

South Platte River Urban Waters Partners (SPRUWP)
May 18, 2021, 1 pm – 3 pm
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
Quarterly Meeting Summary – FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Juliana Archuleta, Lynn Baca, Bill Battaglin, Jennifer Charles, Stacey Eriksen, Sherry Fountain, Chloe Lewis, Steve Lundt, Steve O’Dorisio, Mike McHugh, Jordan Parman, Davis Rausch, Donny Roush, Weston Toll, Scott Williamson, Alison Witheridge, and Justin Zakoren

Facilitation: Izzy Sofio and Samuel Wallace

ACTION ITEMS

All SPRUWP Partners	Reach out to Samuel Wallace if you are interested in joining the SPRUWP Strategic Planning Committee.
Samuel Wallace	Distribute presentation information and partner resources to SPRUWP partners.
Stacey Eriksen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look into the protocol around SPRUWP’s ability to endorse the Statewide Water Education Action Plan program and other similar programs. • Share CSU’s Stormwater Outreach position’s contact information with Steve Lundt.
Steve Lundt	Share phosphorus-free fertilizer informational pamphlets with Samuel Wallace to distribute to SPRUWP partners.

PARTNER INTRODUCTIONS AND UPDATES

Meeting participants shared introductions and provided relevant updates. Key points from the updates are below.

Adams County Stormwater Division

The Adams County Stormwater Division is working on a Brownfield Recovery Land Program and is searching for organizations that can help the County with community outreach. Any organizations interested should reach out to Juliana Archuleta.

Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)

CSFS continues to work on fire mitigation in the Upper South Platte watershed with the support of Denver Water’s Forests to Faucets program, the Forest Restoration and Wildlife Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) Grant Program, and a variety of other grants.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA completed Water Quality Assessment Tool (WQAT) User Guide, and they will put it on the SPRUWP website soon. The WQAT will pull live water quality data on the South Platte River and incorporate it into the interactive platform. Additionally, the tool will provide stories connected to specific actions that individuals can take to make a difference in water quality.

Aurora Water

Aurora Water completed a wetlands evaluation in Aurora, Colorado, in conjunction with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). The digital report can be found at this [link](#).

Earth Force

- Earth Force recently hosted the organization's annual summit focused on natural hazard mitigation. The summit ([link](#)) had a great turnout from students and teachers across Colorado. Earth Force encourages teachers and students to learn about natural hazards in their communities and identify solutions to their local natural hazards.
- Earth Force has connections to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which allows the organization to provide micro-grants to students for projects to address solutions to natural hazards within their communities.

City of Denver Public Works

Beginning April 1, the new Denver MS4 stormwater permits went into effect. The city is working with the Water Quality Control Division on administering the permit. There was a proposed modification to the permit, and public comments are open until mid-June on the Water Quality Control Division website.

Water Education Colorado (WECO)

WECO is offering a webinar on May 26 about providing necessary water supplies to the growing Front Range region. Additionally, registration is open for the following events:

- [WECO's Water Fluency Program](#)
- [WECO's Arkansas River Basin Tour](#)

American Water Resources Association (AWRA)

AWRA is hosting a virtual conference from July 19 – 21. The conference theme is connecting land and water for healthy communities. There will be a special session on the South Platte River organized by Bill Battaglin.

Metro Wastewater Reclamation District (MWRD)

- In January 2021, MWRD completed treatment plant updates that are leading to significant reductions to phosphorus concentrations in the South Platte River downstream of the Robert W. Hite Treatment Facility discharge.
- The organization is currently creating and distributing quarterly informational pamphlets about emerging water quality issues. Samuel Wallace will distribute the most recent pamphlet about salinity to SPRUWP partners.

PHOSPHORUS-FREE FERTILIZER COALITION EFFORT PRESENTATION

Steve Lundt, Metro Wastewater Reclamation District, presented on the phosphorus-free fertilizer coalition effort. Key points from his presentation are below.

