



**2023 COLORADO WATER CONGRESS ANNUAL CONVENTION
FOCUS ON POLICY**

**Hyatt Regency Aurora Denver Conference Center
January 25 – 27, 2023**

WORKSHOPS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

8:30 to 11:00

Around the State with Colorado Division Engineers

Moderator: Kevin Rein, Colorado State Engineer

Colorado Division of Water Resources Leadership and Division Engineers

Our popular session with our Colorado Division Engineers will be back again this year. This workshop will be an excellent opportunity to learn about important water administration topics in each basin.

PFAS

Moderator: Gabe Racz, Vranesh and Raisch & CWC Water Quality Committee Chair

Nathan Moore, Colorado Water Quality Control Division

David Dani, Colorado Water Quality Control Division

John Duggan, Colorado Water Quality Control Division

Todd Brewer, Aurora Water

Ana Schwab, Best Best & Krieger

Andy Safulko, Brown and Caldwell

Katie Koplitz, Metro Water Recovery

PFAS (“forever chemicals”) are widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. Because of their widespread use and their persistence in the environment, many PFAS are found in the blood of people and animals all over the world and are present at low levels in a variety of food products and in the environment. PFAS are found in water, air, fish, and soil at locations across the nation and the globe. There are thousands of PFAS chemicals, and they are found in many different consumer, commercial, and industrial products.

The EPA Council on PFAS developed and is working through a three-year PFAS Strategic Roadmap that specifies a whole-of-government approach to address PFAS (and PFOA). The roadmap sets timelines by which EPA plans to take specific actions and commits to bolder new policies to safeguard public health, protect the environment, and hold polluters accountable.

EPA is developing a proposed National Drinking Water Regulation for publication by the end of 2022. EPA anticipates finalizing the rule by the end of 2023.

States, Tribes, territories, drinking water utilities, and community leaders that find PFAS in their drinking water are encouraged to take steps to inform residents, undertake additional monitoring to assess the level, scope, and source of contamination, and examine steps to reduce exposure. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law dedicates \$1

billion to reduce PFAS and other emerging contaminants in drinking water.

PFAS is a complicated matter with many facets. This workshop will be a great opportunity to get your questions answered (as best we can). We will boost your understanding of the matter, what is being done, and how you may be affected.

Funding Infrastructure with PL-566

Moderators: Julie O’Shea, Farmers Conservation Alliance & Greg Peterson, Colorado Ag Water Alliance

Dave Kanzer, Colorado River Water Conservation District

Nathan Bell, Bell Consulting

Mely Whiting, Trout Unlimited

Amy Moyer, Colorado River Water Conservation District

Jill Ozarski, Walton Family Foundation

Matt Stearns, CWCB

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law infuses significant funding for projects administered under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566). The Natural Resources Conservation Service can direct funding to help local organizations and governments plan and implement infrastructure projects such as flood prevention and damage reduction, development of rural water supply sources, erosion and sediment control, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, wetland creation and restoration, and increased recreational opportunities.

The Colorado Ag Water Alliance, Colorado Cattlemen’s, and the Farmers Conservation Alliance have been working together to organize different groups throughout Colorado to apply to the PL-566 Watershed Program to access Federal funding for large-scale infrastructure projects. There are a few dozen projects navigating the process throughout Colorado, with each one eligible for \$25 million. This workshop, with sponsors for each project, NRCS, and other interested parties will discuss pathways to moving all these projects forward. The focus of the workshop is for different project sponsors (and people interested in the program) to “show and tell” their projects, learn from each other, and discuss how we are all trying to identify matching funds for our projects.

The Water Funding Marketplace

What Federal and State entities have funding available by loan or grant for water infrastructure – water, wastewater, stormwater; water recycling; water conservation; leak detection; irrigation system improvements; stream restoration; flood mitigation; forest fire mitigation/forest health; data collection; dam safety/storage restrictions; etc. Entities that have received funding will discuss their experiences and give tips on how to navigate the system. Schedule a 15-minute session during the conference to get technical assistance from experts on how to access funding.

