

# COLORADO'S WATER PLAN



## NEWS & UPDATES

### 2015 TIMELINE

Final 2015 CWP Submitted to Governor by December 10, 2015

## Finalizing the Plan is the First Step

The development of Colorado's Water Plan is just the first step toward successfully managing our water resources for future generations. If managed strategically, Colorado has enough water to meet our state's needs well into the future. Ultimately, Colorado's Water Plan will continue to succeed if it facilitates ongoing implementation of the projects and methods identified in the Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs) and the actions identified throughout the plan at the statewide, basin, and local level.

Although there's still more work to do, Colorado's ability to understand and confront the water supply gaps that exist at the local level is improved. The plan explores how to make water laws and regulations more agile so that we can maximize limited water supplies for the benefit of agriculture, Colorado's cities and towns, and the environment and recreation. The development of the plan was successful, as outlined in the bullets below.

- ❖ Together we created a clear path forward and actionable next steps are apparent.
- ❖ We brought together work from water interests across the state on actions needed to secure Colorado's water future.
- ❖ The public is clearly engaged and their comments are reflected in the plan.
- ❖ Agencies are collaborating. State, local, federal, and private water interests and resources are aligning to better respond to changing conditions and support the values of the water plan.
- ❖ Some BRTs (Arkansas, Gunnison, South Platte/Metro, Yampa/White/Green) are already working to implement BIPs

## The Final Draft of Colorado's Water Plan

Colorado's Water Plan reflects a significant collaborative effort to revise and enhance the previous drafts. We, the CWCB, worked with partners and stakeholder groups statewide, incorporated eight Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs), and considered nearly 30,000 public comments to put together the final version of the plan. Details regarding the changes to date are outlined below. Pursuant to Executive Order, the first final Colorado's Water Plan will be delivered to the Governor no later than December 10, 2015. After the plan is finalized it will continue to be a living document that will be updated periodically in the future as outlined in the plan.



## Measurable Objectives

In line with the Conservation Stretch Goal, we incorporated additional measurable objectives that are grounded in the water values driving the plan and the work of the basin roundtables. These objectives will allow us to gauge our progress on in addressing Colorado's water challenges including the supply-demand gap; storage; land use; funding; education and outreach; and watersheds, environment, and recreation.

### Supply-Demand Gap

The success of Colorado's Water Plan will ultimately be measured by whether or not the municipal water supply-and-demand gap is closed, and the choices we make to close it. With increased efforts on conservation, storage, land use, alternative transfer methods, and reuse, Colorado can close its gap, balance its water values, and address the effects of climate change on water resources. Colorado's Water Plan sets a measurable objective of reducing the projected 2050 municipal and industrial gap from as much as 560,000 acre-feet to zero acre-feet by 2030.

### Conservation

Colorado must address projected gaps between future water needs and available water provisions from both the supply side and the demand side. Every acre-foot of conserved water used to meet new demands is an acre-foot of water that does not need to come from existing uses. Colorado's Water Plan sets a measurable objective to achieve 400,000 acre-feet of municipal and industrial water conservation by 2050.

### Land Use

In order to reduce the amount of water needed for future generations of Coloradans and keep urban-adjacent agricultural lands in production, Colorado must support the growth of the next 5 million residents more strategically than the last 5 million. Colorado's Water Plan calls for a partnership among local water providers and Colorado's communities. This partnership aims to incorporate water-saving actions into local land-use planning. The CWCB will work with Department of Local Affairs, local governments, water providers, Colorado Counties, Inc., Colorado Municipal League, Special Districts Association, councils of governments, and Colorado Association of Homebuilders to examine and strengthen the tools they collectively possess to help Colorado reach this objective. Colorado's Water Plan sets a measurable objective that by 2025, 75 percent of Coloradans will live in communities that have incorporated water-saving actions into land-use planning.

## Agriculture

Without a water plan, Colorado could lose up to 700,000 more acres of irrigated agricultural lands—that equals 20 percent of irrigated agricultural lands statewide and nearly 35 percent in Colorado’s most productive basin, the South Platte. While the right to buy or sell water rights must not be infringed upon, Colorado’s Water Plan describes market-competitive options to typical “buy-and-dry” transactions. Such alternative transfer methods can keep agriculturally dependent communities whole and continue agricultural production in most years, and if such arrangements can be made more permanent in nature, they will provide certainty to both municipal water providers and agricultural producers. Options include lease-fallowing agreements, deficit irrigation, water banking, interruptible supply agreements, rotational fallowing, water conservation programs, and water cooperatives. The State will encourage innovation and creativity by agricultural producers and research institutions to maximize the productivity of every drop of water. Colorado’s Water Plan sets an objective that agricultural economic productivity will keep pace with growing state, national, and global needs, even if some acres go out of production. To achieve this objective, the State will work closely with the agricultural community, in the same collaborative manner that has produced agricultural transfer pilot projects, to share at least 50,000 acre-feet of agricultural water using voluntary alternative transfer methods by 2030.

