



INTERBASIN COMPACT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Submitted by the Colorado Water Conservation Board

October 29, 2021



A MESSAGE FROM
THE CHAIR

Members of the General Assembly,

Colorado has faced unprecedented challenges over the last year from the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, to systemic drought in western Colorado, to severe wildfires and later floods impacting our forests, rivers, farms, communities and key infrastructure.

Amidst all of this, Colorado River issues have loomed large with both Lake Mead and Lake Powell at their lowest levels since their dams were constructed. This triggered the Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan for the first time, leading to Reclamation calling for releases of water from three Upper Basin reservoirs. The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is continuing its investigation into whether a Demand Management (DM) program is advisable and feasible for Colorado. On this issue, the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) has continued to provide input as a de facto workgroup supporting the CWCB board’s process. The IBCC has specifically looked at the issue of proportionality relating to a potential DM program, with particular focus on mechanisms to avoid disproportionate impacts. However, Demand Management is only one potential tool in our State’s toolkit. It is yet to be determined whether it is the right tool at the right time. We must consider a full range of options to protect our water users and increase state resiliency.

As IBCC tackled this and other discussions, the state was dealt another blow when former IBCC chair Russ George announced he was stepping down. Russ is an unparalleled state leader, a friend and role model to all of us. Recognizing Russ would leave big shoes to fill and understanding that water is such a critical issue to Colorado, Governor Polis recently appointed me to continue Russ’ legacy as the new IBCC chair.

“There’s more to be done. The work doesn’t stop and the spirit of consensus-building that has gotten us to this point is something I am asking you to help keep alive. I am passing that torch to you now and I know you can keep it going. The truth is, we have always carried it together.

We know it hasn’t always been easy but we also know it is worth the effort to see our better selves in each other. Find the common ground! I’m entrusting you to keep that light going because it is how we continue to succeed. You are up to the challenge. Embrace it!”

-Russ George

In spite of the many hurdles, I’m proud to say the IBCC forged ahead this year without skipping a beat. They have steadfastly supported the CWCB’s work by analyzing proportionality issues relating to a potential future DM program. I have witnessed that passion first hand at our recent IBCC meeting – my first meeting as IBCC Chair.

We stand at a pivotal time in Colorado with significant challenges that test our inter-basin resolve and collaboration. However, we do our best work when we embrace the consensus-building approach that Russ George so often reminded us is critical to our shared success. I am inspired by IBCC’s focus on public education, participation and outreach as well as their commitment to serving as a think tank that helps us tackle our most critical water issues. As chair, I am committed to working with IBCC to embrace the same spirit of collaboration that has helped us advance and will continue to help us find solutions to our current and future water challenges.

Truly,

Dan Gibbs
Interbasin Compact Committee Chairperson
Director of the Department of Natural Resources



IBCC BACKGROUND:

Since its inception in the 2005 “Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act” the IBCC has provided an important, diverse, and balanced forum for policy input from across Colorado. Built on the vision of Russ George, Diane Hoppe, and Jim Isgar, the IBCC has helped shape numerous planning initiatives through a focused discourse on the major policy challenges within and across the basin roundtables. Formed at a critical time, the IBCC has helped to rise above regional and basin divisions to simultaneously address statewide and local issues in a cooperative, transbasin manner.

As former Director John Stulp said, “*The IBCC has served many specific roles over the years, but the 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’s statewide perspective and ability to function as a think tank has generated critical feedback to the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), basin roundtables, and broader water community.

Some past examples of IBCC discussion and work products include:

- **2021** – Holding a coordinated IBCC/PEPO meeting at the February 23, 2021 Meeting. The IBCC prioritized developing stronger links between PEPO and the IBCC to facilitate communication within the roundtables.
- **2020** – Acting as a de facto CWCB working group on equity (proportionality hereafter) in Demand Management (DM) as part of the CWCB board’s DM feasibility study and participating in a joint DM workgroup and IBCC meeting in March, 2020. Providing updates and input to the CWCB board on a range of Demand Management proportionality issues noted in the [Demand Management Equity Summary document](#) that was included in the July 2020 CWCB Board packet¹.
- **2018** – Coordinating with IBCC members and the pre-cursor to the *For the Love of Colorado* campaign team to identify critical funding areas and possible funding opportunities for the Colorado Water Plan.
- **2014** – Carefully negotiating the Conceptual Framework that was included as a guidance document in the 2015 Colorado Water Plan to evaluate a course for discussion for any new Trans Mountain Diversions (TMDs).
- **2013** – Compiling a *No and Low Regrets Action Plan* to identify smart near-term actions that support Colorado under any future scenario as well as beginning discussions around the Conceptual Framework.
- **2009** – Evaluating the *Portfolio and Tradeoff Tool* and initiating the scenario planning framework documented in the 2015 Colorado Water Plan that now serves as a foundation for technical analysis.
- **2006** – Creating by-laws and charter documents for the IBCC.

