



COLORADO RIVER DISTRICT

PROTECTING WESTERN COLORADO WATER SINCE 1937

NOTICE

Information and Outreach Committee Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Colorado River Water Conservation District

February 9, 2022

7:30 a.m.**

**This Meeting Will be Held in Grand Junction, Colorado and
via Zoom**

Please See Registration/Attendance Information Below

A meeting of the Information and Outreach Committee of the Board of Directors of the Colorado River Water Conservation District will be held on Wednesday, February 9, 2022, commencing at 7:30 a.m. at Hotel Maverick, located at 840 Kennedy Avenue, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501.

*****PLEASE NOTE: The River District meeting will be held at Hotel Maverick, located at 840 Kennedy Avenue, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501. Due to the prevalence of the Omicron variant of the Coronavirus, the River District Staff has been forced to limit public participation to attend the meeting virtually via Zoom only. To attend or observe the meeting via Zoom, please register at our website at www.coloradoriverdistrict.org***



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Agenda
Information and Outreach Committee
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Colorado River Water Conservation
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7:30 am	1. Information and Outreach 2022 Committees Meeting and Update. a. 2022 communications plan update and discussion.
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MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CRWCD AND INFORMATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

FROM: MARIELLE COWDIN, ZANE KESSLER, AND LINDSAY DEFRADES

SUBJECT: EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES FOR 2022

DATE: DECEMBER 31, 2021

ACTIONS: *No Board action requested.*

APPLICABLE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE(S):

1. Outreach and Advocacy:

1.A. The River District will continue to enhance and expand partnerships and working relationships with key elected and appointed officials to advance western Colorado's perspectives on proposed legislation and regulations affecting western Colorado water resources at both the state and federal levels.

1.B. The River District will assume a leadership role in offering timely and accurate public information regarding topical trends and developments concerning water resources, water use, and water conservation.

1.C. The River District will make special efforts to inform and involve community leaders, especially elected leaders, in water-related matters.

1.D. The River District will expand its efforts to actively engage the public through our website and other social media, including new and emerging media platforms, with a goal of reaching and engaging younger generations of water users.

1.E. The River District will ensure its outreach and communications extend to all 15 counties of the District.

1.F. The River District will expand its branding efforts to ensure grassroots support and understanding of the River District and its mission.

2. Outreach in All Basins:

2.A. The River District will increase its outreach efforts with water organizations and other local organizations in the Gunnison, White and Yampa River basins. The goal will be to use River District resources to help those basins address their consumptive and non-consumptive water needs.



9. Water Efficiency and Conservation:

9.A. The River District will continue to promote, encourage, and support wise and efficient use of all of Colorado's water resources

External Affairs Team 2021 Year in Review

2021 brought significant changes to the Colorado River District. Staff turnover, in addition to the passage of Ballot Measure 7A the previous November, presented opportunities to restructure and create a more agile External Affairs department. Marielle Cowdin was hired in May 2021 as the Director of Public Relations and co-manager of the External Affairs team alongside Zane Kessler, Director of Government Affairs. Lindsay DeFrates was brought on board in July as the PR & Media Specialist. The new team, in partnership with other staff, worked to build upon the successful branding efforts of the previous team and to reimagine communications strategies that reach and engage an even broader River District audience.

The team's first few months were anything but straightforward — historic drought, wildfires, landslides, fishing closures, and a Tier 1 Shortage Declaration by the Bureau of Reclamation framed a difficult season for all water users. These issues also elevated national media interest in Western water issues and the Colorado River Basin. While a challenging atmosphere for the new External Affairs team to enter, water year 2021 provided an important platform for River District advocacy, while elevating the voices and circumstances of our constituents.

The team worked quickly and strategically to connect press with the District's expert staff, reinvigorated our social media platforms with new content, organized and executed new Water With Your Lunch webinars, planned and hosted a well-received Annual Water Seminar, and conducted outreach to counties and municipalities throughout the District.

