

Technical Memorandum

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Prepared by: Sigler Communications, Inc.

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SPROWG Feasibility Study consulting team

Limitations:

This document was prepared solely for the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District in accordance with professional standards at the time the services were performed and in accordance with the contract between the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District and Brown and Caldwell dated March 18, 2019. This document is governed by the specific scope of work authorized by the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District; it is not intended to be relied upon by any other party except for regulatory authorities contemplated by the scope of work. We have relied on information or instructions provided by Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District and other parties and, unless otherwise expressly indicated, have made no independent investigation as to the validity, completeness, or accuracy of such information.

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List of Abbreviations

ATM Alternative Transfer Method

AWRA American Water Resources Association

IGA Intergovernmental Agreement
IBCC Interbasin Compact Committee
MOU Memorandum of Understanding

SP BIP South Platte Basin Implementation Plan

SPROWG South Platte Regional Opportunities Working Group

Executive Summary

The SPROWG Feasibility Study (Study) integrates the initial work of the South Platte Regional Opportunities Water Group (SPROWG) and the South Platte Storage Study to refine the concept of a future multi-purpose water supply concept in the South Platte River basin. The Feasibility Study seeks to answer important questions regarding water demands, governance structure, water treatment strategies and project costs as well as identify opportunities to protect and improve water-dependent natural resources and recreation experiences.

The Study report was published in March 2020. This communications plan describes recommended strategies and tactics to announce and share the study results and move the concept into the feasibility phase. If the concept progresses, subsequent phases (e.g., participant identification and engagement, planning, permitting, design, construction and operations) would require additional communications and outreach to support each phase.

The communications plan presented herein works to fulfill the following goals:

- Educate stakeholders and create awareness needed to refine the recommended governance, operational, and infrastructure concepts.
- Educate potential SPROWG participants to facilitate recruitment.
- Educate ratepayers/taxpayers on the need for the SPROWG Concept and on funding.
- Continue stakeholder engagement and transparency to build stakeholder support.

Section 1: Introduction

The SPROWG Study evaluated a regional approach to develop water supply and delivery to meet projected population growth and to fulfill a significant portion of the South Platte Basin's future water needs. The approach was first considered in the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan (SP BIP) as a "Conceptual Future In-Basin Multipurpose Project". In 2015, a group of South Platte water managers began exploring strategies for advancing the concept described in the SP BIP. In a parallel effort, the South Platte Storage Study, authorized by the Colorado General Assembly (HB 16-1256), evaluated the South Platte River between Kersey and the Nebraska state line for potential water storage strategies that could meet the considerable water gap identified in Colorado's Water Plan.

The SPROWG Study integrated the initial work of the South Platte water managers and the South Platte Storage Study. It sought to answer important questions regarding water demands, governance structure, water treatment strategies and project costs as well as identify opportunities to protect and improve water-dependent natural resources and recreation experiences.

The project team conducted a considerable amount of targeted stakeholder outreach with municipal, industrial, and agriculture users, and recreation and environmental groups. Input from these stakeholders has been used to guide organizational and technical evaluations as well help shape options and choices for future action.

The recent analysis studied four concepts that will yield at least 50,000 acre-feet of water for municipal and industrial purposes and 10,000 acre-feet for agriculture (with more yield in different alternatives). Following are descriptions of the four concepts that were evaluated:

Alternative 1: Refine the Initial Concept

Alternative 1 would meet the same performance objectives as the concept developed by South Platte water managers (described above), but it was refined based on the feedback received from municipal, agricultural, environmental and recreational stakeholders during the SPROWG Study. The SPROWG concept seeks to meet 50,000 acre-feet per year of future municipal and industrial needs for South Platte communities along with some municipal and agricultural needs on the eastern plains. Water will be stored and managed using three potential off-channel storage facilities just downstream of Denver, near Kersey (which is near Greeley), and near Balzac (which is just downstream of Fort Morgan).

Alternative 2: Balzac First

Alternative 2 would meet a similar amount of future South Platte water demand as Alternative 1, but it assumes that the storage facility just downstream of Fort Morgan near Balzac will serve as a hub of operations. It also assumes that a pipeline will be constructed to convey water from Balzac back to the Denver Metro area. Alternative 2 will also seek to meet more eastern plains demand than Alternative 1.

