpose and progress of the water planning process in the Arkansas Basin. Education efforts may include the development of a whitepaper for public policy makers. These efforts will require significant resources to define critical audiences, craft calls to actions, and measure the effectiveness of communication channels.

FIGURE F-1 BIP PUBLIC MEETING DATA



Colorado River Basin

Featured Activity

With an WSRA grant and in collaboration with Colorado Mesa University's Water Center, the Colorado Basin Roundtable solicited input from the public through online surveys, which it advertised in a series of newspaper articles; open discussions at 57 meetings for 1250 attendees; and comment letters and emails. Working with Roaring Fork Conservancy, Eagle River Watershed, Trout Unlimited, and Club 20, the roundtable conducted surveys that generated over 500 responses from adult audiences and student groups, who shared significant concern about future water supplies and the health of the environment in the Colorado Basin. The roundtable developed its six major "themes of the basin" as a result of this data collection.

Featured Strategy

The basin roundtable plans to use the partnerships and communication channels it developed through the BIP outreach process to continue educating the public about basin roundtable activities and regional and statewide water needs, and to encourage the public to provide input about how these needs should be met. The roundtable will share the results of these activities with the CWCB as its planning efforts continue. Longer-term strategies will engage the public regarding basin-wide and statewide water challenges and opportunities, with goals to maintain a steady presence in both traditional and social media, and to ensure that members and partner organizations have the tools they need to inform their constituencies and collect public input on basin roundtable issues.

Gunnison River Basin

Featured Activity

The development of the BIP prompted an organized outreach effort among representatives from each of the six sub-basins of the Gunnison Basin, including educational entities and watershed groups. Basin members organized information-and-input events, and used *The Gunnison River Basin, A Handbook for Residents*³ for town hall meetings with the general public in order to obtain responses to the goals, needs assessments, and proposed projects. Overall input demonstrated strong support for the BIP Basin Goals and Statewide Principles.

Featured Strategy

A long-term strategy focuses on engaging non-roundtable stakeholders to contribute input and feedback about key BIP elements in order to help the basin roundtable reach out to potential new project proponents and partnerships. To help address the basin's water needs, the roundtable encourages the implementation of several concepts and activities by 2025, such as educating the next generation and political leaders, and conducting research on climate change adaptation and the BIP's 10 "tier one" projects. Due to limited resources, the successful continuation of education and outreach activities will require careful coordination with existing organizations, programs, and resources.

Metro/South Platte River Basin

Featured Activity

During the development of the draft and final BIP, the roundtable hosted a total of 32 public meetings, which it publicized through local media, in unique locations across the basin. At least 820 participants attended. They represented a wide variety of interests including agriculture, municipal, industrial, business, recreation, and environmental interests. With assistance from their BIP consultant team, the roundtable used surveys to collect public and stakeholder comments during the meetings, and shared the comments with the basin roundtables for analysis and incorporation into the joint BIP.

Featured Strategy

A facilitated Metro/South Platte basin education committee workshop will identify the staffing and coordination the roundtable will need to identify common priorities and develop implementation strategies. An initial strategy will be the development of a joint communication plan targeted at stakeholders, including water users, political leaders, and major business and industry leaders throughout the state. This plan will maximize existing opportunities and avoid duplication of efforts in order to generate a lasting baseline of public awareness and support for the need for innovative water rate structures, energetic conservation measures, and more integrated land use and water supply planning.

North Platte River Basin

Featured Activity

During the BIP process, basin roundtable members participated in a public outreach meeting and targeted technical workshop meetings with both consumptive and environmental and recreational stakeholders. The public outreach meeting was announced in the local newspaper, and 22 members of the public attended to learn about the history of the roundtable and current planning efforts.

Featured Strategy

Public education and outreach programs can effectively address adverse perceptions and increase project acceptance. By working closely with organizations that specialize in the facilitation of public education and outreach programs, the basin will increase public understanding and participation in important water issues, and capitalize on the basin's education liaison's previous educational efforts.

Rio Grande River Basin

Featured Activity

The BIP process strengthened the roundtable's existing comprehensive outreach program by using numerous media platforms, such as weekly newspaper articles, monthly radio programs, a dedicated website, and a "water 101" booklet developed specifically for the basin. This program has resulted in increased public attendance at regular roundtable meetings, as well as increased momentum for creation of a forum to discuss multiple-use project implementation.

Featured Strategy

Through a continued partnership with the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, the basin will establish a long-term education and outreach strategy for water use and needs. This strategy builds the basin's public communication around three key ideals—outreach, education, and participation—across all demographics, including water users, public officials, communities, and water leaders. The roundtable can achieve this strategy through the development of relationships with active and diverse basin roundtable members, educational opportunities, and strategic planning forums.

Southwest River Basin

Featured Activity

Unique to this basin is the "social hour" before each roundtable meeting, during which nearly as many members of the public attend to learn and network as roundtable members themselves. An additional set of meetings has provided local decision makers with information about the CWP and BIP, as well as discussion topics to spur participation and input—resulting in a greater understanding of public concerns and interests as they relate to water development and uses within the basin. Similarly, the basin asked attendees to widely share the CWCB's fact sheets and the winter 2015 issue of Headwaters magazine with their constituents.

Featured Strategy

Working with the Water Information Program, the roundtable plans to continue to inform local decision makers and the public about consumptive and nonconsumptive needs and planned projects, ways to promote partnerships, representation on the roundtable, and ways to disseminate information on natural variability of river flows and the hydrologic cycle. One short-term strategy to achieve BIP goals related to conservation, land-use planning, and water reuse is to implement a pilot conservation and land-use planning session.

Yampa/White/Green River Basin

Featured Activity

Through a WSRA grant, the Community Agriculture Alliance implemented and facilitated education and outreach activities for the basin. This included forming a partnership with three local National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation districts to host and widely advertise a water forum and Q&A session at their annual meetings, thereby expanding the basin roundtable's constituency. The education committee administered input surveys to the 255 attendees as well as to other stakeholders throughout the BIP process, resulting in three new IPPs for consumptive use projects and 17 additional IPPs for environmental and recreational projects.

Featured Strategy

The basin roundtable recognizes the importance of including stakeholders in the process of developing and implementing IPPs, and will therefore serve as a source for information exchange. It will encourage participation in the public process to provide transparent and open dialogue among all involved parties. Additionally, some IPPs can influence streamflows both upstream and downstream of a project location; as such, the basin roundtable can generate public awareness of projects and help build consensus regarding water management challenges and opportunities.

¹ C.R.S. § 37-60-106.

² Kate McIntire, memorandum to the Colorado Water Conservation Board, "Agenda Item 9a, Statewide Outreach Status Update – May 2014," (2014), <http://cwcwweblink.state.co.us/weblink/0doc/195420/Electronic.aspx?searchid=27f8d999-7734-4ef1-afa6-f1cb603e6d3d>.

³ Gunnison Basin Roundtable, *The Gunnison River Basin: A Handbook for Inhabitants* (Grand Junction, CO: Water Center at Colorado Mesa University, 2013), http://www.coloradomesa.edu/watercenter/documents/Gunnison_Basin_Special_2013.pdf.