The challenges of 2021 painted a clear picture – the Colorado River District's role representing and protecting the interests of West Slope water users will only become more critical in the months and years to come. As such, the External Affairs team proposes the following information and outreach plan for 2022.

New Messaging & Strategic Communications Plan

While River District messaging in recent years has evolved to underscore the importance of the District's work and highlight the many challenges facing West Slope water users, the External Affairs team is developing a new Strategic Communications Plan to provide a clearer and more impactful roadmap for constituent communications in the year to come.

As Colorado's Western Slope continues to suffer the exponential impacts of a changing climate and aridification, the River District's communications must serve to:

1. **Ensure water security for our constituents;**
2. **Provide critical education and engagement to our constituents and to those that affect West Slope water users (e.g., Front Range water users); and**
3. **Provide leadership and guidance to decision makers acting on behalf of Colorado's**



water users within and across state lines.

Prior to implementing specific campaigns and messaging tactics to achieve these goals, the River District must intentionally refine current and new messaging. The External Affairs team recommends **the following new pillars** to guide River District communications through 2022 and beyond:

- Partnerships & Next-Generation Innovation
- Conservation for Adaptation
- Headwaters Economics
- Healthy Watersheds

At the Committee meeting, Marielle Cowdin, Director of Public Relations, will provide a brief presentation to further outline these goals and pillars and welcomes feedback from the Board.

Front Range Colorado River Consumer Campaign

Implementation of the new Strategic Communications Plan in 2022 includes an outreach campaign targeted directly to Front Range water consumers. While Trans-Mountain Diversions and the dichotomy of water consumption across the Continental Divide is a familiar topic to those within our District, many residents across the ever-growing Front Range remain unaware of their West Slope water source. Last summer's historic low flows, spiking river temperatures, and associated economic losses in Western Colorado were a stark reminder of this intrastate disjunction. To best fulfill our mission of water security for our constituents, the River District must engage with Front Range water users around conservation of our state's most valuable natural resource – the Colorado River.

The River District will begin the Front Range campaign across communities within Boulder and Larimer Counties, and in partnership with external groups on both sides of the Divide. East Slope partners will include strategically selected NGOs small businesses, and others that have significant reach into these Front Range audiences. West Slope partners may include conservancy districts, local governments, water providers, and others with significant stake in the health of the Western Colorado and the Colorado River.

The campaign will be executed in two phases:

- I. Tier I – An education campaign targeting Northern Front Range communities, connecting water users with their West Slope water sources. Goals for this campaign tier include increasing Front Range awareness of Colorado water distribution, Trans-Mountain Diversions, and Upper Colorado River hydrology and conditions.
- II. Tier II – An action follow-up targeting the same individuals reached with the education campaign, as well as direct Colorado River District advocacy to elected officials. Tier II public messaging will vary based on audience ties to different Colorado cultural pillars – outdoor recreation, local food production, environmental health, etc. Messaging tied to these pillars will be distributed in collaboration with the appropriate partners for each audience interest group and will be accompanied by an action ask. Actions taken may include:



- i. Writing to local representatives and/or conservancy districts to support general water conservation measures
- ii. Advocating local utilities to participate in conservation trainings

The External Affairs team considers this to be the beginning of a multi-year, multi-tier communications effort.

At the Committee meeting, Marielle Cowdin, Director of Public Relations, will provide a brief presentation to further outline this specific campaign and welcomes feedback from the Board.