Alternative 3: Add Julesburg Storage

Alternative 3 builds on Alternative 2 by considering a fourth storage facility near Julesburg on the eastern plains. The additional storage will allow the SPROWG Concept to meet more agricultural and municipal demand on the eastern plains. Target water demands for the Front Range are the same as in Alternatives 1 and 2.

Alternative 4: Additional Delivery

Alternative 4 includes all of the water storage and conveyance infrastructure in Alternatives 3, but the size of storage facilities is increased by 75% in an effort to investigate how much additional demand along the Front Range and eastern plains could be met with larger storage facilities.

This phase of the analysis also included comparison of potential organizational structures that could be adopted to implement, own and operate a regional water project with multiple participants of different kinds of organizations. Thirteen options were identified, and the following six were selected for additional analysis. The options were compared and contrasted, but no recommendation was made.

- **Existing Governmental Entity** Part of an existing public entity (e.g., the State, a city, a water conservancy district) would own and operate facilities and provide water to other participants.
- **Regional Water Authority** Form a new water agency (similar to South Metro Regional Water Authority) with membership comprised of project participants.
- Water Conservancy District Form a new water conservancy district (similar to Northern Water or Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District) to own/operate the project and provide water to project participants.
- Non-Profit Corporation Establish a non-profit corporation (e.g., Chatfield Reservoir Mitigation Company or a mutual ditch and reservoir company) to own/operate the project and deliver water to project participants in accordance with contract rights or share ownership.
- Intergovernmental Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding Execute IGAs or MOUs between project participants (similar to Eagle River MOU) to define terms of project ownership and operation.

This communications plan describes recommended strategies and tactics to announce and share the study results and move the concept into the feasibility phase. If the concept progresses, subsequent phases (e.g., participant identification and engagement, planning, permitting, design, construction and operations) would require additional communications and outreach to support each phase.

Guiding Principles

Foundational Guiding Principles describing the SPROWG Concept, developed at the initiation of the Study, ensured that participants had a common understanding of the SPROWG Concept objectives, and that information was consistently communicated.

Table 1 provides a summary of the guiding principles that supported the initial collaboration of the SPROWG Concept.

Table 1. Abbreviated Guiding Principles for the SPROWG Concept Principles describing what SPROWG *is* Principles describing what SPROWG *is not* SPROWG will advance the goals of the South Platte/Metro Basin SPROWG is not intended to be a substitute for Implementation Plan (BIP) and Colorado's Water Plan, and will be consistent existing or planned projects. with Colorado water law, interstate compacts/agreements. SPROWG intends to provide at least 50,000 acre-feet of yield to meet part of SPROWG is not intended to store supplies from an the projected municipal and industrial water supply project gap in the South existing or new transmountain diversion project Platte basin. A significant portion of this yield is targeted for smaller but (though it will provide a means to utilize unused rapidly growing communities between Denver and Greeley and larger reusable return flows from transmountain communities in the Denver Metro area and northern Colorado. The project will diversions). also explore providing supplies to smaller communities east of Greeley. SPROWG will utilize different sources of water available in the South Platte SPROWG is not intended to be used to deliver basin and manage them conjunctively to achieve an overall reliable yield water developed from the permanent dry up of irrigated lands in the South Platte basin. beyond what an individual source could produce. SPROWG will identify and incorporate strategies to address environmental and recreational needs. SPROWG intends to enhance the ability to conduct alternative water transfers, thus reducing the need for traditional buy-and-dry transfers SPROWG is intended to help water supply organizations and water users maximize the use of in-basin supplies. SPROWG intends to improve integration of water quality and quantity planning and management activities. SPROWG intends to meet a portion of the agricultural gap.

