

**Boulder County | City & County of Denver | City & County of Broomfield | Eagle County  
Grand County | Pitkin County | Summit County**

To the Colorado Water Conservation Board,

We respectfully submit the following comments regarding the importance of integrating land use planning in the development of the Colorado's Water Plan (CWP). Six boards of county commissioners, including Boulder, City & County of Denver, Eagle, Grand, Pitkin and Summit, are signatories to these comments. Mayor Randy Ahrens and city council member Sam Taylor from City & County of Broomfield are also signatories.

The local government perspective is essential to the CWP. The CWP uses growth projections that indicate that Colorado's population may as much as double by 2050. Land use decisions made by county commissioners directly influence the timing, location, intensity and water demands of this new growth. Likewise, the water use and supply decisions made by county commissioners affect the state as a whole: the way future water demands are addressed in one part of the state necessarily affects water availability and the capacity for future growth in other areas of the state. Because of its structure, the CWP process does not easily allow for problem-solving engagement among local policy makers to address these statewide issues. Roundtables are largely technical and locally-focused; they are not designed to address the local land use issues connected to water planning across Colorado. CWCB comment opportunities are limited to short statements, or one-way written communication.

We believe that interactive discussions about cross-basin land use goals and values are essential to the success of the CWP process. Our interjurisdictional meetings and comments are one step toward assisting the CWCB to accomplish move in that direction.

We developed these comments during a series of five meetings held between commissioners from front range and west slope counties over several months. These meetings consisted of joint discussions about how Colorado can continue to thrive with adequate water resources for future needs while protecting the economy and environment that makes this state such a great place to live and visit.

At the first in the series of meetings, the commissioners developed a guiding statement that framed discussions over the next few months:

Every community can do better on water conservation and efficiency via locally determined measures such as but not limited to reinvestment in aging infrastructure, community education, enhanced building codes and water sensitive land use planning.

The below recommendations would help create a stronger Land Use Section of the Water Plan.

**A. The Land Use subsection of the Water Plan (Ch. 6.3.3) should be elevated.**

**B. The Water Plan should include additional introductory language emphasizing the importance of local land use planning.** As county commissioners, we respect the need for local control and therefore believe in supporting proactive and not reactive solutions that are appropriate for the varying needs and regions of the state. These solutions must address concerns related to current resident needs and future population growth. The following are examples of why water-sensitive land use planning should be stressed in the Water Plan.

**Water sensitive land use planning can:**

1. Decrease the water supply Gap. As Colorado’s population continues to grow, well thought out, effective, sustainable, and predictable land use planning is essential.
2. Provide low cost alternatives for meeting the Gap. Water sensitive land use often results in less stress on water systems, indoor and outdoor water savings, and reduction in expensive longterm capital outlay.
3. Protect the values of Colorado, including vibrant economies, agriculture, open space, and recreation. Local land use planning should be among the first points of consideration in order to protect and support all of Colorado’s values and economic drivers.
4. Create more predictability and reliability as well as reduce risk in water supply planning, in turn creating more sustainability for current and future residents.
5. Encourage shared solutions including best management practices, collaborative physical projects and practical land use models to address water quality and quantity challenges.
6. Result in benefits that reduce infrastructure and service costs, and enhance a community’s quality of life.

**C. The Land Use section of the Water Plan should coalesce common elements in various Basin Implementation Plans (BIPs) into policy recommendations, and should more substantively outline the existing and ongoing tools/ best management practices available to date.**

1. The current draft of Section 6.3.3 on Land Use Planning includes summaries of four ongoing studies regarding water planning and land use planning. While this is useful, we believe it is more useful to explain how the studies are consistent or where they differ, what their recommendations are, and how their recommendations may be used in the future.

The Water Plan should collect ongoing studies and other data from local governments, associations, and state agencies related to water and land use planning. Section 6.3.3 of the Water Plan could also serve as a clearing house for other resources on the subject of water sensitive land use planning, such as Model Land Use Codes or case studies.

2. The current draft of Section 6.3.3 recaps land use planning recommendations from different BIPs, with many of the Basins sharing similar recommendations. We hope that the CWCB will gather the recommendations from various BIPs and produce some suggested action points to better integrate land use planning and water planning.

3. Water sensitive land use planning is a statewide issue. As such, it is proper for the CWCB and DOLA to have a role in coordinating and encouraging that integration while honoring Colorado's proud history of local control.

**D. We recommend potential "Action Steps" in the Water Plan be more specific.**

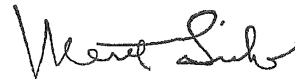
The action items could be broken into steps best-suited for various communities based on various factors, including geography, demography, population, expected rate of growth, etc. Because we believe that Colorado should move forward quickly to consider land use planning practices that take into account water usage and supply, we suggest that two additional steps be included in the Plan:

1. **Evaluate potential impacts on the Gap of land use planning and water planning integration.** We suggest that CWCB include an analysis of the impact of land use planning practices on the Gap in the next update of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative.
2. **Establish goal timelines for implementation, including funding, of identified actions.** Goals relating to land use planning must be a high priority for the Water Plan, on equal pace for successful project development and funding as any other part of the Plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments in the formation of Colorado's Water Plan,



Commissioner Deb Gardner  
Boulder County Board of Commissioners



Commissioner Merrit Linke  
Grand County Board of Commissioners



Mayor Michael B. Hancock  
City & County of Denver



Commissioner Stephen F. Child  
Pitkin County Board of Commissioners



Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry  
Eagle County Board of Commissioners



Commissioner Dan Gibbs  
Summit County Board of Commissioners

Randy Aherns  
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