2023 COLORADO WATER CONGRESS ANNUAL CONVENTION

All sessions in Aurora Ballroom unless otherwise shown

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Opening General Session

Welcome

Travis Smith, CWC Board President and National Wild Turkey Federation

New Era in Water Conservation

Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman

Aurora's new water conservation ordinance will eliminate spray irrigation in medians, using cool-season turf on new golf courses, and turf in landscapes not actively used for recreation. We will hear the story of how the ordinance came into being and expected outcomes.

Municipal Water Conservation Policy Perspectives

Moderator: Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman

Panelists

Ft. Collins Mayor Jeni Arndt

Grand Junction Mayor Anna Stout

Alamosa Mayor Ty Coleman

Following up on our session from the summer conference, we will hear from Colorado mayors regarding the role of water conservation in their water supply planning. Many water providers who draw water from the Colorado River are considering a water conservation memorandum of understanding pledging to continue water conservation programs, introduce new programs to reduce nonfunctional turf by 30%, and increase water recycling programs. Are similar measures likely even if their communities do not rely on the Colorado River?

2:00 Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority Board Meeting

Conference Room VI

2:00 Break for Concurrent Sessions – Block A

2:15 Concurrent Session A1

Aurora Ballroom

Post-fire Watershed Restoration

Lessons Learned from East Troublesome and Cameron Peak Fires

Esther Vincent, Northern Water

Concurrent Session A2

Conference Room I

Colorado River and San Juan Recovery Implementation Programs

Julie Stahli, US Fish & Wildlife Service/Upper CO River Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Concurrent Session A3

Conference Room II

Colorado Airborne Snow Measurement Program

Taylor Winchell, Denver Water

Jeff Deems, Airborne Snow Observatories

2:45 Break

3:00 General Session 2

3:00 Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser

3:15 Colorado's Population Growth Trends

Elizabeth Garner, Colorado State Demographer

3:45 Colorado River Negotiations

Colorado's View on the Status of the Colorado River Negotiations

Becky Mitchell, Colorado River Commissioner for Colorado & CWCB Director

4:15 Colorado Political Trends

Moderator/Speaker: Floyd Ciruli, Ciruli and Associates

Panelists

Mike Dino, Squire Patton Boggs

Dick Wadhams, Republican strategist

What was the 2022 political surprise of the year? Will mayoral races be the big political story in 2023? Will the large Democratic legislative majority affect the ideological/partisan shape of legislation in 2023? Are there any restraints on Democratic legislative priorities, especially of the far left? Can Republicans have influence? Does the changing political leadership (mostly Democrats) among Colorado River states affect the possibility for new agreements on saving or sharing water? Can the current Colorado political distribution of power address the urban-rural divide? Will Joe Biden and Donald Trump be the presidential nominees in 2024? If not, who? Will Governor Polis be a factor in the 2024 national race?

5:30 POND Reception

Casino Night

Grab a beverage and light snack and join POND for their annual event. This year, POND is breaking with tradition and announcing their reception activity in advance - a casino night. Many of the Water Congress Board members will serve as dealers!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26

7:30 General Session 3

State Affairs

Moderator: Peggy E. Montañó, Trout Raley and CWC State Affairs Chair

Sen. Dylan Roberts, Sen. Cleave Simpson, Rep. Karen McCormick (Zoom), Rep. Marc Catlin

Our annual session with Colorado legislators. What are the key issues for 2023? How does the Water Congress advocate effectively for water interests in the Colorado Legislature?

8:15 Federal Affairs

Moderators: Christine Arbogast, and Andy Colosimo, CWC Federal Affairs Co-Chairs

Speaker: *Rosy Brummette, Senator Michael Bennet Policy Advisor*

What are Colorado's federal priorities and how does the Water Congress take care of our members' interests at the federal level? Case study on the relevant titles in the Farm Bill: What are the primary programs of interest to Coloradans. How does the Colorado ag community benefit from the Farm Bill? Are climate, forestry, watershed health considered?

9:00 Break

9:15 Governor Jared Polis

9:30 General Session 4

Beyond the Blacktop

Who Speaks for Agriculture?