Section 2: Communication Plan Goals

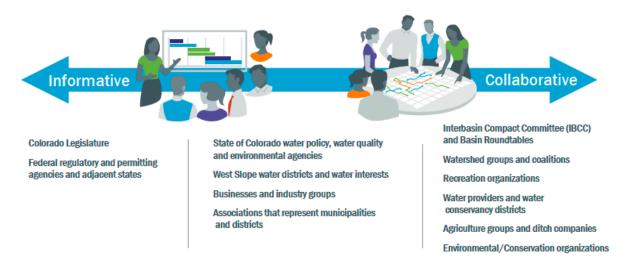
The communications plan would work to fulfill the following goals:

- Educate stakeholders and create awareness needed to refine the recommended governance, operational, and infrastructure concepts.
- Educate potential SPROWG participants to facilitate recruitment.
- Educate ratepayers/taxpayers on the need for the SPROWG Concept and on funding.
- Continue stakeholder engagement and transparency to build stakeholder support.

Stakeholders

A wide variety of stakeholders will need to be engaged in the future to meet the communications goals. Each group's information needs will vary.

Stakeholder groups require different methods of communication and engagement.



Following are general categories of key stakeholder groups that should be targeted for outreach. Communication methods and content should be tailored to the needs of the various stakeholder groups as illustrated in the graphic above. See Appendix A for a detailed list of suggested stakeholders.

- State of Colorado water policy, water quality and environmental agencies
- Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) and Basin Roundtables
- Colorado Legislature
- Associations that represent municipalities and water districts
- Water and soil conservation districts
- Water providers and water conservancy districts
- Environmental, conservation organizations, watershed groups and coalitions
- Recreation interests/organizations
- Agriculture groups and ditch companies
- West Slope water districts and water interests
- Water dependent businesses
- Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Councils, Realtor groups
- Federal regulatory and permitting agencies and adjacent states

In addition to the above stakeholders, the general public should be educated and engaged. If, for example, a ballot measure is proposed to raise funds for a water project such as SPROWG, the general public will need to understand the need for additional supplies and the importance of the water project to meeting future demands. Developing this understanding in the general public will be necessary for a successful ballot measure.

Key Messages

The following key messages were developed during the Feasibility Study to guide communications. Each core message in bold is supported by additional messages/facts.

- 1. While communities in the South Platte River Basin continue to make great strides in decreasing water demands through conservation, there remains a need for additional water supplies.
 - South Platte Basin is home to 80% of the state's population and provides 80% of the state economic and tax base.
 - By 2050, the population in the South Platte Basin is expected to increase from approximately 3.8 million to 6 million.
 - The newly-released Analysis and Technical Update to Colorado's Water Plan projected a municipal supply gap in the South Platte Basin of about 180,000 to 540,000 acre-feet annually by about 2050.
 - The newly-released Analysis and Technical update to Colorado's Water Plan identified current agricultural gaps in the South Platte Basin are approximately 500,000 acre-feet per year, and agricultural gaps by the year 2050 ranging from 375,000 to nearly 450,000 acre-feet per year.
 - The Basin is challenged with the greatest projected supply gap of any of Colorado's river basins and has the state's largest population. (The Basin faces 75% of the projected statewide municipal water supply gap).
 - Increased conservation is essential but that alone will not meet growing demands for rapidly
 growing communities including those along I-25, bounded on the east by U.S. 85 and the west by
 U.S. 287, and extending from Denver's northern suburbs to U.S. 34 running from Loveland to
 Greeley.
 - Between 1996 and 2015, almost 300,000 acre-feet of water (on average) annually flowed into Nebraska that was beyond the amount negotiated in the South Platte River Compact (though this amount varied greatly each year).
 - Water is also needed to adequately support agriculture and maintain and enhance environmental and recreation resources.
 - 26% of Colorado's irrigated agricultural acreage is found in the South Platte Basin.
 - Agriculture is the dominant water user in the Basin (75% of the diversions). Not only does it provide food, fuel, and fiber, it also sustains aquatic and terrestrial habitat in many areas of the basin.
- 2. The South Platte Regional Opportunities Water Group (SPROWG) study is evaluating comprehensive solutions to help meet the gap.
 - The Study is a collaboration of South Platte Basin stakeholders representing agricultural, municipal/industrial, environmental, recreational interests and conservation districts.
 - The Study built upon previous studies to conceive a regional, collaborative, multi-objective approach to water resource management in the Basin.
 - The Study explored a variety of governance structures to fund, administer and operate a new collaborative water supply project in the Basin.
 - The SPROWG Concept is not an alternative to existing projects that water providers are currently pursuing and is intended to help meet future needs beyond other planned projects.