Educational Programs & Activities

1. ***Webinars: Water With Your Lunch*** – This informative, lunch-hour webinar series continues to be a popular and accessible program. 2021 webinars were well-attended, and staff continue to receive positive feedback from participants. The virtual events allow for us to provide a variety of timely content based on constituent interests and River District messaging priorities. The External Affairs team is proposing to host another four (4) webinars in 2022, beginning with a continuation of the popular ‘Know Your Snow’ series in February, followed by a timely look at tribal water right development later in the spring.
2. ***State of the River Workshops*** – The External Affairs team aims to host 12 in-person State of the River events across the District in 2022. These public meetings will be held from March through June. The content will center around snowpack and runoff conditions within specific communities, the Community Funding Partnership, and provide opportunities for unique local issues to be addressed. These events are primarily used to highlight the work of the River District and other topical water issues, as well as to introduce the new faces of the River District to our constituents. There is potential for some meetings to be filmed by local cable TV stations and then re-aired on local Public, Education, and Government channels. Should circumstances change given the pandemic, however, we are prepared to offer virtual meetings akin to 2021.

The 2022 State of the River meetings will be held in the following locations:

- a. Rangely
- b. Grand Junction
- c. Montrose
- d. Ouray County
- e. Craig
- f. Glenwood Springs
- g. Steamboat Springs
- h. Eagle County
- i. Grand County
- j. Summit County
- k. Crested Butte
- l. Carbondale



3. ***Annual Water Seminar*** – After a successful but complex, hybrid event in October 2021, we plan to host the 2022 Annual Water Seminar as an in-person event. Colorado Mesa University served as an excellent venue last fall, so the EA team will work with established contacts to continue our flagship event in Grand Junction at CMU’s Meyer Ballroom. We also plan to lock-in a mid-September seminar date to bring the event back into alignment with the River District’s usual Budget Workshop schedule. An aggressive advertising campaign for the seminar will focus email, radio, social media, and other digital advertisements to boost in-person attendance. The event will also include a livestream component and professional recording for later viewing on the River District’s YouTube and Vimeo channels.
4. ***Water ’22 Campaign*** – Water Education Colorado (WeCO) recruited the River District to participate in and support their upcoming *Water ’22* education and outreach campaign. Marielle is a member of this campaign’s steering committee and throughout the last several months of 2021, has provided guidance on behalf of the District and its priorities. The statewide campaign will officially launch in January 2022 at the Colorado Water Congress annual convention with events and educational materials evolving throughout the calendar year. The EA team will be engaged in some of these efforts with campaign partners, allowing us to provide key demographics on both sides of the Continental Divide with a better understanding of Colorado River issues.
5. ***Live Zoom of Board Meetings*** – The Administrative Staff continues to successfully broadcast the Zoom video and audio of our Board meetings live, while also archiving them on our website for public access.

Outreach Programs/Activities

1. ***River District News Drop*** – Our bi-weekly newsletter includes a staff-curated list of relevant water news headlines. The News Drop has an audience of more than 5,500 subscribers. And a consistent open rate average of 30% throughout the year puts our e-newsletter well above the industry standard average of 18%. To continue to grow this audience, we will feature the News Drop registration link more prominently on the River District website and we will continue to collect email addresses from participants in our virtual and in person events. Our monthly social media calendar will also include at least one boosted post to encourage followers to register for the News Drop.
2. ***Newsletters/Blog Posts*** – The External Affairs team will continue to send eight (8) e-newsletters to subscribed constituents throughout the year, before and after each quarterly Board meeting. All long-form story content shared within these emails is published on the River District blog as online articles, archived and accessible on the River District website. These posts are then re-shared across all three River District social media platforms. The newsletters and blog posts continue to be an essential way for the Colorado River District to grow its ‘expert’ voice to our audience and to maintain our status as a “go-to” source for information and perspective on western water issues.
3. ***Website*** – In developing the Communications Strategic Plan, the External Affairs team revisited design and structure ideas for a new website that can serve to increase



public engagement and understanding of the work we do. Updating the beta version of the website with this new site map has delayed the soft launch into January 2022. However, the EA team is confident that the changes were necessary and will greatly enhance the usability and relevance of the new site.

