



Spotlight on Water Policy Organizations: Local to National Perspectives

Moderator:

- Giselle Arroyo, Community Advocate for Mother Earth, Spirit of the Sun

Panelists:

- Mindy Bridges, State Policy and Government Affairs Manager, US Water Alliance, mbridges@uswateralliance.org
- Kerry Miller, Program Manager, WaterNow Alliance
- Commissioner Kate Greenberg, Colorado Commissioner for Agriculture, Colorado Department of Agriculture
- Nita Gonzales, River Sisters Congresso

Speaker biographies can be found here: <https://watercenter.colostate.edu/water-leadership-summit/speaker-information/>

Resources:

➤ Toolkits:

- [One Water for America State Policymakers' Toolkit](#)
- Evaluating Urban Agriculture as a Water Resource Management Tool: A Policy Roadmap for Colorado
 - <https://waternow.org/project/research-initiative-community-gardens-and-water-management/>
- Collaborative Water Sharing Agreements – A Guide for Local Leaders in CO
 - <https://waternow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Alternative-Transfer-Methods-A-Guide-for-Local-Leaders-in-Colorado-WNA.pdf>

➤ Assistance Programs:

- [WaterNow Alliance Project Accelerator](#)
- [Pro-Bono - Colorado State Revolving Fund Technical Assistance](#)
- [WaterSMART Grant Support](#)

➤ Funding:

- [Wildfire Resilience Financing Dashboard](#)

➤ Online Resources:

- [Value of Water Campaign](#)



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- [Imagine a Day Without Water](#)
- [2025 Poll Index and Takeaways](#)
- [Messaging for Results: Communicating Critical Water Issues](#)
- [How States Can Lead on Water: Innovative Funding and Public Awareness](#)
- **Project Accelerator Library**
 - <https://waternow.org/project-accelerator/>
- **Building Blocks of Trust Training Module**
 - <https://www.rivernetwork.org/resource/building-blocks-of-trust-creating-authentic-and-equitable-relationships-between-community-organizations-and-water-utilities/>
- **Websites:**
 - US Water Alliance - <https://uswateralliance.org/>
 - WaterNow Alliance - <https://waternow.org/>
 - Colorado Department of Agriculture - <https://ag.colorado.gov/>
 - River Sisters Congresso - <https://www.spiritofthesun.org/riversisters>

Presentation 1: Role of Policy and Our One Water Future

Speaker: Mindy Bridges, State Policy and Government Affairs Manager, US Water Alliance

US Water Alliance

The US Water Alliance is a cross-sector membership organization that advances a One Water Future for all. <https://uswateralliance.org/>

- Educate
- Initiate
- Accelerate

One Water

- One Water is a transformative way of viewing, valuing, and managing water.
- A One Water approach means managing all water in a collaborative, integrated, inclusive, and holistic manner.
- One Water: A response to complex water challenges.

Hallmarks of a One Water Approach

- Value water at every stage and in every form



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- Focus on achieving multiple benefits
- Approach decisions with a systems mindset
- Use watershed-scale thinking and action
- Intervene with right-sized solutions
- Center inclusion and partnerships
- Account for climate action urgency and opportunities

Colorado Water Plan

<https://cwcb.colorado.gov/colorado-water-plan>

- The Colorado Water Plan specifically highlights One Water Values and Approaches
 - One Water Values Guide Our Approach – The Water Plan is based on the following four values:
 - A productive economy that supports vibrant, sustainable cities, agriculture, recreation, and tourism
 - An efficient and effective water infrastructure system
 - A strong environment with healthy watersheds, rivers, streams, and wildlife
 - An informed public with creative, forward thinking solutions that are sustainable and resilient to changing conditions and result in strong, equitable communities that can adapt and thrive in the face of adversity.

Policy at the Local Level

- **Value of Water Campaign**
 - <https://uswateralliance.org/programs/the-value-of-water-campaign/>
 - The Value of Water Campaign is spearheaded by leading organizations and individuals and educates the nation about how our water is essential, invaluable, and in need of investment.
 - The Value of Water Campaign has been building public and political will for investment in America's aging and failing water infrastructure since 2015.
- **Value of Water Index –**
 - <https://uswateralliance.org/2025-value-of-water-index/>



Colorado Water Leadership Summit: Pathways to Civic Engagement & Action

- This year, we asked voters if they agree with the statement “My state government should invest in funding toward the upkeep of my water infrastructure”
 - Nine in ten voters agree that their state government should invest in water infrastructure.
 - This result was even stronger in the West – with 93% of voters in the West seeing this as important.
 - This sentiment is bipartisan – and we see even stronger support for this state funding question among GOP respondents than we did for continued federal investment.
- **Imagine a Day without Water – October 16, 2025 - [Imagine a Day Without Water](#)**

Events can include:

- Community art contests
- Utility tours
- Brewery giveaways and trivia nights
- University campus engagement
- Social media challenges
- Mayoral proclamations

Resources

- [Value of Water Campaign](#)
- [Imagine a Day Without Water](#)
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- [How States Can Lead on Water: Innovative Funding and Public Awareness](#)
- [One Water for America State Policymakers’ Toolkit](#)

Presentation 2: WaterNow Alliance Policy Initiatives

Speaker: Kerry Miller, Program Manager, WaterNow Alliance

WaterNow Alliance

- WaterNow works to advance transformation in the urban water sector to accelerate the widespread adoption of equitable, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable strategies.



