

**From your perspective as a community leader in Northern Colorado, what is your key takeaway from today's session?**

- My key take away from this month's session is how complex water ownership affects who gets water, if, and when! It is amazing to me how the flows are monitored, and need to be closely monitored, in order to accurately allocate the water! I was also fascinated by the water court and impressed that we have such a legal system in place to deal with these tricky ownership issues.
- It's fascinating that our water law is completely different than the East Coast. You would've thought that having come from a system of riparian water rights that the new Coloradans would've followed suit. But, no, like so many other instances, it really was the Wild West. Whoever had the wherewithal to schlep the water some distance before someone else did eventually got the senior water rights. As a leader, it's important to understand how different our water law is and how people could have misconceptions about water rights (for example, thinking that they own some water because it is coming across their land).
- One of my key takeaways from this month's meeting was the realization of not only how complicated, but how thorough, water law is and the complicated nature of trying to write agreements and legal policy to account for who gets what, and how much etc, based upon how senior or junior a right they may or may not have and how far back some of these rights are in our state's history.
- My key takeaway from today's session was the discussion about the relaxation of water diverting practice, particularly in recreational use. While it can have many positives and raise quality of life opportunities, it will be incumbent on elected officials to oversee carefully and collaborate so that the practice doesn't grow to the point that it has a negative impact on water quality and availability. Don't let the popularity of the access overtake the purpose of the diversion.
- Amy Beatie left me with some nuggets: Be a captain not a coach...you should have grass stains on your Jersey, not be in a suit, Also on moving...be risk tolerant, move before ready, lean into change.
- My key takeaway was drilling down or digging into Colorado Water Law and how Colorado Water law is different than the rest of the country-"first in time, first in right".
- My key takeaway was the complexity of administration-application of water rights from adjudication down to field work by the respective commissioners.
- I had assumed that there would be a handful of days each year when the Poudre was still a "free river". Learning that some years there are no days of free river or just a handful in good years really illustrates how over appropriated the river is.
- I found the full session to be very eye opening especially discussions on how water rights are converted from agricultural to municipal as presented by Ryan Donovan. I didn't realize the scope and importance of return flows to meeting the demands of various users in a given basin and how the elimination of those return flows can dramatically impact or injure the rights of downstream users, and how as water is piped to urban areas even senior rights holders can be impacted. I really appreciated Cory DeAngelis's description of how the system of calls and augmentation plans works to meet the needs of water consumers. Til that point I had heard these terms without fully understanding how they are put into practice in real time. The primary

2019-2020 Water Literate Leaders of Northern Colorado  
Homework Assignment for **October 2019**

takeaway for me was that we are already in a time of great over appropriation in the South Platte Basin, and I'm increasingly concerned how the Northern Front Range will look in 5-20 years as population growth will further strain our limited supply and that we may see a dramatic shift in the landscape as farmers' water becomes more valuable than their lands. As a Realtor and leader in Trout Unlimited I'm torn between working to further the region's economic development while striving to maintain our historic agriculture roots and preserving our natural spaces & outdoor recreation opportunities.

- Western water law's history is a case study in common sense decision making, and compromise between concerned parties. This allows the juridical system, to make decrees, based on previous court's actions which has produced an efficient, although complex, process to settle water disputes and the amounts of water available from drainage of natural basins.
- Learning more about the legal process involved with water rights, and how far back in history the water rights system goes is just remarkable. It is such a complex topic that is deep in history. It is very surprising that typically in the summer, only water users with water rights dating from the 1860's to the 1890's can divert water in priority.
- It takes a long time to make change in the world of water. Water law has become such a complex system to navigate and live by, that it feels like our ability to collaborate and share a resource is so limited. It was also interesting to learn about how C-BT water shares can change use without going to water court. I see why their value (\$\$) keeps going up. \$60k for a 0.7 af share of water sounds cheap compared to the lawyers and scientists needed to build a water case.
- As a City Council member in Fort Collins, we are in the process of expanding the Halligan Reservoir to create additional storage in case of drought. It is a complicated process and one that has taken 12+ years to reach fruition. Although the Halligan water will be stored for Fort Collins, I have learned that, just because you see water in a lake or reservoir, it doesn't mean you own it. So much diverting going on! Water is such a legal matter in Colorado and it is a fascinating topic that I look forward to learning more about as we pursue our Water Leaders class.
- Colorado has a unique water legal system based on prior appropriation for beneficial use adjudicated in water court. Water is a public property for which people can acquire rights. C-BT water is especially prized because it can be used anywhere within Northern Water's boundaries without going to Water Court.