- Triggered by Total Maximum Daily Loads (TDML) measurements and the Barr Lake Water Association (BMW), the statewide phosphorus-free fertilizer effort targets sources of phosphorus that contribute to high levels of nutrients in Colorado watersheds. All-purpose bagged fertilizer (with phosphorus) is one source that is relatively easy to tackle and is an effort that works throughout the state.
- Twelve states in the U.S. address this issue with legislation. Rather than taking a top-down legislative approach, this effort is based on education and outreach to inform and educate the public on the issue.
- The first step of this effort is to educate and influence individuals to use phosphorus-free fertilizers for lawn and garden maintenance to improve local water quality and prevent events that the public is aware of, like algal blooms and fish kills.

- One way to improved water quality and reduced algal blooms and fish kills is to reduce phosphorus inputs. The initiative plans to do this through public education and outreach about phosphorus-free fertilizer and essential nutrient-reducing lawn care tips. The initiative focuses on promoting phosphorus-free fertilizer for users, sellers, and makers of fertilizer statewide.
- There are fertilizer brands that are phosphorus-free, although most of these brands do not advertise that the fertilizer is phosphorus-free. For example, Scott's and Ace Hardware's all-purpose fertilizers are phosphorus-free. The coalition hopes to promote the use of phosphorus-free advertisements and logos on bags in the future.
- The states that regulate phosphorus-free fertilizer via legislation include Minnesota, Maine, Wisconsin, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Vermont, Washington, and Virginia. Although Colorado's effort is not legislatively based, these states are still valuable examples for the Colorado initiative to reference.

Public Outreach – Communication is Key

- In an effort to build partnerships and attract participation in the effort, the coalition is approaching utilities, cities, counties, regional agencies, stormwater agencies, state and federal agencies, fisheries, lake associations, watershed groups, environmental groups, the tourism industry, landscaping industry, manufacturers, agricultural groups, and retail and garden stores for their support and participation.
- Thus far, the coalition has support from the BMW Association, Colorado Lake and Reservoir Management Association (CLRMA), the City and County of Boulder, and the South Platte Metro Land Conservancy (SPMLC).
- The BMW Association funded an ad campaign that will run on Colorado radio stations to promote the initiative. The initiative also uses H2O Only campaign materials, which are accessible to everyone ([link here](#)). One H2O Only advertisement they use is known as the "Attack of the Algae." The Coalition will continue to pursue additional ad campaigns as part of its public outreach efforts.
- The Coalition plans to distribute resources on fertilizer and lawn care to the public. For example, Lundt altered a list of a New England phosphorus-free fertilizer coalition's "Dos and Don'ts" around fertilizer use to fit Colorado's unique geographic and environmental characteristics. The Coalition is in the process of developing a website, which will eventually house all the information and resources in one place for easy access.
- If anyone is interested in supporting the coalition or has additional questions, they should reach out to Steve Lundt.

Clarifying Discussion

SPRUWP partners discussed information from the presentation and ways to support this effort. Key points from the discussion are below.

- Approximately half of the phosphorus found in Barr Lake comes from urban sources, while the other half of phosphorus comes from agricultural runoff. The phosphorus-free fertilizer effort is one part of a larger-scale implementation plan geared towards urban landscapes and activities. Barr Lake requires a dramatic reduction in phosphorus levels, as do other water systems in Colorado. While the phosphorus-free fertilizer coalition effort focuses on urban areas, phosphorus coming from agricultural runoff must be addressed in the future as well.
- The Colorado Stormwater Council (CSC) planned to approach industries that rely on fertilizers and other nutrient-rich materials, like landscaping companies, golf courses, and other industries. The coalition planned to meet with the Stormwater Council to discuss the

effort soon. Juliana Archuleta, a CSC member, would like to join efforts with Steve Lundt to reach out to industry representatives.

- Ice removal solutions also impact water quality. Some of the states with legislation addressing fertilizers also address ice removal solutions. Those states would be good examples for Colorado to reference when ice removal becomes of interest.
- The Colorado State University (CSU) Stormwater Center has a staff member dedicated to outreach. They work with landscaping organizations now on similar efforts, particularly industries involved in green space maintenance.
- CSU does a great deal of work collecting soil samples across the state. Their soil collection expresses that there is naturally a sufficient amount of phosphorus in Colorado's topsoil. Most areas of Colorado do not need to use additional phosphorus, as there is an adequate amount to support healthy lawns.