3. SPROWG is studying ways to meet future needs by strategically managing existing supplies.

- The SPROWG Concept envisions a collaborative and regional approach, sharing costs, infrastructure and supplies to help meet growing water demands in the South Platte Basin.
- Initial concepts include the development of multiple "off-channel" storage reservoirs, both above and below ground, capable of holding at least 215,000 acre-feet of water and the necessary infrastructure to move the water within the Basin.
- The goal is to develop a system which when operated will result in at least an additional 50,000 acre-feet or more of water annually to meet part of the Basin's municipal/industrial needs and additional supplies to meet agricultural water needs.
- Storage reservoirs could be filled from a variety of sources of water including: the unappropriated South Platte River water not obligated to senior water rights; reusable water that has been treated and returned to the river; temporary leasing arrangements with farmers including Alternative Transfer Methods (ATMs); recharge credits that are surplus to the needs of the augmentation plans that create them; and in some limited ways, groundwater.
- Reservoirs operate much like a savings account, banking water in wet years to use in dry years and helping better manage the effects of climate variability.

4. The study is evaluating ways to optimize the use of water supplies available in the South Platte Basin.

- The SPROWG Concept would make use of reusable water from project participants and from the project itself, thereby improving the overall efficiency of water use in the South Platte Basin.
- A distinguishing element of the SPROWG Concept is that it will likely rely on "exchanges" to move water as much as possible. Exchanges promote maximum usage by allowing an upstream user to take water out that would usually flow downstream. The upstream user must provide the downstream user, who would have used that water, replacement water in the same amount, timing and quality as the other source. Using exchanges can reduce the amount of infrastructure (pipes) needed to move water from one place to another.
- The SPROWG Concept would provide an opportunity to facilitate ATMs between willing partners, thereby helping protect agricultural water users from permanent transfers while meeting longterm municipal needs.
- The SPROWG Concept would combine available water supplies and system capacities to create a sustainable and efficient water supply to help address long-term water supply needs.
- The efficient use of water through full utilization of existing resources is a sustainable means of meeting water demands and reducing reliance on non-renewable water resources.

A broad and diverse group of stakeholders representing water utilities/providers, agriculture, rural communities, environmental and recreational interests will provide input to the SPROWG process.

- SPROWG stakeholders are working together to find a regional solution to future demands.
- The Study was guided by a 14-member Advisory Committee that includes members from various stakeholder groups.
- Frequent input was sought from a 90+ member Task Force, which was open to any interested stakeholder.
- Workgroups that include the major interest groups represented on the Task Force provided input and guidance.

- Feedback was sought from major stakeholder groups to inform SPROWG refinements.
- Only through collaboration can a combination of infrastructure be identified that offers benefits to all who live, work, farm and recreate in the Basin.

Section 3: Near Term Activities: Communicate Feasibility Study Results

A number of stakeholders will be interested in the Feasibility Study results. Near term activities include communicating the recent Study results to interested water stakeholders in the South Platte Basin to obtain addition feedback and further refine a concept(s). The following outreach activities are recommended to reach and educate the widest group of stakeholders:

Create and Share Content and Study Findings

Materials will be created to inform stakeholders of the Study findings include:

- Updated project fact sheet.
- Study map that visually outlines the project and operational management alternatives.
- Content developed for the website, southplattebasin.com, to be housed on a dedicated project page
 that is easy to find on the site's homepage. Study reports, technical memos and other materials would
 be included on this page.

A stakeholder database should be developed to facilitate the distribution of information such as links to the Study report and subsequent research findings.

News Media and Social Media

Sharing information through the news media and various social media channels will help reach water stake-holders and the general public. A general news release summarizing the findings will be distributed to a statewide media list with a link to the final report. Reporters will be invited to the presentations noted above to learn about study findings and one-on-one interviews will be arranged as requested.

A series of social media posts highlighting Study findings could be created that can be shared with members of the Advisory Committee, Task Force, Water Education Colorado, CWCB and others to distribute through their social media channels.

