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Charting New Waters: Report on the Colorado Regional Freshwater Forum

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Region (<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/region>) and Lower Colorado Region (<http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region>) webpages.

Joseph Norris

CHARTING NEW WATERS: REPORT ON THE COLORADO REGIONAL FRESHWATER FORUM

Lynn Broaddus, Director of the Environment Program at The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread, provided an update on the outcomes of the Charting New Waters Colorado Regional Freshwater Forum. The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread ("Foundation") held the meeting on October 18, 2011 at the Denver Botanic Gardens. Nearly one hundred water stakeholders attended to discuss the State's experience in dealing with several freshwater-specific challenges, including balancing the different needs for water, enhancing water conservation, and the water-energy nexus.

The Colorado Regional Forum was one of a number of similar meetings around the country presenting the Foundation's findings over the last three years. The Foundation initially presented their report, *Charting New Waters: A Call to Action to Address U.S. Freshwater Challenges*, on September 15, 2012 in Washington, D.C. The Foundation's goal is to bring stakeholders from across the country together to achieve a more comprehensive approach to freshwater management. Broaddus explained that the Regional Forums allow local stakeholders to have a more prominent voice at the national policy-making level. The Foundation's message also includes allowing different regions of the country to learn from one another in water management.

Broaddus noted that the Foundation is not attempting to tell Colorado water managers what to do, but is rather attempting to have meetings that are different from the status quo. The focus of the meetings is to foster collaboration and truly bring all types of players to the table to discuss freshwater issues.

Broaddus explained that the Foundation chose Colorado for one of the Regional Forums because of its issues in water supply that are unique from other parts of the country. While the rest of the country focuses primarily on water quality issues, Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region must also consider water availability under the prior appropriation doctrine. Both upcoming Forums will focus on topics related to specific regional issues. The Seattle Regional Forum will focus more on Clean Water Act issues and the balance between uses of stormwater and freshwater. In contrast, the Boston Regional Forum will consider what urban water infrastructure looks like in the future.

Finally, Broaddus discussed some of the themes that came out of the Colorado Regional Forum. Forum attendees discussed mutually beneficial alternatives to traditional agricultural transfers of water that promote triple-bottom line benefits (revenue, quality of life, and environmental protection). Broaddus also explained some of the discussion on the wa-

ter-energy nexus topic. Attendees suggested fostering opportunities for water and energy utilities to collaborate as well as developing a common vocabulary and shared modeling methods.

For more information about the Charting New Waters project from the Johnson Foundation, along with a copy of the Colorado Regional Freshwater Forum Report, go to <http://www.johnsonfdn.org/aboutus/chartingnewwaters>.

Joseph Norris

WATER AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE ECONOMIES OF THE
HEADWATER COUNTIES: PRESENTED BY THE NORTHWEST COLORADO
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Jean Townsend, President of Coley/Forrest, Inc., presented the recently completed Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Report ("Council" and "Report"). Coley/Forrest, Inc. prepared the Report to evaluate the unique economic characteristics of the six headwater counties of Council, Routt, Grand, Eagle, Summit, Pitkin, and Gunnison Counties ("Counties"). Townsend explained that the Counties have a unique relationship with the Front Range and Eastern Plains of Colorado when dealing with water. The report addressed the economic consequences of increased demand for water and transmountain diversions on the Counties. Townsend stressed that there is a strong history of cooperative planning and collaboration between West Slope and Front Range interests; however, some of the historic planning strategies may not be as effective in the future. Townsend also emphasized that the report does not take issue with Front Range water users, but highlights the concerns and point of view of the West Slope Counties.

First, Townsend described the effect of tourism on the Counties and Colorado as a whole. She argued that the vast recreational areas are just as valuable a commodity to the Counties as they are to the Front Range. Recreational opportunities attract national and international tourists to all of Colorado. Townsend pointed out that many Front Range economic development initiatives actually use iconic images provided by the recreational areas in the Counties. Industries in the Counties also rely more on having consistent water in the natural stream course than Front Range counties. Internationally known kayaking venues and "Gold Medal" fishing are examples of the key recreational industries that rely on flowing water in the natural stream course. Townsend explained that the Counties rely on water clarity and water volume in their water bodies. Recreation in the Counties comprises forty-eight percent of jobs while statewide the number is only eight percent. Because tourism is a key industry for Colorado, Townsend suggested that preserving a viable recreation industry in the Counties is in the best interest of the entire state.

Next, Townsend discussed the agricultural sector and mineral leasing in the Counties. The Report found that farmed acres in the Counties decreased nine percent from 1929 to 2007 while there was a six percent