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For Information Contact:
Karla Brown, Outreach Coordinator
Cell: 303.589.8418
outreach@southplattebasin.com

Water Roundtables to Host Local Meetings, Webinars

Longmont – You are invited to learn more about ongoing regional planning efforts in the South Platte Basin to address projected long-term water supply shortfalls. In February, the South Platte Basin and Metro Roundtables are hosting special information and input sessions and webinars, regarding their joint regional water planning effort known as the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan (BIP). The meetings will be held February 10 in Sterling, and February 11 in Denver. Free webinars covering the same topics will also be hosted Thursday February 5. For all meeting and webinar details see the end of this article.

The South Platte Basin and Metro Roundtables are composed of diverse volunteers representing agricultural, municipal, industrial, governmental, environmental and recreational interests. They were created by the State Legislature in 2005, along with seven other roundtables representing each of Colorado's river basins. They are tasked with determining how to meet the State's projected near- and long-term water needs.

At a local level, the Roundtables are developing Basin Implementation Plans outlining how to best address predicted water needs for all uses. Draft BIPs were released in July 2014, and final BIPs are due in April 2015. The BIPs discuss how much water is needed for the region's future, and how to meet the gap between demand and supply. Members of the South Platte Basin and Metro Roundtables have dedicated countless hours over the last decade to finding solutions that are pragmatic, balanced, and consistent with Colorado law and property rights. However, there is still much work that needs to be done to provide for the water needs of the South Platte Basin, including the Denver Metro area, and the State as a whole.

Colorado's nine roundtables are currently completing BIPs that will contribute to the formation of Colorado's Water Plan. A first draft of the Water Plan was released to the public December 10, 2014. This 419-page document has been under development since May 2013, following an executive order by Gov. John Hickenlooper, who described the draft as "a new way to conduct our water business." Work on Colorado's Water Plan will continue through 2015, with a final version due in December 2015.

Joe Frank, Chair of the South Platte Basin Roundtable, emphasized that "the Roundtables are traveling throughout the basin to educate the public on water supply shortages and other challenges. We need public feedback on solutions for our meeting current and future water needs."

Mark Koleber, Chair of the Metro Roundtable, also encouraged public participation, saying "It's important for the public to understand our water supply situation, and to provide input on how to best address the challenges that we'll be facing in the very near future."

Meeting Times and Locations

The next South Platte Basin Roundtable meeting is on Tuesday February 10, 2015, at the Ramada Inn, 2500 East Chestnut, Sterling. From 4:00-5:00pm, the Roundtable will provide a presentation on the BIP, followed by a public question and answer session. Regular Roundtable business will be discussed from 5:00-8:00pm. Doors will open at 3:45pm. These meetings are free and the public may attend either or both of these sessions.

The next Metro Roundtable meeting is Wednesday February 11, 2015 at The Lowery Conference Center, 1061 Akron Way, Denver. From 4:00-5:00pm, the Roundtable will provide a presentation on the BIP, followed by a public question and answer session. Regular Roundtable business will be discussed from 5:00-7:00pm. Doors will open at 3:45pm. These meetings are free and the public may attend either or both of these sessions.

Webinar Information

A free webinar will be held Thursday February 5, from 12:00 to 1:00pm. To participate, go to southplattebasin.com and click the "Join Webinar Now" button. Each session will include a live audiovisual presentation, followed by opportunities to ask questions, either via text or phone.

For more information about the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan, go to www.southplattebasin.com.