



Colorado's Water Supply Future

Interbasin Compact Committee Annual Report

October 31, 2017



Treasure Falls in October, Mineral County—Megan Holcomb

To the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Energy



From John Stulp

*Special Policy Advisor to the Governor for Water
Director of Compact Negotiations Interbasin Compact Committee*

Dear General Assembly, Basin Roundtable, and Interbasin Compact Committee Members,

Reflecting on the year past brings to light many promising developments at the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). New leadership at many levels –on the CWCB Board, Basin Roundtables, the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC), and throughout the Agency– brings forward a combination of fresh energy and critical expertise. As we approach the two year anniversary of the completion of Colorado’s Water Plan this November, the milestone reminds us of all the hard work over many years that went into the Plan, as well as the hard work ahead for all through implementation efforts around the state. Such changes and focal shifts help to examine and renew our collective, statewide commitment to “conserve, develop, protect, and manage Colorado’s water for present and future generations.”

Since its creation, the IBCC has continually served the state as a valuable platform for discussing challenging water issues and uniting statewide interests. We can look back to brief snapshots of the IBCC’s history to recognize how it has achieved considerable statewide consensus on water planning that works for all Coloradans. In highlight, after years of IBCC efforts, 2013 brought Colorado the “No and Low Regrets Action Plan” which was foundational to the Basin Implementation Plans and 2014 provided the Conceptual Agreement. The year 2015 then represented a culmination of the transformative efforts behind Colorado’s Water Plan, while 2016 brought the early days of implementation and action emerging from Basin Roundtables and stakeholders with the support of the IBCC.

The Basin Roundtable process, year after year, proves to be a robust, highly-collaborative system driving local solutions to daunting resource management challenges. Over the last year in particular, Basin Roundtables have demonstrated an unparalleled effort in activating projects and programs in their Basin Implementation Plans (BIP) and the Water Plan. Basins have taken initiative to bring forward multi-use, multi-benefit projects and have shared their successes and challenges through increased inter-basin communication. On June 20th, 2017, the

Arkansas, Metro, and South Platte Basin Roundtables held a joint meeting in Denver to discuss the evolving role of the Interbasin Compact Committee, Colorado’s Water Plan implementation, Alternative Transfer Methods, stream management plans, education and outreach efforts, and the Water Supply Reserve Fund needs assessment. The Arkansas Roundtable and joint Metro and South Platte Roundtables enlisted the help of BIP Coordinators; the position has already proven to proactively bring parties together in support of feasible solutions to address identified BIP needs, from planning and financing to construction and completion. The four west slope roundtables are planning a similar joint meeting for the spring of 2018 to collectively review the products of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) Update and the results of Phase II of the Technical Study on Colorado River Risk Response Options.

On November 29, 2016, the IBCC, CWCB, and Colorado Ag Water Alliance ([CAWA](#)), held an [Ag Water Summit](#) with 175 participants from across the state. The summit focused on identifying concrete ways to achieve the measurable objective in Colorado’s Water Plan to share at least 50,000 acre-feet of agricultural water using voluntary alternative transfer methods (ATMs) by 2030. The day included discussions on successful current ATM projects from the perspective of agriculture, municipal and industrial, and environmental and recreational water users; discussions on common denominators and obstacles to adopting ATMs; legal and legislative issues related to ATMs; and best next steps to move ATMs forward.

On April 20th, 2017, the IBCC convened in Keystone to debrief from the Ag Water Summit and discuss ways in which to foster the implementation of successful alternative ATMs. A [Colorado Water Institute report](#), co-authored by Anne Castle, MaryLou Smith, John Stulp, Brad Udall, and Reagan Waskom, outlines a number of these recommendations and is intended to provide a foundation on which further progress toward meeting Colorado’s Water Plan ATM goal can be built. Some “next step” ideas include potential partnerships to invest in storage and delivery infrastructure, development of regional infrastructure and incentives, state leadership on specific areas, and field trials. Updates were provided on the status of the “Catlin Canal



Company Rotational Land Following-Municipal Leasing Pilot Project” in the Lower Arkansas River Basin; the [2015](#) and [2016](#) reports can be found on coloradowaterplan.com.

April’s IBCC meeting also included updates on the Agricultural Water Protection Bill (HB-1228), the Colorado River Risk Study, the Statewide Water Supply Initiative Update, and the 2017 CWCB Projects Bill. IBCC members continued discussions to examine various options for funding the implementation of Colorado’s Water Plan and the appropriate role of the IBCC in this process. Consensus was reached that IBCC members could readily help promote a funding initiative through capacity building and by providing direction on needs and utilization of such a fund, but may not be the appropriate entity to draft a specific funding mechanism. The next IBCC meeting scheduled for November 30th will continue the discussion on distribution of potential long-term revenue.