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- We do this as a national network for local water leaders and decision makers, empowering them with the technical assistance, resources, and tools they need to implement innovative One Water drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater solutions in their communities.

How does our work intersect with water policy?

- Policy development
- Policy implementation
- Policy advocacy

Project Accelerator

<https://waternow.org/our-work/our-work-projects/project-accelerator/>

- Program Summary:
 - 250 hours of pro bono technical assistance
 - Over a 6-12 month period
 - City/Agency identified project, driven by local priorities
 - Jump start innovative water management initiatives
- Project Accelerator Focus: Integrating Water and Land Use Planning
 - Incorporating waterwise landscaping requirements, turfgrass restrictions, and efficient irrigation strategies into municipal codes
 - Examples:
 - Broomfield, CO Project Accelerator
 - Erie, CO Project Accelerator

Colorado State Revolving Fund Technical Assistance

<https://tapin.waternow.org/colorado-state-revolving-fund-technical-assistance/>

- **Pro-Bono** Colorado State Revolving Fund Technical Assistance
- Drinking Water Revolving Fund (DWRF)
- Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund (WPCRF)
- GSI, indoor and outdoor water efficiency, water reuse, source watershed protection, lead service line replacement, and more!
- WaterNow helps Colorado communities secure financing for sustainable and innovative water infrastructure projects
- Process:
 1. Sustainable Water Projects – Application Process



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2. Application Process
 3. Support for DACs
 4. Technical Assistance
 5. Resources and Tools
- Video Tutorial - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a67bMpDWtRw>

WaterSMART Grant Application Support and Help Desk

<https://tapin.waternow.org/toolkit/?item=watersmart-grant-support>

- Water & Energy Efficiency Grant (WEEG)
- Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects (SWEP)
- Environmental Water Resources Projects (EWRP)
- Drought Resiliency Projects (DRP)
- Planning and Project Design Grant (PPDG)
- Water Conservation Field Services Program (WCFSP)
- Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects (AERP)
- Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP)
- Upper Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program

Building Blocks of Trust

To build trust utilities and communities need authentic relationships

- Prioritize transparency and accountability
- Restore community confidence
- Deepen community understanding of utility roles and responsibilities
- Highlight shared goals to leverage mutual benefits
- Build from personal to more formalized relationships
- Cultivate long-term community relationships
- Adopt a community-facing organization
- Include the community a part of utility decision making

Colorado Community Water Academics

<https://tapin.waternow.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/RN2306-CommunityWaterGuideAcademy-full-1.pdf>

- **Community Partnerships**
 - Aurora Water, Metro Water Recovery, and Aurora Health Alliance



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- The City of Longmont Water Department and Colorado Water Stories
- Goal Deepen community understanding of utility roles and responsibilities

Reduced Federal Funding for WaterSMART and State Revolving Funds

IRS Tax Exemption for Water Resources

- **Why It Matters**
 - Rebates for efficient toilets, washers, and lawn removal are cost-effective tools for enhancing water supply resilience and keeping water rates affordable
- **The Issue**
 - IRS may treat rebates >\$600 as taxable income.
 - Creates a barrier to local water efficiency programs.
- **Our Efforts**
 - Elevating the issue with national partners.
 - Advocating for water rebates to receive the same tax exemption as energy efficiency programs.

Join WaterNow

- Learn more and sign up - www.waternow.org/join-the-leaders

Resources

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 - <https://waternow.org/project-accelerator/>
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Presentation #3: Agriculture

Speaker: Commissioner Kate Greenberg, Colorado Commissioner for Agriculture,
Colorado Department of Agriculture

Regenerative and Climate Smart Farming

An agricultural approach focused on enhancing soil health

- **Key Practices**
 - Plant diverse crops
 - Minimize soil disturbance
 - Keep soil covered
 - Maintain living roots
 - Integrate livestock
- **Soil Health**
 - Improves soil structure
 - Increases organic matter
 - Enhances nutrient cycling
 - Increases biodiversity
- **Climate Resilience**
 - Improves water retention
 - Reduces erosion risk
 - Helps sequester carbon
- **Farmer and Rancher Benefits**
 - Boosts resilience and productivity
 - Cuts input costs
 - Creates market opportunities
 - Produces high-quality crops

Visit <https://ag.colorado.gov/> to learn more

Presentation 4: River Sisters Congresso – No Slides

Speaker: Nita Gonzales, River Sisters Congresso

Website: <https://www.spiritofthesun.org/riversisters>