



## THE COLORADO WATER PLAN

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On May 14, 2013, Governor Hickenlooper issued an executive order directing the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to develop the Colorado Water Plan (CWP). According to executive order D 2013-005, the CWP must promote a productive economy that supports vibrant and sustainable cities; viable and productive agriculture; and a robust skiing, recreation, and tourism industry. It must also incorporate an efficient and effective water infrastructure promoting smart land use and a strong environment that includes healthy watersheds, river and streams, and wildlife. A draft of the CWP is due to the Governor by December 10, 2014, and the final CWP must be completed by December 10, 2015. This issue brief describes the process involved in the drafting of the CWP and how citizens of Colorado can become involved in that process.

### Other States' Water Plans

When completed, Colorado will join 11 other western states that have developed a state water plan, including Arizona, California, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. In general, these plans were drafted to help states prepare for water shortages, meet future water needs, and address other priorities. Most of these state water plans identify a state's natural water supply, existing water uses, and projected water demands. However, each state water plan is a unique expression of that state's hydrology, water law, economy, and the priorities of its citizens and policymakers. Most state water plans are advisory and include recommendations

to governors and legislatures regarding how to better prepare for water shortages and meet future water needs. However, some state plans have a regulatory effect, such as prohibiting certain water development projects or guiding state spending for water projects. Two states—California and Colorado—allow their legislatures to amend or reject the state water plan. Oklahoma prohibits its state agency from implementing the state water plan unless expressly authorized by the legislature.

### Colorado's Growing Water Demand

Colorado's population is expected to double by 2050, which means that water demand is expected to dramatically increase. The "gap" between Colorado's water supply and water demand is projected to grow as Colorado's population grows. The General Assembly commissioned the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) to study statewide water supply and demand issues. SWSI was first completed in 2004 and will be updated in 2016. According to the 2010 update, approximately 190,000 to 630,000 acre feet (AF) of water will be needed to meet municipal, industrial, and agricultural water demand across the state by 2050.

### Water Agencies and Entities That Will Help Draft the CWP

The CWCB, in the Department of Natural Resources, is the state's main water policy and planning agency. It also is the primary entity

responsible for the development of the CWP. Its major programs include water supply protection, flood protection, conservation and drought planning, stream and lake protection, and water supply planning and finance. The CWCB is governed by a 15-member board that is charged with conserving the state's waters to promote utilization and to prevent floods. Nine of its members are appointed by the Governor for three-year terms to represent eight river basins and the City and County of Denver. Other members include the Department of Natural Resources executive director, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the State Engineer, the Colorado Attorney General, the Division of Parks and Wildlife director, and the CWCB director.

In the Governor's executive order, several other state agencies were directed to cooperate with the CWCB in the drafting of the CWP, including:

- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment;
- Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority;
- Colorado Department of Agriculture; and
- Colorado Energy Office.

**Basin Roundtables.** In 2005, in order to help address Colorado's growing water demand, the Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act was established. This law created nine basin roundtables made up of appointed citizens who represent counties, cities, and water districts across the state. The roundtables identify water needs within each basin and are responsible for creating Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs) that discuss how each basin's water needs may be addressed at the local level. The CWCB is directed in the Governor's executive order to utilize the basin roundtables in the drafting of the CWP.

**Interbasin Compact Committee.** The Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act also created the 27-member Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) to facilitate negotiation between the roundtables. The Governor's executive order also directs the CWCB to utilize the IBCC in the drafting of the CWP.

## Citizen Involvement

The Governor's executive order stresses that the CWP will be a plan written "by Coloradans, for Coloradans." Citizens can become involved in the creation of the CWP in several ways.

**Attendance at Water Resources Review Committee meetings.** Although the legislative Water Resources Review Committee (WRRRC) was not mentioned in the Governor's executive order, it is statutorily charged with reviewing water issues and proposing legislation related to the conservation, use, development, and financing of Colorado's water resources. The 10-member committee primarily meets during the interim, but is permitted to meet up to two times during the legislative session. At least four members of the WRRRC must reside west of the Continental Divide and, to the extent possible, members represent each of the seven water divisions.

In 2014, the legislature enacted Senate Bill 14-115, which requires the WRRRC to review statewide planning for water resources. In addition, the WRRRC is charged with holding public meetings around the state—one in each of the nine basin roundtable areas—to gather public input on the draft CWP.

As required by the law, two rounds of public meetings will occur in 2014 and 2015. Feedback gathered at these meetings, and the committee's own feedback, will then be communicated to the CWCB by November 1 of 2014 and 2015. The WRRRC may repeat this process whenever the CWCB submits a significant amendment to the CWP.

**Submit comments electronically.** Persons unable to attend the Senate Bill 14-115 meetings may also submit written comments on the draft CWP to the WRRRC via the WRRRC website: [www.colorado.gov/lcs/WRRRC](http://www.colorado.gov/lcs/WRRRC). The first deadline to submit comments on the draft CWP to the WRRRC is October 1, 2014.

For more information, please visit [www.coloradowaterplan.com](http://www.coloradowaterplan.com) or [www.colorado.gov/lcs/WRRRC](http://www.colorado.gov/lcs/WRRRC).