Moderators: *Travis Smith, CWC President & National Wild Turkey Federation and Jim Yahn, North Sterling Irrigation District*

Speakers:

Don Ament, Former Colorado Ag Commissioner and Colorado Legislator

Marc Catlin, Colorado Representative

Tony Haas, Las Animas County Commissioner

James Henderson, Colorado Farm Bureau Vice President

Erin Karney, Colorado Cattlemen's Association Executive Vice President

A candid conversation regarding the future of Colorado's Irrigated Agriculture from a rural perspective. The challenges, benefits, and opportunities facing Colorado's agriculture communities are not always seen from the highway. Colorado's Ag Water Policy and Ag Industry leaders will share their concerns and solutions on today's hot topics ranging from rural inflation, rural stress, climate change impacts, water and food security, urban perspective of rural communities, benefits of irrigated ag. Who speaks for agriculture and is anybody listening?

How can Colorado Water Congress ensure the voice of the Ag community is heard?

11:00 Break for Concurrent Sessions – Block B

11:15 Concurrent Session B1

Aurora Ballroom

The Chimney Hollow Reservoir Project

Joe Donnelly, Northern Water

Kevin Lock, Northern Water

The Chimney Hollow Reservoir Project is under construction. It is a collaboration between nine municipalities, two water districts and a power provider to improve the reliability of water supplies from the Windy Gap Project. The reservoir will be located just west of Carter Lake in southern Larimer County, and will store 90,000 acre-feet of water when built - slightly smaller than neighboring Carter Lake (112,230 acre-feet). The project will provide a firm yield of 30,000 acre-feet annually, which will meet a portion of the future demands of the participants.

Concurrent Session B2

Conference Room I

DARCA Session

Easements and Rights of Ways for Water Delivery Structures

Sara Dunn, Balcomb and Green

Branden Effland, Summit Water Engineers

Craig Ullmann, Applegate Group

This session will explore the creation, modification and protection of rights of ways for water delivery or storage structures under existing Colorado law and why the proposed Uniform Easement Relocation Act is unnecessary in Colorado.

Concurrent Session B3

Conference Room II

Getting Your Water Projects Off the Ground

SGM Services: Engineering, Environmental, and Consulting Expertise to Support Colorado's Growing Water Challenges

Angie Fowler, SGM

Jordan Dimick, SGM

Bailey Leppek, SGM

Andrew Straub-Heidke, SGM

Mark Harris, SGM

SGM will provide an overview of their capabilities and services and expand upon a few Water Resources and Environmental projects.

Concurrent Session B4

Conference Room V

Water '22

Jayla Poppleton, Water Education Colorado

Cailyn Andrews, Water Education Colorado

Water '22 was a year-long celebration of Colorado's water, dedicated to the idea that "It all starts here." This was an opportunity to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Colorado River Compact, the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, and the 20th anniversary of Water Education Colorado.

Concurrent Session B5

Conference Room VI

Colorado Water Stewardship Project

Austin Vincent, CWSP Chair, Colorado Farm Bureau

Steve Leonhardt, Burns Figa Will

12:00 Lunch

1:00 General Session 5

Aspinall Roundtable

Who Really Sets Colorado Water Policy?

A gathering of our Aspinall Award winners will lead us through an entertaining journey through the Colorado water policy landscape.

1:40 2023 Aspinall Award Presentation

2:00 Break for Concurrent Sessions – Block C

2:15 Concurrent Session C1

Aurora Ballroom

In response to Those Who Really Set Colorado Water Policy, what should “we” (Colorado’s Water Community) be doing to address Colorado’s water infrastructure and water needs.

Moderator: Eric Wilkinson, CWRPDA Board and fmr. Northern Water

Patti Wells, CWRPDA Board and fmr. Denver Water

Bob Wolff, CWRPDA Board and fmr. Southwestern Water Conservation District

Colorado faces many challenges to meet its existing and future water supply, water treatment and wastewater treatment needs. Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority has for decades provided financial resources to meet water resources infrastructure needs. Our moderator and panelists (all having served, or now serving on the CWRPDA Board) have well over 150 years of collective experience directly engaged in water resources planning, development, and management. Join us for a discussion of what “we” are doing right, what “we” could do better, and what opportunities “we” should be pursuing.

