



Growing Water Smart in the Headwaters Member Update

Sonoran Institute hosted its Growing Water Smart Workshop for headwaters communities from April 24-26th in Keystone. This member update highlights the workshop and participants.

QQ COMMUNITIES COMMIT TO “GROWING WATER SMART”

Headwaters communities joined with QQ for a three-day workshop hosted by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy’s Babbitt Center and Sonoran Institute, exploring options for integrating water planning into land use planning and development approvals. A signature of the workshop, each team walked away with a year-long action plan identifying next steps to growing ever-more water smart.

This spring’s workshop was the first one targeted at a specific region of the state—the QQ headwaters region. Integrating water and land use has long been a QQ priority, both locally and statewide. QQ’s priorities and its current work assessing member land



Presentations included Colorado River context-setting by Eric Kuhn, former manager of the Colorado River District, and sessions on tools for Growing Water Smart, messaging and public outreach, and how to start building an action plan. Photo by Sonoran Institute.

Growing Water Smart Teams:

Grand County regional team, including representatives from Grand County, Winter Park, and Grand #1 Water & San. District.

Gunnison County regional team, including representatives from Gunnison County, Towns of Gunnison, Crested Butte, and Mount Crested Butte, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservation District, and High Country Conservation Advocates.

Summit County regional team, including representatives from Summit County, Frisco, Silverthorne, and the High Country Conservation Center.

Garfield County team, including County planning commission member, staff, consultants, and Middle Colorado Watershed Council. While Garfield County is not a QQ member, we were pleased to share this workshop with our downstream neighbor!

Town of Eagle team, including water utilities and planning staff

use codes and authoring best practices for incorporating water quality and water conservation measures in part led to this exciting opportunity.

The Growing Water Smart workshop introduced participants from five communities and 24 local government agencies and organizations to a full spectrum of communications, public engagement, planning and policy implementation tools necessary to realize their watershed health and community resiliency goals. Topical sessions and team-based action planning focused on context for how local governments can meet a number of land use and water efficiency goals stated in the Colorado Water Plan, as well as practical steps for leading a community through a process to become more water smart.

Participants concluded the program with a commitment to improved

collaboration among multiple disciplines, agencies, and decision-makers involved in water and land use planning, answering the call for local action in response to the Drought Contingency Plan adopted for the Colorado River Basin. They also returned to their respective organizations equipped with specific actions that will allow them to immediately put into practice what they learned.

As part of the workshop, teams developed concise messages about the importance of growing water smart. Selected (draft) messages and photos follow.



Members of various teams share lessons learned and priorities moving forward at the conclusion of the workshop. Photo by Sonoran Institute.



Team Summit County works to refine its water smart message. Photo by Sonoran Institute.

“In **Garfield County**, water is essential to our ways of life, heritage, and the places we love most. But we lacked information, locally and regionally, about our water resources. Therefore, we need to take our collective action to ensure that the decisions we make today don’t compromise our future.”

“**Summit County** locals and visitors alike thrive in this amazing outdoor Mecca. We live a life shared with nature and connected with our neighbors. At our core, water is essential to our livelihood and future yet our water resources are stressed and becoming less reliable. Therefore, we cannot take water for granted. We need to come together on water-saving solutions to protect our way of life now and into the future.”