**What questions do you have based on what you heard from today's speakers and group discussion?**

- My questions about what I heard was to understand how we can refill reservoirs when we had so few free flow days? With so much snowfall this year, the weather helped us avoid floods but did not permit much in the way of capturing water for future use.
- We need a flow chart of how the various agencies work together. There are many involved agencies, but I'm not yet clear on who is responsible for what and who coordinates with whom. We heard that Poudre water comes from the native river, C-BT, and other transbasin supplies. I printed out a map of C-BT. It's not clear where

2019-2020 Water Literate Leaders of Northern Colorado  
Homework Assignment for **October 2019**

the water re-enters the river since it appears to be piped through RMNP. The same goes for the Big Thompson.

- I would like to know why, during a “free water” allowance on a river, even after all parties, no matter how junior or senior their rights are, the water commissioners or ditch riders can guarantee that there still will be enough water to satisfy all parties a hundred miles away (i.e. in Kansas or Nebraska etc) with what water they are entitled too based on our state’s long standing agreements with them?
- I still have questions about the decrease of agricultural land in our area. I have some questions about Native American Water Rights. After listening to the Division 1 Engineer and the Water Commissioners, I have questions about how their jobs and departments are funded, what their office structures look like, how they mentor the next generation of water commissioners, and I am curious to their personal insights for the future of water.
- In a changing Front Range from traditional agriculture to municipal growth, is there an opportunity to smoothly transition water rights to new uses including conservation and river health? Also with projected Front Range population increase on systems already over budgeted for water, how will we be able to sustainably accommodate increased use demands?
- The engineers certainly understand how our current water laws are written, applied and adjudicated. From their perspective, I would love to hear what practical changes to water law they would see as being beneficial.
- I'd like to know if there are existing or emerging tools to help water management entities, rights holders and municipalities plan for smart growth in the region in response to dwindling water supplies and the exponential population growth that is expected by mid-century. It seems fundamentally wrong to buy and dry farms only to replace high performing agricultural areas with track housing and sod that require large amounts of water. If water use projections were reduced for homes and water tap fees we could reduce home prices, increase affordability while keeping water in rivers or feeding crops.
- How will the past century plus of western water law hold up to future changes and pressures made by state compacts and federal mandated policies? How will laws apply, as the supply/demand curve becomes ever more divergent?
- It seems that there are immense challenges and complexities with a change of use case. Given the associated time, cost and effort it takes, I would be curious to know what percentage of change of use cases are successfully completed and the average time it takes from start to finish.
- Roy Otto mentioned a survey that was going out to Northern Colorado Communities to see how much people knew about water. I would be curious to see what questions are being asked in the survey. I would like to learn more about the history behind the formation of ditch companies. Which municipalities now own large quantities of shares in them? I bet there is a map to look up here. How do RICD’s work? What is the history behind Fort Collins’ RICDs?
- I heard plenty about the laws governing the diversion of water from a stream for immediate use but, since most water in Colorado is stored at some point, I want to learn about the laws governing water storage. As Colorado’s economy, population, and related needs change, I wonder how our water law should and could be adapted

to work better for us today. In particular, how can environmental and recreational rights be elevated?

**What did you learn today that encouraged you, discouraged you, or captured your attention to the extent that you could see yourself engaging in it further?**