Concurrent Session C2

Conference Room I

Colorado Water Center

Introducing new Director John Tracy

John Tracy, Colorado Water Center

Jennifer Gimbel, Colorado Water Center

Concurrent Session C3

Conference Room II

Colorado Springs Utilities – Bent County Water Sharing Program

Abby Ortega, Colorado Springs Utilities

Scott Lorenz, Colorado Springs Utilities

Concurrent Session C4

Conference Room V

Children’s Water Education

Elaine Chick, Water Information Program

Water Education today is dedicated to solving critical environmental challenges by teaching the world about water. Elevating students understanding about water is accomplished by engaging in meaningful learning. The Water Information Program does this by providing hands-on, science-based water education programs and resources to formal and non-formal educators in the Southwest Basin. In challenging times, questions arise: What happens when there is a pandemic and schools shut down? How do we keep delivering water education programs to teachers and students? Elaine Chick will talk about a few creative ways the Water Information Program continues to bring water education to our communities.

2:45 Break

3:00 General Session 6

Expectations for Colorado’s Water Strategy in 2023

Moderator: Jackie Brown, Tri-State Generation & Transmission Assn. & CWC Board

Speakers

Lauren Ris, CWCB

Jessica Brody, CWCB Board & Denver Water

Paul Bruchez, CWCB Board & Grand County Rancher

Heather Dutton, CWCB Board & San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District

Greg Felt, CWCB Board & Chaffee County Commissioner

Join members of the CWCB board and staff in a once in a lifetime opportunity to discuss the Colorado Water Plan and take questions from the water community. Learn about annual operations planning, funding, and the balance between agency and partner actions. Come and participate in this unique dialogue that will be both fun and informative.

4:15 Environmental/Water Justice

Moderator: Dr. Tom Romero, University of Denver

Panelists

Darcy O'Connor, Water Division Director, EPA Region 8

Lubna Ahmed, Environmental Justice Boards Manager, CDPHE

Renee M. Chacon, Executive Director, Womxn from the Mountain

Jamie Valdez, Community Organizer, Mothers Out Front

The Environmental/Water Justice panel will feature the State's leaders who are advancing environmental/water justice in Colorado. Join the discussion to learn more about how Colorado is a model for implementing meaningful actions at both the local and national levels, and how and why environmental justice is applicable and critical to the future of Colorado water.

5:00 Adjourn for the day

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

8:45 Senator Michael Bennet

9:00 General Session 7

Living with Colorado's Limited Water Supply

Policy Recommendations for Dealing with Climate, Hydrology Compacts, and Water Supply

Co-Moderators/Speakers: Jennifer Gimbel, Colorado Water Center and Eric Kuhn

Russ Schumacher, Colorado State Climatologist

A new report prepared by the Common Sense Institute takes us on a sweeping view through all of Colorado's water basins. Connecting the themes from throughout the conference, we will examine the different forces and conditions driving water policy in each basin and consider recommendations.

10:15 Break

10:45 General Session 8

Is Our Water Law and Policy Framework Crisis Ready?

Moderator: David Robbins, Hill and Robbins

Reaction Panelists

Jim Broderick, Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District

Jim Lochhead, Denver Water

Andy Mueller, Colorado River Water Conservation District

Brad Wind, Northern Water

Steve Wolff, Southwestern Water Conservation District

Possible Additional panelists TBA

At the first Water Congress meeting in 1958, your predecessors adopted a Platform that stated: "We, who have assembled here in this Water Congress, come from every watershed in Colorado, and represent every classification of water use in the State. We recognize the necessity for complete unity of purpose and objective in forming and carrying out a stable water policy for a unified State of Colorado. We now join together dedicating ourselves to the task of securing full development of all of our available water resources, grounding our actions upon the fundamental proposition that equity must be done to and among all areas within the State."

We have faced drought before. Battled other Western States and the federal government over Colorado River operations. Spent tens of millions of dollars building sophisticated planning tools. Invested considerable energy in basin dialogue groups. In all this and much more, have we realized our initial 1958 vision? Are we truly ready for the crises we face now? Our reaction panel will share their thoughts.

12:00 Convention Concludes