STATEWIDE WATER EDUCATION ACTION PLAN AND PRESENTATION

Scott Williamson, WECO, presented on the Statewide Water Education Action Plan (SWEAP). Key points from his presentation are below.

- The Colorado Water Plan and the Water Educator Network (WEN) called for a shared vision for water education in Colorado. Chapter 9.5 of the Colorado Water Plan is called the "Outreach, Education and Public Engagement" chapter. SWEAP is the shared vision for water education in Colorado. SWEAP's mission is to educate and empower Coloradans to take an active role in their communities and make informed decisions around water-related issues. SWEAP aims to educate and empower Coloradans through engaging outreach and education efforts.
- SWEAP was established in 2019. The Colorado Water Plan Engagement and Innovation Grant and the ThinkWater Grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture fund SWEAP. The SWEAP coalition has liaisons in each of the nine basins in Colorado, including representatives from NGOs, governments, universities, and WEN members.
- SWEAP is a five-year plan (2020 – 2025) meant to strengthen local and regional water education activities to advance sustainable water goals laid out in the Colorado Water Plan by 2050.
- SWEAP identified the education continuum, which are types of outcomes related to water education and outreach. The continuum recognizes that a teacher, state legislature, scientist, etc., are all water educators and may use different strategies to promote water education. Additionally, the continuum recognizes that these different strategies are all valuable and necessary in improving water education throughout the state. The four types of outcomes identified in the education continuum are below:
 - Awareness: Awareness is the first step toward engagement. Water educators use public relations strategies to raise awareness.
 - Knowledge and Skills: Knowledge is required for well-informed decisions. Skills are required for effective discourse. Water educators use education strategies to increase knowledge and teach skills.
 - Behavior Change: Behavior changes are required for increased engagement. Water educators use social marketing strategies to encourage behavior changes.
 - Systems Change: Systems change is required for balanced solutions and empowered communities. Water educators use systems thinking strategies to ensure citizens help shape systems change.
- Each aspect of the continuum represents a category to place water education and outreach outcomes. Outcomes will be unique to the several river basins in Colorado. An example of an awareness outcome is the proportion of Coloradans in each river basin that can identify

how water supports their life and the threats to and potential solutions for a sustainable water supply. An example of a systems change outcome would be water decision-making bodies are increasingly represented by the demographic makeup of the area they serve.

- SWEAP's framework identifies a vision, goal, six critical water concepts, and guiding principles. This information is on the [SWEAP website](#).
- Since SWEAP's implementation in January of 2020, SWEAP published an executive summary and created a website, brand, and logo. WECO uses SWEAP strategies as the basis for all professional development with WEN. WECO identified metrics to support the 10 SWEAP outcomes and recently organized a task force to evaluate those metrics. A task force of educators across the state used SWEAP's Critical Water Concepts to identify connections with Colorado Academics Standards for Science and Social Studies to include more water education in traditional education.
- SWEAP offered a year-long Professional Development Unit (PDU) in collaboration with Denver Public Schools (DPS) and Denver Water. Teachers in the Denver Metro area, representing eight different schools and various grade levels and subjects, dedicated 45 hours to this course to learn how to teach about water issues in the Denver area and the state in their classrooms.
- On June 28 and 29, 2021, SWEAP will be in Basalt, Colorado, for a two-day symposium focused on awareness strategies.
- The following are objectives for Phase II of SWEAP (July 2021 – June 2023):
 - Continue to coordinate the implementation of SWEAP while also empowering WEN to take the lead on that initiative.
 - Evaluate and implement protocols to measure water education's impact on the Colorado Water Plan and at the SWEAP program level.
 - Develop educational resources for youth and adult audiences and connect implementers with funding sources to implement SWEAP strategies.
 - Increase public awareness through various outreach and initiatives. WECO will begin looking for a management plan for increasing public awareness on a trimmed budget. If any SPRUWP partners have budget ideas, they should reach out to Scott Williamson.
- Lastly, SWEAP gained the support of several organizations in its first year of implementation (Phase 1). SPRUWP partners may take the SWEAP survey to provide their desired level of involvement with and support of SWEAP going forward. The SWEAP survey can be found at this [link](#).

Clarifying Questions

SPRUWP partners asked several clarifying questions. Questions are in italics, and corresponding answers are in plain text.

