



Colorado's Water Plan

DRAFT 9/12/2013 - Outreach and Communications Plan Overview

INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) has been charged with a historic task over the next 16 months – to incorporate and build upon nine years of work and unprecedented dialogue and consensus among water leaders throughout the state to develop a comprehensive plan for addressing Colorado's water challenges.

Public engagement coupled with consistent and clear communications about Colorado's Water Plan (CWP) will be critical to its success. The Outreach and Communications Plan is designed to provide a cohesive strategy and structure for all CWP communications and outreach activities. While strategic communications around the plan will undoubtedly become a multi-year effort, this plan is intended to act as a guide from September 2013 until the submission of the draft CWP to the Governor's office in late 2014. The plan should be considered a living document, with changes and updates being made as necessary. Communications beyond late 2014 will necessarily shift and strategies will need to be adjusted accordingly.

GOALS

Outreach and communications will be rooted in four clear goals aimed at ensuring the CWP's success:

- To engage the public and to create general public awareness and dialogue about the CWP and its role in ensuring a secure water future for Colorado;
- To build support within the water community for the CWP and increase the level of understanding of the plan and its components;
- To proactively identify and address issues that may create barriers to success for the CWP and mitigate/manage negativity; and
- To share the responsibility of implementing and executing communications about the CWP across CWCB leadership and key stakeholders to achieve the impact of a collective voice.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Public input is essential to the success of the CWP. While the communications effort will seek to inform and foster dialogue among a broad group of stakeholders, targeted efforts will be made to engage a core group of audiences through a variety of tactics designed to specifically connect with each group's values. Target audiences include:

- General public
- IBCC and Basin Roundtables members
- Broader water community
- Constituent groups
- Policy makers
- Key community groups and opinion leaders
- News Media

STRATEGY

The multi-pronged, proactive approach outlined below embraces the local nature of water and leverages existing efforts and forums to the largest extent possible to build support for the CWP from the ground up.

Across all audiences, the strategy involves an initial push focused first on education and gradually turns up the volume over time towards deeper engagement and understanding.

Elements of the strategy include:

Basin Roundtable Engagement

The Basin Roundtables are a ripe opportunity for grassroots engagement and members have the potential to act as ambassadors of the CWP in the communities they represent. In addition to regular CWCB attendance and participation at BRT meetings, we will work together with the BRTs to develop communications collateral and messaging that they can disseminate and use in their conversations about the CWP in their communities. Part of this work will happen through the existing Public Education, Participation, and Outreach (PEPO) Workgroup. Basin Roundtable education liaisons are also creating opportunities to share information regarding the Basin Implementation Plan development process and how it relates to the CWP.

Grassroots Stakeholder Group Outreach

We will build a database of key community, civic, and water organizations (e.g., Chambers of commerce, Colorado Municipal League, Water Congress, regional advocacy groups, others) with established communications networks (websites, newsletters, email updates, etc.) that we can partner with to distribute CWP materials. We will engage with these groups on the development of the plan and to help get information into the hands of their constituents. These groups also present important speaking opportunities that will be incorporated into a speaking opportunity schedule.

Public Comment

Opportunities for public input will be emphasized in all communications materials related to the CWP. A public comment form will be built into the website, and comments will be tracked and shared with the Basin Roundtables and other key groups as appropriate to consider in their decision making. Members of the public will also be encouraged to engage directly with their Basin Roundtables.

Media Relations

CWCB has an immediate opportunity to work with the press to clearly articulate what the CWP is and isn't before the plan is defined by others. It will be critical to establish an initial foundation of knowledge and awareness in the media with an immediate push through op-eds, news releases and other means, and to follow that with a steady drum beat of information. Subsequent proactive pushes tied to key milestones will follow. Official spokespeople will be designated to ensure our message remains clear and consistent.

DNR/CWCB/IBCC Leadership Roadshow

Meetings with DNR/CWCB/IBCC leadership will go a long way in increasing understanding of and hopefully building support for the CWP in the water community. We will identify a number of key organizations and individuals (e.g. local governments, environmental groups, policy makers, etc.) throughout the state for one-on-one meetings or group briefings. Some of these meetings could potentially be accomplished through members of the Speakers Bureau (see below) if appropriate.

Speakers Bureau

In coordination with the IBCC and the BRTs, we will identify a small group of geographically diverse spokespeople who can speak about the CWP in various forums across the state. This should include engaging our key partners (e.g. agricultural and municipal water providers) wherever possible. We will prepare a master calendar of events in order to capitalize on existing opportunities to reach key stakeholders. Efforts will be made to line-up speaking assignments and prepare appropriate materials and trainings for spokespeople.

Branding

We will develop an overarching brand (logo, templates, and consistent look and feel) that reflects the CWP's purpose and values. This will be an early-action item that will be carried through all collateral materials produced for the CWP.

Digital Engagement

We will develop a robust online presence for the CWP where stakeholders can go to get information, sign up for updates and get involved with the process. This strategy includes a CWP-specific website, active social media channels and targeted email campaigns tied to key milestones.

Social Media

Facebook and Twitter accounts have been created and will be integrated into the CWP website. These social media tools provide an informal and interactive space for CWP dialogue and exchange of ideas. The accounts will be monitored and administered by CWCB staff who will proactively post relevant information and participate in the conversation. The accounts will be launched and promoted through a variety of channels including the website and email campaigns.

Key Meeting Outreach and Follow-Up

As appropriate, targeted pre-event outreach and follow-up will be made to drive stakeholder attendance to important events and create opportunities for additional interaction and dialogue.

Communications Plan Management

This communications plan requires a strong and coordinated team effort to be effective. Regular strategy sessions with the CWCB team will be critical to keeping our strategy on track while remaining flexible to respond to inevitable changes in the communications landscape.

PRODUCTS

Print Materials

We will develop a suite of printed collateral materials (Fact Sheets, FAQs, Brochures, White Papers, etc.) based on communications needs that will be targeted and updated as necessary. The materials will be made available for download on the CWP website and distributed as appropriate through other channels.

Digital Materials

As another early-action item, we will develop a comprehensive CWP website that showcases the current work of the CWP and provides important plan information, materials and background. The website will be updated as necessary to ensure timeliness. A mailing list sign-up option will be included, and branded templates will be developed for email campaigns at key milestones.

Media Materials

A basic CWP press kit will be developed containing many of the print materials outlined above. We will also develop milestone-specific press releases, op-eds and other necessary press materials to support communications goals.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Since the CWP will be built from the ground up, our success depends on our ability to effectively engage with each basin through a variety of outreach tools. The following targets and metrics will be used to measure the success of our communications effort over the next six months. These targets will be updated as the development of the CWP and our strategy progresses.

- At least one op-ed, editorial board meeting and CWP presentation to a broad-based community group occurs in each basin
- All appropriate CWP materials supplied to the Basin Roundtables and other identified groups are being distributed through their respective networks (e.g., PEPO network, local Chambers of Commerce and other community organizations)
- The website and Basin Roundtable meetings are being utilized as public comment mechanisms. Comments are being received from each basin and shared with the IBCC and Basin Roundtables around the state.