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## Land Use Tools for a Water-Smart Future: Training Communities and Building Networks

Devon Bell

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and recreational impacts on cities.

Finally, implementing creative solutions to Denver and the Colorado River Basin's water supply challenges requires quicker permitting processes. Lochhead called for the development of a permitting process that includes some level of logic. He suggested continued effective environmental analysis, but at a pace that allows water users to get through the process in a reasonable amount of time.

Recognizing the practical reality that transcontinental diversion projects are too costly to serve as potential solutions, Lochhead closed the RMLUI panel by reiterating the need for true communication and collaboration between interest groups, particularly land use and water planners. Discussion of the real issues at stake will require political courage and committed community participation. By moving past an "us vs. them" mentality, Colorado can integrate uncertainties into a plan that will sustain the Front Range economically, environmentally, and from a smart-growth perspective.

*Ashley Basta*

#### LAND USE TOOLS FOR A WATER-SMART FUTURE: TRAINING COMMUNITIES AND BUILDING NETWORKS

As part of its weeklong conference, the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute ("RMLUI") hosted a three-member panel that discussed land use and its importance in water-related issues, especially in Colorado and other western states.

The host of the panel, Drew Beckwith, a water policy manager with the Western Resources Advocates, first addressed the growing gap in urban water supply. Beckwith explained that as population continues to grow there is a constant concern over the availability of water for future generations. Beckwith mentioned that because of this population growth, the demand on the Colorado River will exceed its supply sooner than expected. Before introducing the speakers, Beckwith addressed how land use substantially affects water supply and emphasized that different geographic locations face different land use challenges.

The first speaker, John Nolon, professor at the Land Use Law Center at Pace Law School, discussed integrating water and land use planning through leadership training. Nolon focused on the work of the Land Use Leadership Alliance training program ("LULA program"), which educates local land use decision-makers on legal tools and techniques. The step-by-step LULA program focuses on reaching out to prominent local leaders, bringing them into the training program, educating them on land use and decision-making, and subsequently having them implement post-training strategies in their localities. The LULA program selects communities that have something in common with each other or are geographically proximate, such as Aurora and Castle Rock in Colorado, to organize the dialogue and address programs at a regional level. The program then introduces prominent local leaders to the program and focuses their work on legal research and policy issues. The program finds great importance in urban form—the spaces and boundaries that make up a city.

Additionally, the kind of buildings constructed in a city can create water consumption rates that vary greatly. Nolon argued that there is a need to integrate water and land use planning, since a majority of water supply planners do not consider urban form as having a direct relevance to water consumption. The training itself takes four days and the participants develop strategies to implement the program after the training.

Nolon also addressed the lessons learned from the program. First, Nolon noted that there is a lack of horizontal connection within some cities and amongst other cities. Second, there is a lack of vertical connection between regional and state agencies. Third, the instructions for completing water conservation plans do not focus on land use, although knowledge of land use law is important for water planners. Furthermore, Nolon expressed the importance for land use planners to recognize the importance of understanding water supply projections. The strategies thus far developed from the program include creating water elements for comprehensive planning in community developments, considering water in making discretionary project decisions, and redrafting zoning and subdivision regulations.

The second speaker, Greg Fisher, manager of demand planning at the Denver Board of Water Commissioners ("Denver Water"), discussed Denver Water and its perspective on land use and water in Colorado. Denver Water is an independent municipal agency first established in 1918. Its funding comes from water rates and tap fees, and the agency employs 1,100 employees in twelve counties and serves about twenty-five percent of Colorado's population. Denver Water has a collection system containing four thousand square miles of watershed, nineteen reservoirs, two tunnels, and nine hydroelectric power turbines.

Fisher addressed the land use issue in Colorado: eighty percent or more of Colorado's water is on the western slope while most of Colorado's residents live on the eastern slope. Denver Water expects Colorado's population to grow by the millions and, because of this, water providers will have to meet the growing demand. Based on its per capita use goal calculations, Fisher stated that Denver Water set a twenty-two percent water reduction goal by 2016. The reduction will target all customers by providing conservation incentives, utilizing marketing tools, and including an outreach program. Fisher closed by saying Colorado's population will continue to grow, and the State accordingly needs to consider many conservation techniques, including what landscaping is appropriate for the state. Since Colorado residents value the state's open spaces and forty percent of Denver Water's use goes towards outside use, this issue is imperative and the concern will continue to grow with the population.

The last speaker, John Fernandez, the FasTracks and Transit Oriented Development team leader for the City of Aurora, discussed land use and water conservation in Aurora. Fernandez first talked about how important transportation is to water conservation in Aurora. Fernandez argued that the FasTracks system's development around transit centers is critical to reduce water needs and raise income levels by allowing the transit centers to become economic centers.

Because Aurora also faces population growth, demand and supply planning are important. Population scanning, growth projections, and improvement projects are routinely evaluated. Future tools for Aurora include regional

growth plans, redirecting sprawl around transit centers, maintaining growth allocations, and creating a new policy called “Metro Vision”, which seeks to concentrate fifty percent of the new housing and seventy-five percent of the new employment in urban centers. The next steps for Aurora include major revisions to tap fees and rates, new park and open space dedications, re-zonings along the urban centers, and designation of new urban centers.

Overall, the panel provided a detailed overview about how land use issues and water use issues significantly affect each other, and how developers need to address both concerns.

*Devon Bell*

### THE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF WATERSHED ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Nearly four hundred guests attended the twenty-third annual Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute (“RMLUI”) conference, which addressed the topic “Moving Beyond Recession: What’s Next?” The conference drew private and municipal planners, land use attorneys, public officials, developers, and many others to the University of Denver Sturm College of Law for three days and presented over forty panels of speakers.

The session titled “The Dollars and Sense of Watershed Ecosystem Services” included a moderator and three speakers that explained what ecosystem services are—specifically relating to watersheds—and offered examples ranging from the global context to local watershed protection efforts.

“Ecosystem services” are the collective benefits humans receive from a healthy, well-functioning ecosystem. To give a simple example, upstream vegetation filters harmful contaminants out of water as it moves downstream. Ecosystem services fall into four categories: supporting services, regulating services, provisioning services, and cultural services. Watershed ecosystems primarily provide a regulating service in the form of cleaner water for human use because healthy ecosystems naturally purify water. The panelists used watersheds in Colorado as an example. When watersheds in high elevations are healthy, cleaner water flows into reservoirs, allowing water providers like the Denver Board of Water Commissioners (“Denver Water”) to save money on purification. The panelists focused on how watersheds and users can fund and provide ecosystem services that can help to maintain healthy watersheds.

Devon Buckels, a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, moderated the panel. Buckels works for the Environmental Protection Agency as an Urban Waters Partnership Coordinator and serves on the Denver Sustainability Advisory Council. Through these positions, he plays an important role in the South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership, making his background well suited for moderating a discussion on watershed ecosystem services.

The first panelist, Kate Hamilton, an independent consultant and member of the Colorado Governors’ Climate and Forest Task Force, offered a global perspective on ecosystem services. Hamilton studies what water users currently pay for ecosystem services worldwide. She stressed that this is different than measuring the value of ecosystem services because the value incorporates many different considerations and indirect benefits that actual payments do not.