4. ***Social Media*** – In 2022, social media will be an essential tool in engaging wider audiences with the goal of increasing the number of water users who fully understand our mission and importance to West Slope communities. To increase our overall following online, we plan to use geo-targeted marketing and promotion of relevant posts and information to grow our following throughout the District. Our goal is to increase our followers by one-third across all platforms, with growth that more accurately reflects the District’s broad geographical representation. Social media will also play a crucial role in supporting our Front Range water conservation messaging and continue to be a platform from which to celebrate CFP awards and on-going partnerships.
5. ***Radio Advertising*** – Advertising on radio stations within our District continues to be a cost-effective way to solidify branding and promote water messaging to a very broad audience. In 2022, the River District will continue public radio underwriting and will maintain a presence across private station airways with adaptive 30-second messaging segments to reach a larger cross-section of our constituents.
6. ***Community Funding Partnership*** –The External Affairs team continues to work with Amy Moyer, Director of Strategic Partnerships, to communicate with constituents about Community Funding Partnership projects, grantees, and successes. The new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has brought a once in a generation opportunity to further leverage program funds for adaptive projects to benefit West Slope water users, and the EA team will prioritize messaging with this in mind.
 - ***Films*** – With Vital Films recently contracted, the EA team has worked with Amy Moyer and the filmmakers to tell the stories of 2021 Community Funding Partnership projects and grantees, with an emphasis on elevating the stories of these individual West Slope water users. A teaser trailer for a longer, documentary-style film was released in late November 2021. The EA team aims to debut the longer-form film at the 2022 Annual Water Seminar, while releasing a series of six smaller vignettes throughout the year to highlight specific projects and grantees.
7. ***Speakers Bureau*** – A variety of staff members are recruited by civic groups and other organizations to address current water issues each year. The new EA team aims to directly meet with as many of these organizations as possible in 2022, connect with new groups through this networking, and to find points of collaboration around and at upcoming State of the River workshops. While building those relationships, we will reinforce the River District as an expert resource for Western water issues and work with non-External Affairs River District staff to ensure strong, consistent external messaging at all engagements. Strategic messaging training will be provided to all staff throughout the year to make sure that they are confidently prepared for these opportunities.



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8. ***Press Relations*** – The River District continues to be a go-to place for reporters to find background, context, and quotes for increasing coverage of western water issues ([click here](#) for Media Mentions attachment). We will continue to foster these relationships in 2022 by setting editorial meetings with our major media partners to build new relationships and strengthen old ones.
 9. ***Director Briefings*** – As individual directors desire and request, staff is available to assist in any briefings or public meetings you may have in your county.
 10. ***Elected Official Briefings/Updates*** – With the ongoing drought, River District communication to inform and advise legislators and elected officials on West Slope water issues in 2022 will be critical. Zane, Andy, and others on the team will continue to engage in state and federal legislative matters, in-person briefings, BOCC meetings, and increase correspondence with elected officials throughout the District.

GO BACK TO MEMO

The Herald Times

1. COUNTY BEAT: Water, roads, meeting notices discussed, *December 22, 2021*

<https://www.theheraldtimes.com/county-beat-3/rio-blanco-county/>

2. River District to host lunch-hour webinar on next-gen agriculture, *November 12, 2021*

<https://www.theheraldtimes.com/river-district-to-host-lunch-hour-webinar-on-next-gen-agriculture/rio-blanco-county/>

Summit Daily

3. High Country snowpack lags, but it's early, *December 14, 2021*

<https://www.summitdaily.com/news/regional/high-country-snowpack-lags-but-its-early/>

Sopris Sun

4. Helping out the trout at Canyon Creek, *December 8, 2021*

<https://soprissun.com/2021/12/08/helping-out-the-trout-at-canyon-creek/?fbclid=IwAR3CApbhLg3dW3bzoGnNBTboKhrNThTD23KN3XMP42SKW4-3lkZy9KcMU5w>

