

# ~~~ *Gunnison Basin Roundtable* ~~~

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## **2015 – GUNNISON BASIN ROUNDTABLE EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2015**

**Overview:** The Gunnison Basin Roundtable Education and Outreach Program will focus activities for 2015 on three areas:

- A. Continue to keep decision-makers and interested general citizenry in the six sectors of the Basin informed on the development of the Gunnison Basin Plan and the Colorado State Plan.
- B. Continue existing water education programs in any of the six sectors of the Basin that have such programs in place. Local watershed groups especially have initiated public education and participation programs addressing problems specific to their areas; these need support for continuity.
- C. Lay the foundation for an Education Action Plan for the years 2016-2025, toward some specific goals described below to prepare the people of the Gunnison Basin for the cultural and economic changes that will probably take place through the decades of the planning period (2015-2050).  
The underlying assumption here is that a possible doubling of population statewide, with a fixed or quite probably decreasing water supply, will require significant cultural and economic changes in Colorado life. The current “generation in charge” that is doing the planning will be retiring or otherwise leaving the active field by 2030-35; a new generation, now in school, will be taking over the actual execution of the Colorado Water Plan for its critical years. The next decade (2015-25) will be critical in developing a moving toward not just public awareness-raising, but the institutional changes necessary for a more proactive approach to the water problems we will face as the Southwest both “fills up and dries up.”

***TASK A: Continue to keep decision-makers and general citizenry in the six sectors of the Basin informed on the development of the Gunnison Basin Plan and the Colorado State Plan.*** This will be achieved with continuity from the 2014 Education Action Plan:

- As benchmarks on the way toward the adoption of a Colorado Water Plan late in 2015 are reached, “GBRT Progress Reports” will be drafted by the PEPO Liaison, and distributed in paper and electronic format to City Councils, County Commissioners and other Basin decision-makers.
- An updated website with the evolving Basin and State plans will be maintained, with links from local water organization sites, and with online opportunity for public responses.
- Public meetings will be held in the six sectors of the Basin as benchmarks on the way toward adoption of a Colorado Water Plan are reached, and at other times when it seems desirable to do so.

***TASK B: Continue existing water education programs in any of the six sectors that have such programs in place.***

- The Basin watershed groups, conservancy districts and some water providers have education plans and programs in various stages of development.
- The public schools have some water education activities that should be not only continued, but also amplified on and expanded.

***TASK C: Lay the foundation for an Education Action Plan for the years 2015-2025, at the end of which time these things will be in place for the rest of the planning period (2015-2050):***

- Every school district in the Gunnison River Basin will have an established water education program, involving 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades that will combine responsible field stewardship (watershed monitoring, stream cleanups, riparian restoration) with standards-based classroom education. This will involve all segments of the curriculum – natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities.
- All Basin governing bodies (municipal, county, water-related special districts, and their planning staffs) will participate in annual half-day seminars on “the state of the streams and water resources” in their sector of the Basin, and in the Basin, state and region at large.
- Each of the six sectors of the Gunnison River Basin will have an annual spring or summer celebration focusing on the watershed streams and water resources, combining educational presentations (booths, films, readings or theater, etc.) with in-stream activities, displays and competitions. (Gunnison’s River Festival or the North Fork’s Float are examples.)
- Municipal and county governments, Chambers of Commerce, realtors, and others at the interface with new and existing residents will have informational materials prominently available to inform new and existing homeowners on basic personal water concerns and to help engage them in creating water-efficient and climate-appropriate homes and landscaping.

***Toward those goals, these things will occur in 2015:***

- A. A Gunnison Basin Education and Outreach Committee (GBEOC) will be organized, composed of a representative from each of the six sectors of the Gunnison Basin (Upper Gunnison, North Fork, Surface Creek/Grand Mesa, Upper Uncompahgre, Lower Uncompahgre, Lower Gunnison). For sectors with existing watershed groups, the education facilitator from that group should ideally be a GBEOC member. The Roundtable Public Education, Participation and Outreach Liaison will also be a member. This group will meet quarterly (February, May, August and November), prior to Gunnison Basin Roundtable meetings, and as necessary between those meetings.
- B. The six sector representatives will explore partnership opportunities in their sector, identifying organizations and individuals interested in participating in the water future of their area, either financially in supporting project activities or through providing volunteers for program field activities, or in other more specific participatory ways.
- C. The six sector representatives, working with funds provided by the CWCB and Roundtable, will assess the perceived education needs in their sector, for youths, adults, and specifically targeted groups (city councils, county commissions, business organization, etc.), and will report that to the full committee. *(See the attached exemplary model for youth water-ed needs from the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership.)*
- D. The GBEOC will prepare activities for the Roundtable, and possibly for selected other Basin organizations, to spur discussion on water-related issues requiring clarified or changed thinking. An example will be the challenge of gradually freeing up some water from agriculture for other uses over the 35-year time period without diminishing the acreage under irrigation in the Basin.
- E. The GBEOC will (presumably working with other basins and state organizations) develop an education program for enlarging basin inhabitants’ thinking about M&I water providers, bringing them to acknowledging that water providers are not selling water by the gallon, but are providing a service with fixed costs independent of individual use decreases.
- F. The GBEOC will initiate an inventory of Gunnison Basin land-use planning codes, regulations and guidelines as those codes, et cetera, relate to the relationship between land and water. Once this is complete, a followup study will pull together “Best Practice” analysis of alternatives that will try to balance land development with water sufficiency.
- G. The GBEOC representatives in the Upper Gunnison and Lower Gunnison sectors, together with other representatives, will initiate discussion with relevant college faculty and officials at Western State Colorado University and Colorado Mesa University, and organizations like the Youth Corps Association, to initiate a “Water Leaders” program for the basin, utilizing college students to work in

the basin's public schools, assisting in delivering educational programs, and leading small field groups in stewardship activities.

The GBEOC will meet in February 2016, and in February each year following, to evaluate progress on those action items, and to determine what the next steps in each area of activity will be toward the goals above for the 2016-2025 decade.