Does SWEAP have specific goals or objectives to involve underserved communities and people of color in SWEAP initiatives?

Yes, that is something SWEAP considered at the strategy level during the development stage of SWEAP. SWEAP encourages outreach and support to underserved communities and people of color through mentorships and internships with the hopes of bringing diverse representation into the workforce and the water decision-making processes. SWEAP's tenth outcome specifically speaks to this effort. SWEAP wants community members to be involved in their community's water decision-making process. Additionally, SWEAP would like to gauge how underserved community members feel being part of the process and measure data by demographic groups to identify the progress of these efforts.

Is SWEAP working with any tribes or on any tribal lands?

There are members of the coalition who regularly engage with the tribes in southwestern Colorado, but at this time, there is not tribal representation connected to SWEAP or its development. Fort Lewis College serves a high population of tribal undergraduates. SWEAP is thinking about establishing programs with Fort Lewis College, like an undergraduate water leaders program, to begin connecting with the tribal communities in Colorado.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY RESULTS

Samuel Wallace presented the preliminary results of the SPRUWP strategic planning survey. The survey's purpose was to gather feedback from SPRUWP partners on how to improve SPRUWP meetings and activities and make them more current and relevant to your organization. As of May 18, 17 people responded to the survey. The survey will stay open until Friday, May 21, to collect more responses. Key points are below.

General Questions and Most Popular Answers

- What about SPRUWP is currently working for you?
 - Partner updates,
 - Networking and connecting with other people in the watershed, and
 - Event and grant opportunity updates work for the majority of SPRUWP partners.
- What about SPRUWP has been most helpful to you?
 - Connecting with colleagues,
 - Hearing and learning from partner updates, and
 - Receiving information about opportunities to collaborate with other agencies and organizations is most helpful to the majority of SPRUWP partners.
- What about SPRUWP would you like to see change?
 - Greater access to SPRUWP documents and resources (i.e., strategic plan and contact lists),
 - In-person meetings and improved collaboration,
 - Improved reporting and identify achievable outcomes for the Partnership,
 - Increased representation from local jurisdictions, and
 - More actions, projects, and activities are some things the majority of SPRUWP partners would like to see change.

Meeting Questions and Answers

- Does the current meeting schedule work for you?
 - 81% YES
 - 19% NO
- What are your thoughts on the structure of the quarterly meetings? (e.g., partner updates, presentations, or general meeting format)
 - The current meeting format is working well.
 - There should be more field experiences and site visits.
 - There are mixed perspectives on partner updates.
 - There should be more consistent updates from the committees at quarterly meetings.
- What is your preference for in-person and/or virtual meetings moving forward (post COVID-19 restrictions)?

- A majority of SPRUWP partners expressed interest in hybrid meetings moving forward. About 20% of survey respondents preferred in-person, and about 15% preferred virtual.

Priorities and Partners

- Are we missing any key priorities?
 - SPRUWP should identify the links between each individual/organization roles, focus on engaging community members (including young people), revisit and reflect upon the founding goals/outcomes of SPRUWP, focus on environmental justice, focus on climate change, focus on green infrastructure, and learn about changes to MS4 permits.
- Are we missing any key partners?
 - SPRUWP is missing municipalities, counties, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Colorado Watershed Assembly, regulated industries, agricultural partners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the CSU SPUR Campus representatives.
 - SPRUWP should reengage missing partners like Water for People and the River Network.
- Is there a need for any additional SPRUWP committees? If so, what should the committee be?
 - This depends on the results of the strategic planning session and if anyone is interested in championing the committee.
- If SPRUWP partners are interested in participating in the SPUWP Strategic Planning Committee, they should reach out to Samuel Wallace. The Committee will likely meet three to four times for three to four hours.

NEXT STEPS

- The next quarterly meeting will take place on August 18, 2021. SPRUWP partners should expect to hear presentations from the Army Corps of Engineers on their South Platte study and the City and County of Denver on the South Platte River needs assessment.
- If the meeting has an in-person option, there will also be a virtual meeting option for those who prefer a virtual setting.
- Peak Facilitation Group will distribute the meeting summary to SPRUWP partners and copies of the presentation.