MSNBC

5. Denver Breaks Records With Historic Lack of Snowfall, *December 8, 2021*

<https://www.msnbc.com/mtp-daily/watch/mountain-west-looks-to-cloud-seeding-to-increase-rain-and-snow-levels-128218693598>

Glenwood Springs Post Independent

6. Bruell column: The rivers run through us ... Let's do more to protect them, *November 18, 2021*

<https://www.postindependent.com/opinion/bruell-column-the-rivers-run-through-us-lets-do-more-to-protect-them/>

Aspen Times

7. Ouray County asks state water board to delay filing aimed at instream flow protection, *November 16, 2021*

<https://www.aspentimes.com/news/ouray-county-asks-state-water-board-to-delay-filing-aimed-at-instream-flow-protection/>

8. Crystal River restoration finding its footing in Carbondale park, *November 13, 2021*

<https://www.aspentimes.com/news/crystal-river-restoration-finding-its-footing-in-carbondale-park/>

Denver 9 News

9. Cloud seeding making up for lost snowpack, *November 11, 2021*

<https://www.9news.com/article/news/state/colorado-climate/colorado-cloud-seeding/73-2a23961d-e6c2-4a48-914a-21678a5e3697>

Steamboat Pilot and Today

10. Community Agriculture Alliance: Meeting demand for water, *November 9, 2021*

<https://www.steamboatpilot.com/news/community-agriculture-alliance-meeting-demand-for-water/>

11. River District report highlights Western Slope concerns with state water-savings plan, *October 1, 2021*

<https://www.steamboatpilot.com/news/environment/river-district-report-highlights-western-slope-concerns-with-state-water-savings-plan-2/>

KVNF

12. KVNF Regional Newscast: *November 3, 2021*

<https://www.kvnf.org/news/2021-11-03/kvnf-regional-newscast-november-3-2021#stream/0>

Gunnison Times

13. Public outreach central to Upper Gunnison's mission, *October 27, 2021*

<https://www.gunnisontimes.com/articles/public-outreach-central-to-upper-gunnisons-mission/>

Bloomberg Law

14. Infrastructure Bill Seen as Way to Pay Farmers to Cut Water Use, *October 22*

<https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/infrastructure-bill-seen-as-way-to-pay-farmers-to-cut-water-use>

Aspen Journalism

15. Wolf Creek reservoir project secures River District grant, *October 21*

<https://aspenjournalism.org/wolf-creek-reservoir-project-secures-river-district-grant-to-fund-permitting/>

Aspen Public Radio

16. Talking about demand management and how to leave more water in the Colorado River, *October 17*

<https://www.aspenpublicradio.org/environment/2021-10-17/demand-management-a-new-strategy-for-saving-water-in-colorado>

Fresh Water News

17. West Slope water officials sound alarm on climate change, shrinking water supplies, *October 6*

<https://www.watereducationcolorado.org/fresh-water-news/west-slope-water-officials-sound-alarm-on-climate-change-shrinking-water-supplies/>

Crested Butte News

18. Gunnison Basin Roundtable not happy with Blue Mesa releases, *October 6*

<https://crestedbuttenews.com/2021/10/gunnison-basin-roundtable-not-happy-with-blue-mesa-releases/>

Western Slope Now

19. Annual water conference addresses harsh impacts to the Colorado River and proposed solutions, *October 1*

<https://www.westernslopenow.com/news/local-news/annual-water-conference-addresses-harsh-impacts-to-the-colorado-river-and-proposed-solutions/>

The Arkansas Valley Voice

20. Governor Polis applauds USDA's \$3 billion climate and agriculture investment, *October 2*

<https://arkvalleyvoice.com/governor-polis-applauds-usdas-3-billion-climate-and-agriculture-investment/>

Wall Street Journal

21. The Colorado River Is in Crisis. The Walton Family Is Pushing a Solution.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-colorado-river-is-in-crisis-the-walton-family-is-pushing-a-solution-11633167002>