

South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership (SPRUWP)
Full Partners Meeting
August 16, 2022, 1:00PM to 3:00PM
Meeting Summary - FINAL

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Tessa Adkins, Lynn Baca, Josh Baker, Ryan Banta, Lauren Berent, Sylvia Bierman, Casey Davenhill, John Davenport, Jim Dorsch, Sherry Fountain, Allen Gallamore, Nolan Hahn, Rachel Harrington, Peter Ismert, Cathy McCague, Mike McHugh, Audrey Miles-Cherney, Susan Newton, Jordan Parman, David Rausch, Gene Reetz, Polly Reetz, Donny Roush, Taylor Ruffin, Erickson Smith, Melissa Toering, Scott Williamson, and Joe Zell

Facilitation: Samuel Wallace

PARTNER UPDATES

Meeting participants provided updates. Their updates are summarized below.

City and County of Denver Public Works

The City and County of Denver Public Works department is engaging in the Water 2022 campaign and the phosphorus-free fertilizer initiative. They are tabling booths at local farmers' markets, and they will be at Barks at the Park, an event held at Coors Field. They will also be hosting a fishing day at Overland Pond.

US Geological Survey (USGS)

The USGS is working with the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment (DDPHE), the US Forest Service (USFS), and other stakeholders to assess the geomorphology of the South Platte River before, during, and after the implementation of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) restoration activities. They will assess the geomorphology upstream, within, and downstream of the restoration project. They will begin monitoring soon to set baseline conditions.

Water Education Colorado

Water Education Colorado continues to host events for the Water 2022 campaign. They are hosting Water 2022 book clubs. They are also hosting mini-tours throughout the different river basins; the next mini-tour will be in the Rio Grande River Basin.

Adams County

The Water Quality Control Commission is hosting a series of community meetings to hear input on antidegradation designations for three segments (COSPUS15, COSPMS01A, and COSPCL15) in the South Platte River and Clear Creek River. Adams County is participating in those meetings.

Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners

The Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners are hosting the Cherry Creek Watershed Conference – Follow the Nutrients on Friday, September 23. The conference is an all-day event that will include technical presentations and a half-day tour. The focus of the conference is on nutrient management and innovative reclamation projects.

Sustaining Colorado Watershed Conference

The 2022 Sustaining Colorado Watershed conference will occur from October 11 to October 13 in Avon. The theme of this year's conference is *Bridging Connections: Learning from the Past, Investing in the Future*.

COLORADO RIVER PLAN AND SOUTH PLATTE BASIN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PRESENTATION

Casey Davenhill, South Platte Roundtable Public Education, Participation, and Outreach Committee, presented on the Colorado River Plan and South Platte Basin Implementation Plan. A copy of her slide deck is accessible at [this link](#). Her presentation is summarized below.

- Casey Davenhill showed a video that the South Platte Basin Roundtable made about the river. The video is accessible on [the South Platte Roundtable webpage](#).
- In 2005, the Colorado State Assembly passed the Water for the 21st Century Act, establishing the basin roundtables. The legislation created nine basin roundtables, which act as forums for a diverse set of stakeholders to have difficult conversations related to the challenges of meeting future water demands, protecting economies, and protecting community values. The purpose of the roundtables is to encourage locally driven collaborative solutions to water supply challenges.
- The roundtables are organized around the eight major river basins in the state, with a unique roundtable designated to the Denver Metro subregion.
- The roundtables operate openly; the basin roundtable information is available on the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) website.
- The CWCB, with input from the basin roundtables, released the first iteration of the Colorado Water Plan in 2015. They recently updated it. The revised plan is open for public comment until September 30.
- Around 80% of Colorado's precipitation occurs on the West Slope, while 90% of Colorado's population lives east of the Continental Divide. Each year, 27 tunnels and ditches transport 500,000 acre-feet of water from the west to the east. Transmountain diversions account for one-third of the water used in the South Platte River Basin. The state of Colorado has achieved a 5% reduction in water usage despite rapid growth.
- It is estimated that Colorado will have a 740,000 acre-foot gap in water supply by the year 2050.
- Each basin roundtable created a basin implementation plan (BIP). The South Platte BIP identifies four strategies:
 - Meet the municipal supply gap
 - Protect irrigated agriculture
 - Protect and enhance watersheds
 - Implement projects
- The South Platte BIP identifies 282 total projects. Of the 282 projects, 39 are tier 1 projects, and 54 are multi-use projects. The South Platte Basin Roundtable added 185 new projects in 2020. The total estimated cost for project implementation is \$9.8 billion.
- The South Platte and Metro Basin Roundtables manage a Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) to allocate to projects that meet certain guidelines and criteria. The South Platte Basin Roundtable webpage has a tool where users can explore the projects in the South Platte and Metro basins funded by their respective WSRF. The mapping tool includes over 400 projects.
- Examples of funded projects include fish passage projects and irrigation infrastructure efficiency improvements.
- WSRF applicants must go through the basin roundtables to request funding. WSRF grants are for planning and implementing projects. WSRF grants tend to be allocated in smaller amounts. The goal of the WSRF is to help partners get started on projects and eventually request more funding from other sources. State and local government entities (municipalities, districts, enterprises, counties, and state agencies), covered entities, and

private entities (mutual ditch companies, non-profits, and partnerships) can apply for funding. Federal entities are encouraged to work with local entities to request funding.