HIGHLIGHT OF IBCC 2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, the IBCC was able to convene two virtual meetings in March and October of 2021. The IBCC conversation around DM proportionality continues to be of importance and interest to both the IBCC and the CWCB Board. The IBCC conversations began in October 23, 2019 and have continued through the last IBCC meeting on October 21, 2021. To date, IBCC input is captured in the input it provided to the CWCB Board in the July 2020 “*IBCC Demand Management Equity Summary*” (hyperlinked above). The CWCB board asked IBCC to provide any additional feedback to the board by its November 2021 meeting. The IBCC continues to see proportionality relating to a potential DM program as a topic of great interest.

¹ See Appendix K of the July 15-16, 2020 CWCB Board packet “*Demand Management Update*” memo.

In addition to the DM conversations, the IBCC has worked to promote the need for greater support of Public Education, Participation and Outreach (PEPO). A PEPO workgroup was identified in IBCC's founding legislation but has not been active within IBCC for several years. The IBCC recently named a new IBCC PEPO representative (Lisa Darling) to help facilitate conversations between the IBCC and the PEPO representatives on the roundtables.

HIGHLIGHT OF IBCC PRESENTATIONS & INTERESTS

After focusing much of their energy and interest in DM over the last few years, the IBCC continues to entertain presentations on a wide array of topics. The IBCC has engaged in dialogue around many of these issues and are considering further exploration into some of them. Examples of topics include:

- **Alternative Transfer Methods (ATMs)** – Noting IBCC's interest in exploring ATMs, CWCB staff (Alex Funk) provided a review of the [Alternative Transfer Methods in Colorado](#) report that CWCB released in 2020.
- **Drought and Climate Change Impacts** – Noting the IBCC's interest in climate issues, the IBCC requested and received a report from CWCB staff (Megan Holcomb) on the state of Colorado's ongoing drought at its February 23, 2021 meeting. This included an explanation of the ways that [climate change is incorporated into the Water Plan scenarios](#) that informed the Analysis and Technical Update to the Colorado Water Plan, the Basin Implementation Plans, and which will inform the update to the Water Plan.
- **Funding and Sustainable Funding Sources** — The IBCC continued to express interest in exploring funding issues and helped plan a panel discussion on funding for the February 23, 2021 meeting. The [panel discussion on funding](#) was moderated by Sarah Alexander of the Keystone Policy Center. It included a presentation from Lori Weigel, of New Bridge Strategy, who shared the results of both 2019 and 2020 statewide surveys of voters' views on funding water. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion on water funding with IBCC members Sean Cronin, Aaron Citron and Andy Mueller as well as Mike Melanson and Lori Weigel. The panel was followed by IBCC discussion.
- **Forest Health** – The IBCC was offered updates from Matt Lindburg from Brown & Caldwell and CWCB staff (Russ Sands) on the progress towards creating a Forest Health White Paper being developed to supplement the work for the Colorado Water Plan update. At the October meeting, DNR Director and new IBCC Chair, Dan Gibbs provided insights into potential upcoming support needs for Forest Health.
- **Colorado River Issues** – The IBCC received Colorado River updates from CWCB Director and Upper Colorado River Commissioner Becky Mitchell at their February 2021 meeting and from Michelle Garrison at the October 21, 2021 meeting.
- **Regional Planning and Projects** – IBCC members Mely Whiting and Paul Bruchez led an update around the progress on the Upper Colorado Alternative Transfer Method project at the October 21, 2021 meeting.
- **Demand Management** – CWCB staff (Amy Ostdiek) led multiple interactive conversations with the IBCC on Demand Management, explaining the board's process for evaluating the feasibility of any potential DM program and helping facilitate discussions on proportionality concerns with DM.

Some of these conversations have more immediate pathways for the IBCC to continue to make advancements while others may require additional input. Ongoing conversations with roundtables on their interests and enhancing IBCC and roundtable communication will be helpful to inform future IBCC work.

RESOURCE QUICK REFERENCE

- [CWCB Website](#)
- [IBCC Webpage](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

To learn more or if you have questions please email waterplan.info@state.co.us, call 303-866-3441, visit the CWCB website (www.cwcb.state.co.us) or see how we're working to engage the public at engagecwcb.org.