



The Colorado Water Plan

The Challenge

Water is essential to Colorado's quality of life and economy and yet, we face a future that is plagued with a significant gap between demand and supply. Within the next few decades, even assuming aggressive conservation and the completion of dozens of water projects currently being considered, we will face a shortfall that could exceed 500,000 acre feet. If we don't take responsible action now, the consequences will be great: hundreds of thousands of acres of Colorado's most productive farmland will dry up; our cities and towns will have insufficient water; drought and wildfire response will grow more difficult; and the environmental health of our watersheds will be increasingly threatened.

The Opportunity

Governor Hickenlooper issued an Executive Order in May 2013 directing the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to develop the Colorado Water Plan. This plan will be a grassroots effort, incorporating and building upon eight years of comprehensive work and unprecedented dialogue and consensus that water leaders from across the state have produced through the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) and Basin Roundtable process. The Colorado Water Plan will be Coloradans' plan for a water future aligned with our values: vibrant and sustainable cities, viable and productive agriculture, a robust skiing, recreation and tourism industry, and a strong environment that includes healthy watersheds, rivers, streams, and wildlife.

Why Now?

The time to develop the Colorado Water Plan is now and there are two key reasons: our need is urgent and the work of the IBCC and Basin Roundtables has led us to a point where development of the Colorado Water Plan has become possible.

- The 27 members of the IBCC, representing every water basin and water interest in Colorado, have agreed that unless action is taken, we will face an undesirable future for Colorado with unacceptable consequences. The IBCC has reached consensus on a number of actions that Colorado must take in the near term to secure our water future. These include conservation, alternative methods of utilizing agricultural water that doesn't result in the permanent dry-up of farmland, and support for water projects that meet certain factors.
- The Basin Roundtables have brought together leaders from each of Colorado's major river basins and the metro area to map out their own basin's needs and water future, facilitated discussions on water issues and developed locally-driven, collaborative solutions.
- Since the 2002-2003 drought, the CWCB has been leading the most comprehensive analysis of Colorado water ever undertaken through the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI 2010). As a result, we know more today than we have ever known about our future water demand: what supplies are available, how much water we need for consumptive and nonconsumptive needs, and more.

How it will be Developed

The Colorado Water Plan will be built from bottom-up. Each Basin Roundtable will develop its own plans for the future. The Basin Implementation Plans (BIP) will identify the projects and methods that each basin will implement to meet its water needs, the specific challenges that it faces to a secure water future, and the strategies it will pursue to address those challenges. These BIPs will then be incorporated into the Colorado Water Plan.

The IBCC will continue to facilitate dialogue across basins and continue its work of refining and adding to the list of action items around which there is consensus, including a thorough examination of options for new water supply.

The CWCB is tasked with drafting the plan. To do so, it will be reviewing and combining technical information and policy recommendations, incorporating the work of the IBCC and Basin Roundtables, and conducting any additional technical analysis needed.

How to Get Involved

Communicating with interested stakeholders and keeping them informed throughout the development of the Colorado Water Plan is a priority for the Governor.

Join the Discussion!

The most effective way to be involved is to be engaged in your Basin Roundtable. To learn more about when your Roundtable meets and who represents your basin on the Roundtable, visit www.cwcb.state.co.us.

Find the Colorado Water Plan on Facebook and follow us on Twitter – @COWaterPlan.

Questions?

Contact us at cowaterplan@state.co.us. In addition, the CWCB is in the process of developing a Colorado Water Plan website where information and developments will be posted and where you can sign up for updates.

The Timeline