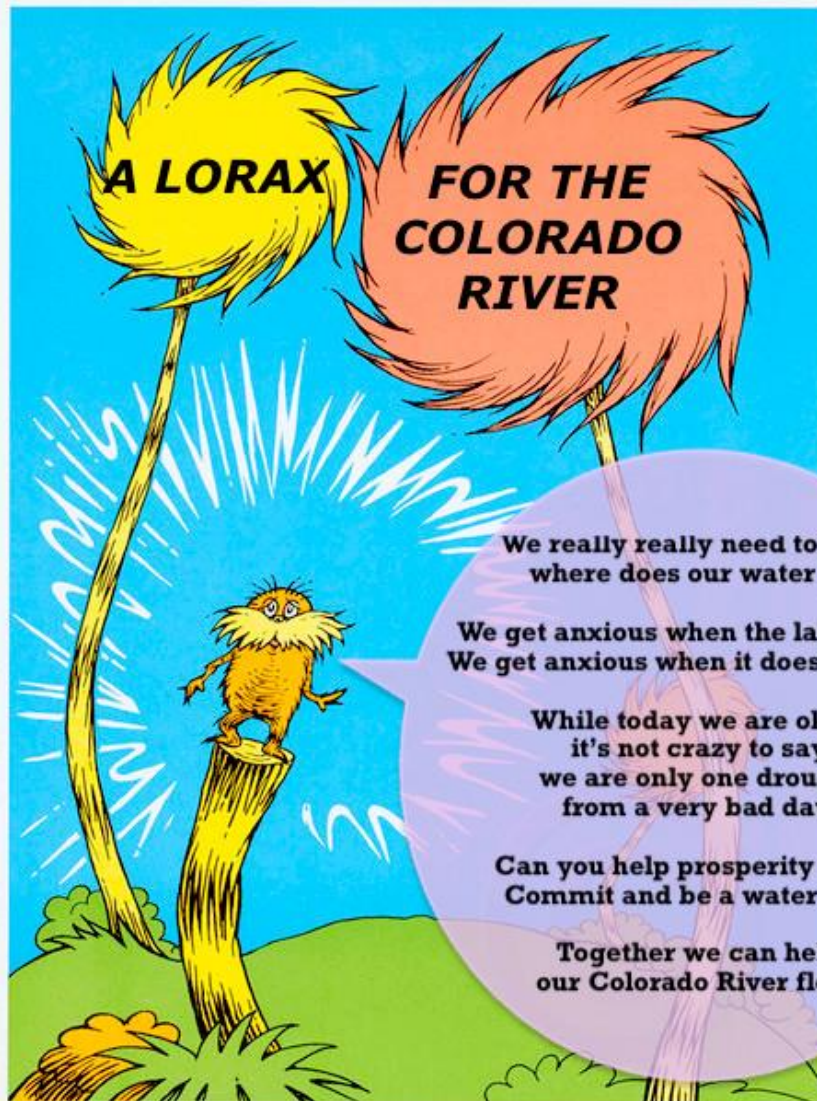
Team Grand County. Photo by Sonoran Institute.

“The Colorado River is the lifeblood of the West, and it all begins in **Grand County**. But, we demand a lot of our river, from recreation, wildlife, agriculture, to our drinking water. As the headwaters of the Colorado River, it is incumbent upon Grand County to be leaders in the conversation for how to be responsible stewards of the river.”

“This year our river is health and flowing through **the Town of Eagle**, but we are still vulnerable to the next drought. It was just last summer that we saw our river and creek almost dry. Therefore, we must better protect and manage our water to ensure the quality of life we love.”



The Gunnison County regional team was the largest at training! Photo by Sonoran Institute



**We really really need to know
where does our water go?**

**We get anxious when the lake is low.
We get anxious when it does not snow.**

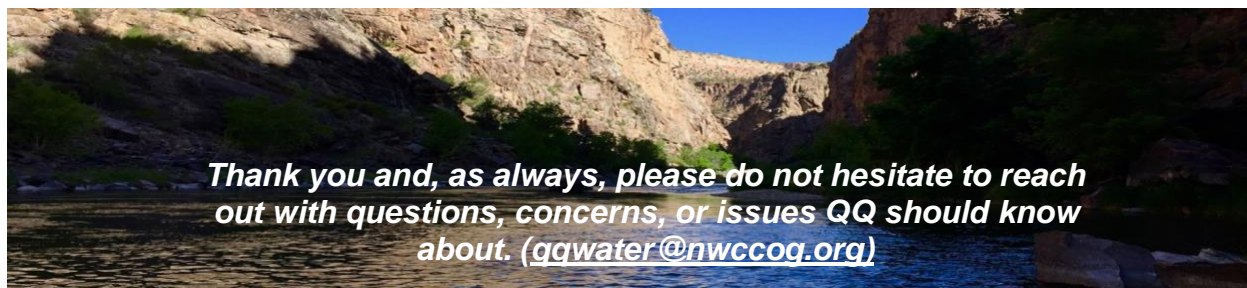
**While today we are okay,
it's not crazy to say
we are only one drought
from a very bad day.**

**Can you help prosperity grow?
Commit and be a water hero!**

**Together we can help
our Colorado River flow!**

Dr. Seuss

One of the teams was heard lamenting, "we get anxious when the lake is low, we get anxious when it does not snow." The teams took this inspiration to work on lines for "A Lorax for the Colorado River" during the workshop. Graphic created by Torie Jarvis.



**Thank you and, as always, please do not hesitate to reach
out with questions, concerns, or issues QQ should know
about. (qqwater@nwccog.org)**