- I frankly am scared by the trajectory of our population growth and the increasing trend of water scarcity. In addition, I am concerned how ill informed our population is in terms of this water issue. Education is imperative, as is conservation. We will need to have significant collaboration to figure out ways to solve a problem that will only escalate with our population growth.
- I was not crystal clear on what Jean Lever was saying about peak flows from the Big Thompson, but it seems like the message is if the water comes too late, as in 2019, it is a problem for the farmers. I'll be curious to learn more about storage and if that helps to mitigate the timing issues.
- A key takeaway from this month's meeting was finding out how arduous a process water court is based on existing law and how long it can take for the parties involved to have their case heard. It was fascinating to see how much individual cases that go through water court really are treated the same way cases would be in a criminal court with a hearing, judge, and how both parties involved must be present at the time of the hearing.
- The history of water in the west is such an accelerated topic. Although less than two centuries old, the laws and regulations that were put in place early in the history have so much power in how water issues manifest today which is fascinating.
- I was unaware that we had water commissioners for Thompson and Poudre rivers, and everything they do.
- Instream diversions, water rights, and how recreation will impact water rights and laws captured my attention.
- Amy Beatie was an amazing, enthusiastic presenter with a wonderful message of hope and encouragement. Starting new endeavors and reinventing oneself can be a very daunting task, and she has successfully pulled it off multiple times. Her suggestion that it is ok to try to fail, while learning from that failure, and that sometimes jumping into uncertainty with the confidence that it will work out is needed to move off the rut you're in is helpful for me. Taking the leap can be scary.
- I appreciated Amy Beatie's presentation. Oftentimes, the challenge for leadership is going through a process without really being sure where you are going to end up. You need to build a lot, and may not have a lot of reassurances you can give to your co-workers, bosses, etc., so trust is paramount. Additionally, you may do great work, and then have the rug pulled out from under you and realize that your plan is no longer relevant. In all, I found myself connecting with her and understanding how difficult some of those challenges were. Additionally, I found her process of keeping water in the river during the drought was very innovative—through diversity she found a very creative solution. I believe that it will stand as a framework in the future as the state is required to keep our water compacts whole.
- I'll keep an eye on the various storage projects planned for the coming years. I have both personal and professional interests in seeing these come to fruition in order to

2019-2020 Water Literate Leaders of Northern Colorado  
Homework Assignment for **October 2019**

meet growing urban demands while also holding promise for a more sustainable management of the Poudre and other river systems.

- “First in time- first in right” tries to protect early water users, but the adjudication process, and time of submission of this prior appropriation doctrine can be a lengthy process. I was discouraged that as water shares are changed to municipal uses, farming and ditch companies are impacted by these calls, due to lack of storage for peak runoff.
- I thought that the leadership challenge with Amy Beatie was great. It was amazing to hear her story, her journey and perspective on leadership. It was refreshing to know that even with all the challenges she has faced, if you have enough passion, drive and perseverance, you can get through it, and end up where you need and want to be. I especially enjoyed her leadership reference to her experiences with white water rafting. “Sometimes you can sit back and analyze and see how your team does, and let some people struggle and learn; and sometimes when you hit whitewater, you need to take charge, be direct, make quick decisions, take action, etc.”. It was a very visual reference that could be applied in just about any leadership situation – that was a great take-away for me.
- The conversation with water referee, John Cowan, was fascinating. It makes me want to read the Water Court Resumes on a regular basis just to watch how people are using, changing, and requesting new water rights. It was interesting to hear about the time frames for changing use within a water right. When working on master planning for communities and identifying where new development might occur, the water capabilities are certainly the biggest wild card in the probability of successful execution. I am also interested in continuing the conversation to protect in-stream flows for the Poudre River through downtown Fort Collins. I am curious about Recreational In Channel Diversions and searching the Water Court’s Resumes might give some case studies for other cities in Colorado where this was achieved. For example the June 2001 court decree protected flows on Clear Creek through downtown Golden. In reading that decree, the “substantial economic benefit from the recreational use of the [whitewater] course” was cited as part of the beneficial water use justifications for the City of Golden. This only leads to more questions I need to figure out...like why can’t a private entity or individual hold a RICD? Why was the CWCB against this use of water right? Would a decree like this actually protect in stream flows on the Poudre or are we too far behind prior appropriation? And who do I need to inspire to go collect this recreational data on our own downtown stretch of the Poudre River?
- I enjoyed learning about the vast responsibilities of the Water Commissioner and the State Hydraulic Engineer and how long ago their positions were created by the Legislature. I was particularly interested in the topic of diversion and storage.
- When I first heard that water rights in Colorado are adjudicated in a special court rather than an administrative agency, I was disappointed that we used an adversarial procedure. When we visited water court and met with the water referee, I was heartened to see that most of the cases in water court are actually decided in a more collaborative administrative process with few cases going to trial. I was disappointed to learn that, after all the debate about maintaining a minimum flow in the Poudre with NISP, the Big Thompson has no minimum flow requirement.