
The Future of Western Slope Water is uncertain.

The questions and the rumors are abundant while the answers are vague and in many cases frightening.

The Colorado Agricultural Water Alliance (CAWA) has been created to bring leaders within the agricultural industry together to voluntarily discuss water issues. Members of the CAWA includes representatives from Colorado Cattlemen Association, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Colorado Farm Bureau, Western Dairy Association, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, Colorado Livestock Association, Green Industries of Colorado, Colorado Corn Growers, Colorado Aquaculture, Colorado Horse Council and the Colorado Onion Association. The Colorado Department of Agriculture and Colorado State University provide support and act in an advisory capacity.



CAWA and the Colorado Ag Council hosted the 2007 Ag Water Summit on December 14th at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Denver. Routt County participants included Sarah Hagenbuch, Geoff Blakeslee, Marsha Daughenbaugh, Todd Hagenbuch and Margaret Gay Hagenbuch. Mary Brown was able to be in attendance for part of the afternoon discussions.

The day was long and the roads were awful but the summit was well worth the effort to attend. Presentations were made by Dick Wolfe, Colorado State Water Engineer; Harris Sherman, Director of Colorado Department of Natural Resources; John Stulp, Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture; Reagan Waskom, CSU; Rich Brown, Colorado Water Conservation Board; Dr. James Pritchett, CSU; and Justice Greg Hobbs, Colorado Supreme Court. A panel of representatives from each of the five statewide water roundtables reported on the endeavors being accomplished by each of the areas: Mary Brown, the agricultural representative from the Yampa/White Roundtable represented our area's interests. A presentation was also given on the water situation in the Lower Arkansas River Valley. And lots of time was given during breaks and at lunch to allow the attendees to network with each other.

The formation of CAWA and the development of the water summits are historic because they bring agri-industry people together to talk about their individual water needs and the broader issues that are facing each river basin and the entire state. Less than 3% of all Coloradoans are farmers and ranchers yet we serve the state by providing safe food, jobs, open space, working landscapes, wildlife habitat and a sense of heritage. We realize that the picture is much bigger than any one industry and we must pull together or we will be pulled apart by urban and recreational demands.

Water is the lifeblood of agriculture and it is a call to action for everyone to become active in the debates and discussions that are occurring across Colorado and the West.

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