## Storage

As the state conserves, Colorado must also develop additional storage to meet growing needs and face the changing climate. Tomorrow’s storage projects will increase the capacity of existing reservoirs, address a diverse set of needs, and involve more partners. New storage projects will be increasingly innovative, and will rely on technologies such as aquifer storage and recharge. In addition, water managers will need to be more agile in responding to changing conditions, so that storage can be more rapidly added to Colorado’s water portfolio. To do this, Colorado will address the broken permitting system. Colorado’s Water Plan sets a measurable objective of attaining 400,000 acre-feet of water storage in order to manage and share conserved water and the yield of IPPs by 2050. This objective equates to an 80 percent success rate for these planned projects.

## Watershed Health, Environment, and Recreation

The environment and recreation are too critical to Colorado’s brand not to have robust objectives; a strong Colorado environment is critical to the economy and way of life. In addition, the WQCC identified a strategic water quality objective to have fully supported classified uses—which may include drinking water, agriculture, recreation, aquatic life, and wetlands—of all of Colorado’s waters by 2050. Colorado’s Water Plan sets a measurable objective to cover 80 percent of the locally prioritized lists of rivers with stream management plans, and 80 percent of critical watersheds with watershed protection plans, all by 2030. These plans will address a variety of concerns, including pre- and post-fire mitigation, forest mortality, water quality impairments, potential impacts of legacy mines, flood mitigation and recovery, aquatic and riparian habitat enhancement, and land use change.

## Funding

Colorado’s Water Plan sets an objective to sustainably fund its implementation. In order to support this objective the State will investigate options to raise additional revenue in the amount of \$100 million annually (\$3 billion by 2050) starting in 2020. Such funds could establish a repayment guarantee fund and green bond program focused on funding environmental and recreational projects. In addition, such funds could further support conservation, agricultural viability, alternative transfer methods, education and outreach, and other plan implementation priorities.

## Education, Outreach, and Innovation

Colorado’s Water Plan will expand outreach and education efforts that engage the public to promote well-informed community discourse and decision making regarding balanced water solutions. This work will be collaborative and include

state, local, and federal partners. As one component of this overall strategy, the CWCB will work with Colorado’s innovation community, education and outreach experts, research institutions, and the Governor’s Colorado Innovation Network (COIN) to address Colorado’s water challenges with innovation and “outside-the-box” creativity. Colorado’s Water Plan sets a measurable objective to significantly improve the level of public awareness and engagement regarding water issues statewide by 2020, as determined by water awareness surveys. Colorado’s Water Plan also sets a measurable objective to engage Coloradans statewide on at least five key water challenges (identified by CWCB) that should be addressed by 2030.

## Other Changes Include:

**Critical Action Plan:** We narrowed down the list of actions within Chapter 10, the Critical Action Plan, focusing on high-impact actions that need to be undertaken immediately.

**Storage:** We added a new sub-section within Chapter 6 on storage, which recognizes that Colorado must develop additional storage to meet growing needs and face the changing climate. Tomorrow’s storage projects will increase capacity in existing reservoirs, address a diverse set of needs, and involve more partners.

**Impacts of Agricultural Dry-Up:** We added a discussion within Chapter 6 regarding the impacts of lost irrigated agriculture, which describes potential impacts to rural communities and indicates that without a water plan, Colorado could lose up to 700,000 more acres of irrigated agricultural lands – that’s 20% statewide and nearly 35% in Colorado’s most productive basin, the South Platte.

**Conceptual Framework:** The IBCC and CWCB recently adopted the Conceptual Framework, which is supported by the basin roundtables and county commissioners. Based on this historic collaborative effort, we now acknowledge the Conceptual Framework as Colorado’s Conceptual Framework within Chapter 8.

**Project Funding:** Within Chapter 9, we describe how Colorado could use additional funds to maximize the smallest amount of funds needed to implement the plan. In addition, we describe the need to dedicate \$50 million in 2016 to initiate the guarantee repayment fund, green bond program, and other priority activities.

**State Support of Projects:** Within Chapter 9, we included new clarification on the state’s role in the permitting process, support of projects, and communication with federal partners.

**Outreach and Education:** Within Chapter 9, we moved the section summarizing the outreach and public engagement activities completed during development of the plan and a summary of the public comments received during development of the plan into the appendices.

## Questions ?

Contact us at [cowaterplan@state.co.us](mailto:cowaterplan@state.co.us) and visit us online at [www.coloradowaterplan.com](http://www.coloradowaterplan.com). Find Colorado’s Water Plan on Facebook and follow us on Twitter — [@COWaterPlan](https://twitter.com/COWaterPlan)

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COLLABORATING ON COLORADO’S WATER FUTURE



**COLORADO**  
Colorado Water  
Conservation Board  
Department of Natural Resources