The upcoming IBCC meeting in November is slated to be held in west Denver and holds promise to explore the evolving nature of the Interbasin Compact Committee. Over the last few months, I held individual phone conversations with many IBCC members, alongside CWCB Water Supply Planning staff Greg Johnson and Megan Holcomb, to discuss each member’s vision for the most appropriate value and mission of the IBCC, and specific ideas for next steps in the coming year. During those conversations, several common themes arose around the following:

- Examining the role of the IBCC in CWCB’s Roundtable structure
- Combating general complacency during non-drought years
- The inherent duty of IBCC members to communicate between basins to maintain Roundtable crossbreeding and the shared benefit of identifying successes and failures
- A desire to renew conversations on compact compliance and transbasin diversions

I appreciate the candid conversation we had with members on the direction of the IBCC in light of the substantive success of Colorado’s Water Plan. The Interbasin Compact Committee has served many specific roles over the years, but 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 is a powerful clearinghouse of ideas, where relationships are built and maintained to help eliminate, or at least mitigate, resource management conflicts. The strength of such an entity exists in its very continuation—through periods of quiet as well as necessity.

November’s IBCC meeting aims to elevate many of these themes to help re-energize the Committee to take on the next big challenge, together. To best support the implementation of Colorado’s Water Plan and the CWCB-Roundtable-IBCC system, we must continue to support and renew each other in both our local communities and broader professional collaborations.

Thank you all for your tremendous daily efforts and cumulative contributions.



SWSI—Statewide Water Supply Initiative Update

The ongoing SWSI Update serves two primary purposes: (1) to provide consistent statewide framework for examining future water supply/demand under differing scenarios and (2) to provide tools and data for Roundtables to use in updating BIPs and developing detailed local solutions to gaps.

As the first time SWSI is completed in the context of Colorado's Water Plan and Basin Implementation Plans, this update will be different from previous versions, providing a more detailed and scientifically rigorous hydrologic modeling approach with a technical focus on data, not policy and public input like the Water Plan. The methodology, guided by focused Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs), will enable more consistency—geographically and across sectors. The methodology development process will be wrapped up in November thanks to the work of the TAGs. The CWCB is using the TAG process to get stakeholder feedback and ensure that the new methodologies are scientifically sound, effective, and appropriate. TAG participants were encouraged to compile feedback from other roundtable members and local constituents, with the TAG review focusing on technical issues, including key concepts and assumptions, data sources, and fatal flaws. A list of TAG participants, all methodology documentation, and related presentations are posted on the [CWCB website](#).

QUICK LINKS

- [CWCB Website](#)
- [Colorado Water Plan Website](#)
- [ATM Report Colorado Water Institute](#)
- [Catlin Canal CO Rotational Fallowing-Municipal Leasing Pilot Project 2015 Report](#)
- [Catlin Canal CO Rotational Fallowing-Municipal Leasing Pilot Project 2016 Report](#)
- [IBCC/CAWA Ag Water Summit November 2016 Summary](#)
- [Elizabeth Koebele, PH.D.—Technical Report](#)

Fall 2016 Basin Roundtable and IBCC Survey Summary

In October 2016, a doctoral student conducted a survey about the Basin Roundtable and IBCC process to learn more about the role that collaborative processes can play in governing our water resources. The survey asked about participants' experiences in the Roundtable/IBCC process and the impacts that it has had on Colorado water management thus far. The research, conducted by Elizabeth Koebele, Ph.D., University of Nevada Reno, was presented to the CWCB in a [technical report](#) in June 2017. Several highlights from her dissertation include the following:

- Participants included 111 survey respondents and 40 in-depth in-person interviews distributed across stakeholder groups and geographic regions
- 84% of respondents participated in the Basin Roundtable/IBCC Process for over 3.5 years
- Koebele attended 20 Basin Roundtable/IBCC meetings and events between 2013–2016

Results were subdivided into the topics of Collaborative Dynamics, Collaborative Learning, Collaborative Outcomes, and Perspectives on Water Governance. Outcomes of note include the following:

- Over 92% of respondents agreed that the process they participate in makes decisions based on consensus
- While only 31% of respondents agreed that participation caused them to change their values about water management in Colorado, 98% agreed that they learned more about other stakeholders' values as a result of participating, and 84% agreed that they formed new working relationships with stakeholders with different values.



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