Presentations/Targeted Outreach

Presentations have been scheduled with the Colorado Water Conservation Board, South Platte River Basin Roundtable, and Metro Basin Roundtable. Additionally, presentations could be made at water conferences and organization meetings (i.e., the Interbasin Compact Committee, Colorado Water Congress, Front Range Water Users Council, South Platte Forum, AWRA Colorado Section Annual Symposium, Northern Water Users Meetings, Rocky Mountain Water Conference, Colorado Farm Show, Sustaining Colorado Watershed Conference, and the Water Resources Review Committee). A project PowerPoint presentation will be updated and used to share findings. Information materials noted above could be used as handouts.

The SPROWG Concept could be incorporated into outreach activities conducted as part of the update to the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan. Additionally, targeted outreach with West Slope stakeholders is recommended.

Communications with Business Community

Presentations to the chambers and economic development groups and other businesses within the South Platte Basin could be scheduled to help educate opinion leaders on the strategies being evaluated to fill the water supply gap and how these concepts could help meet that need.

Section 4: Feasibility/Recruitment Phase Activities

Efforts to further develop the feasibility of the SPROWG Concept and recruit participants are the likely next steps in the process. The following are example outreach activities that could take place to support those efforts. The project team recommends that the outreach and education committees of the South Platte and Metro Basin Roundtables consider these activities and develop an outreach plan that incorporates these and potentially other strategies that the roundtables or potential participants deem necessary, as part of the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan Update process.

Communications/Outreach to Potential Water Provider Participants

The following approaches could be taken to further discuss concepts with water providers and other interested parties (such as mayors, city council members, boards of directors, city attorneys and water resource staff) to evaluate their interests and assess how their organizations could fit into a regional South Platte Basin water project. Priority should be given to water providers who completed the Feasibility Study survey or those that expressed interest during the Feasibility Study for follow up meetings. Below are some recommended communications activities:

- Conduct information meetings for interested project participants (muni/industrial, agriculture, environmental and recreation) similar to the meetings conducted during the Study.
- Develop a communications toolkit (PowerPoint presentation, fact sheet, infographics, animated video, newsletter articles, social media posts) for water providers and other stakeholders to use in communicating with their customers/stakeholders.
- Develop a SPROWG 'companion piece' to be used with municipalities/utilities Integrated Water Resource Plans.
- Partner with Water Education Colorado and Colorado Watershed Assembly to tie into programming and outreach opportunities on the South Platte Basin.
- Collaborate with Colorado Ag Water Alliance, CSU Extension, water districts on education and outreach.

Communications/Outreach to potential ATM participants

Agricultural stakeholders need to be approached to discuss alternative transfer methods (ATMs) that are deemed mutually beneficial to farmers and water providers. It will be important to engage these stakeholders early in the process. Following are some recommended communication activities to reach the agricultural community:

- One-on-one meetings with ditch companies and owners.
- Informational open house meetings in targeted communities.
- Use of local radio stations (KGNU radio, Progressive 15, KSIR Radio, 1010 Farm Radio) to discuss Study findings.
- Outreach to rural communities to gain information and perspectives on the importance of agriculture and potential secondary economic impacts from ATMs and mitigation strategies.
- Presentation to the Colorado Ag Water Alliance.

Communications and Outreach to the Environmental/Recreation Communities

Environmental and recreation interests have been engaged in the SPROWG Concept since the beginning and have provided valuable feedback. It will be important to continue engagement with these stakeholders to ensure that issues and suggestions raised during the Study process continue to be evaluated as the concept(s) progress. Recommended strategies are described below:

- Conduct one-on-one meeting with groups that have expressed interest.
- Engage groups through the Basin Implementation Plan update.

South Platte Basin Residents and Businesses

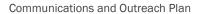
Ratepayers who will eventually be asked to help fund the development of a new water concept should be informed about its need and purpose, approach and costs. Potential participants in a South Platte Basin water concept will need information to share with their constituents to garner support. Recommended strategies are described below:

- Create a communications toolkit/content for participants to use to inform their stakeholders (white papers, key messaging, fact sheets, FAQs, infographics, news release, website content, and social media posts).
- Develop and implement a concept eNewsletter for people who sign up on the concept website.
- Provide updates through local news media and social media.