Clarifying Questions

Meeting participants asked clarifying questions about the Colorado Water Plan and South Platte BIP. Their questions are indicated below in italics, with the corresponding responses in plain text.

Has the South Platte Basin or Metro Basin Roundtable reached out to homeowner associations (HOAs) to discuss their requirements around landscaping and fertilizer application?

The basin roundtables have not reached out to HOAs. The Colorado General Assembly recently passed a bill to provide \$2 million to a turf replacement program. Some municipalities, like Aurora, have ordinances to discourage the use of high water turf grass. The Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado also have a certificate program for maintaining low-water landscapes.

What sections of the Colorado Water Plan update would be most relevant for SPRUWP partners to review and provide comments on?

The entire Colorado Water Plan should be relevant to SPRUWP partners. If partners want to focus their review, SPRUWP partners should look at the specific, measurable goals in each category.

Group Discussion

The South Platte River video is very informative and helpful.

AURORA WATER SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PRESENTATION

Mike McHugh, Aurora Water, presented on Aurora Water's source water protection efforts. His presentation is summarized below.

- Aurora Water began recognizing the connection between fire and water supply following the Buffalo Creek Fire and Hayman Fire. Following those fires, the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership formed to address the challenges facing the forests, including fire, insects, disease, and floods.
- The USFS and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a report from the Pinchot Institute on protecting Front Range forested watersheds from high-severity wildfires in 2007. Following this report, the Watershed Wildfire Protection Work Group formed and still operates today. This Work Group identified four to five million acres along the Front Range at risk from high-severity wildfire. The Work Group put together a plan titled *Protecting Critical Watersheds in Colorado from Wildfire: A Technical Approach to Watershed Assessment and Prioritization*. This plan became a model on how to prioritize watersheds for treatment.
- Aurora Water recognizes the complexity of watershed and forest health. Aurora Water's source water protection plan is based on four high-level concepts: focus, collaboration, adaptability, and resilience.
- Aurora Water has several principles outlined in its source water protection plan:
 - Forested headwaters must be restored as a pathway to water security and protection against climate change
 - Forest projects should occur at a landscape scale.
 - Treatments should support forest treatments and protect the wildlife-urban interface.
 - Critical watersheds must be prioritized to protect water resources.
 - Forests must remain forests, including the reforestation of burned areas.
 - Durable and sustainable markets for utilizing long-lasting wood products should be promoted.

- Strategies should be informed by science and adaptive management.
- Forest restoration projects should optimize environmental benefits, including using existing roads when possible.
- Cross-boundary solutions are necessary as fires do not recognize institutional boundaries.
- Aurora Water will acknowledge the costs and benefits of action versus inaction.
- Aurora Water draws water from the Colorado, Arkansas, and South Platte River Basins. Their watersheds of interest stretch from Cheyenne to Trinidad. Aurora Water brings the majority of its water supply through Strontia Springs Reservoir.
- Aurora Water identified priority watersheds after assessing wildfire risk on the landscape. They generated over 80 maps, including maps on vegetation cover type, expected flame length, ruggedness, road density, erodibility, soil type, ecosystem sensitivity, 303(d) listings, transportation, land ownership, and mining.
- Partnerships are very important to Aurora Water. They work with the Clear Creek Collaborative, Upper South Platte Partnership, and Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative. They also partner with other water providers, like Denver Water.

SPRUWP UPDATES

Samuel Wallace, Peak Facilitation Group and SPRUWP ambassador, provided updates on SPRUWP. His comments are summarized below.

- The SPRUWP Science and Data Committee is updating the Water Quality Assessment Tool to pull live water quality data from the EPA's Water Quality Portal and Colorado Data Sharing Network.
- The SPRUWP Education and Outreach Committee received an update on the Lincoln Hills Cares South Platte River Advisory Youth Council.
- Samuel Wallace is working on organizing SPRUWP funding workshops to connect SPRUWP partners around upcoming funding opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

The next meeting of the Full Partners will take place on Tuesday, November 15, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.