Project Branding

SPROWG is a study name and just a process at this stage. As the concept evolves into a water project(s), it will need to be renamed and branded to aid in communications and recruitment. Names should be vetted among potential project participants. Following are strategies to brand a project:

- Once a name is selected, a project logo and tagline would be developed to help establish an identity to aid in communications.
- Establish a dedicated project website which will enhance stakeholders' ability to find information about the project quickly. The website could be built with basic content initially and expanded as the project progresses through planning, permitting and construction.
- Create an animated video that shows how the project would operate for use on website and in presentations.
- Updated messaging and collateral materials as project advances.



Appendix A – Representative Stakeholder List

Following are representative stakeholders who should be informed or engaged as the project advances.

State/Region water/land use agencies:

- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Metro Basin Round Table
- Front Range Water Users Council
- South Platte Basin Round Table
- Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC)
- South Platte Water Related Activities Program (SPWRAP)
- Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP)
- State Engineers Office
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Colorado Legislators (Interim Water Resources Review Committee)
- Colorado River District
- Colorado Municipal League
- Special Districts Association
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Water Providers/Entities:

- Arapahoe County Water and Wastewater Authority
- Arvada
- Aurora Water
- Berthoud
- Boulder
- Brighton
- Broomfield
- Castle Pines MDCastle Pines North MD
- Castle Rock Water
- Centennial WSD
- Center of Colorado WCD
- Central Weld County WD
- Coalition for the Upper South Platte
- Colorado Rural Water Association
- Consolidated Mutual Water Company
- Cottonwood WSD
- Dacono
- Denver Water
- Dominion WSD
- East Cherry Creek Valley WSD
- East Larimer County WD
- Eaton
- Englewood
- Erie
- Evans
- Firestone
- Fort Collins

- Fort Collins-Loveland WD
- Fort Lupton
- Fort Morgan
- Frederick
- Gilcrest
- Golden
- Greeley
- Henderson
- Hudson
- Inverness WSD
- Johnstown
- Julesburg
- Kersey
- Lafayette
- Left Hand Water District
- Little Thompson Water District
- Lochbuie
- Longmont
- Louisville
- Loveland
- Meridian MD
- Metro Wastewater
- Milliken
- Morgan County Quality WD
- Mount Carbon Metro District
- North Weld County WD
- Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District
- Northglenn
- Parker WSD
- Pinery W&WWD
- Platteville
- Rangeview MD
- Severance
- South Adams County Water and Sanitation District
- South Metro Water Supply Authority
- Sterling
- Stonegate Village MD
- Superior
- Thornton
- United Water and Sanitation District
- Wellington
- Westminster
- Wiggins
- Windsor

Environmental/Conservation Groups:

- Colorado Water Trust
- Barr Milton Watershed Association
- Big Thompson Watershed Coalition
- Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
- Chatfield Watershed Authority
- Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority
- Western Resource Advocates
- Trout Unlimited
- Nature Conservancy
- Ducks Unlimited
- Greenway Foundation
- National Audubon Society
- American Whitewater
- American Rivers
- Coalition for the Poudre Watershed
- Coalition for the Upper South Platte
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Colorado Water Trust
- Colorado Watershed Assembly
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Left Hand Watershed Center
- Middle South Platte River Alliance
- Poudre River Coalition
- Water Quality Control Division
- Conservation Colorado

Agriculture Groups:

- St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District
- Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District
- Central Colorado Water Conservancy District
- Colorado Cattlemen's Association
- Colorado Livestock Association
- Corn Growers Association
- Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance
- Northeast Colorado Water Co-op
- Ditch companies and augmentation plans

Industry:

- Colorado Oil and Gas Association
- Brewers Association/Colorado Craft Brewers
- Encana
- Anadarko
- Xcel Energy
- Tri-State
- Platte River Power Authority
- Sand Hills Metropolitan District

- Sorin Natural Resources
- Windy Hill Water Operations LLC
- Gravel mining businesses
 - Varra Industries
 - o Aggregate Industries
 - o Loveland Ready-Mix Concrete
 - o Martin Mariette
- Trade Associations and Chambers: Associated Landscape Contractor of Colorado, Community Association Institute, Home Builders Association, Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, chambers and EDCs in the South Platte Basin

Other Interested Entities:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Forest Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nebraska
- Wyoming