



Colorado WaterWise
Colorado Water – Live Like You Love it
Communication Plan
Developed by for Colorado WaterWise
By Sigler Communications, Inc.
October 2014 -- FINAL

Situation Analysis:

Colorado water providers and others with a role in managing our state’s most valuable natural resource face a serious challenge. In an analysis of research conducted for Colorado WaterWise (CWW), it appears many of the people who currently pay or will be paying for water do not understand its value, how it gets to their tap, and the finite nature of the resource. (See Appendix A for full research analysis.)

Additionally, people ages 18-34 who have lived in Colorado less than 10 years are the least concerned and informed about water quality, availability and infrastructure. Several barriers also were noted to increasing appreciation of water among Coloradans, including the complexity of the issues; low price of water; and the lack of overarching, consistent and compelling messages about water across the state.

Research identified shortfalls in awareness of the following areas:

- **The Life Cycle of Water:** Most residents lack understanding of the life cycle of water, including the long journey it takes from source to treatment plant to tap, as well as the effort and infrastructure required in this elaborate process.
- **The Finite Nature of Water/Projected Shortfalls:** Many residents do not have the high level of awareness required to instill an appropriate sense of urgency and value for the state’s water resources.
- **The True Cost of Water:** Respondents cited the low price of water as one of the greatest barriers to increasing appreciation for the resource.

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- **The Varied Uses of Water:** Lack of understanding of multiple water uses, and specifically how much water is used by various users, was noted.

One thing the research did make clear is that people do have an emotional connection to their water. One survey noted that those interviewed value water more than any other service – electricity, Internet, cellphone and cable television.

Simple information about the value of water exists in general, but little of that is specific to Colorado. Information that addresses issues in Colorado is often technical and/or lengthy, and geared to a more informed audience. A number of utilities in Colorado, particularly the larger water providers, have robust water conservation campaigns and messaging, but very few deliver messages comprehensively in the context of the value of water to Coloradans. Colorado does not have a statewide, consumer-friendly water conservation information campaign such as those in other states: California’s [Save our Water](#), Arizona’s [Water Use It Wisely](#), and Texas’ [Water Smart](#).

The state of Colorado is embarking on its first statewide water plan. One of the plan’s recommendations will be to deliver more education throughout our state on the importance of water and water conservation.

Recognizing that educating consumers about the value of water they use and purchase is a critical foundation to having meaningful conversations about some pressing issues related to water, Colorado WaterWise proactively embarked on developing a communications toolkit for its members and sponsors in 2014. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide members with professionally produced informational tools and cohesive messaging to help educate the public about the importance of water in our state and why it’s worth conserving and caring for.

To access the toolkit, logo and other components, an organization must be a member of CWW, or agree to a financial sponsorship and become a project partner. Members and project partners will have access to a password-protected area of the CWW website to download materials. Eventually, all materials could be housed on a campaign website.

CWW retained Sigler Communications, Inc., a Denver-based strategic communications firm with water expertise, to develop identified components of the toolkit and this communications plan to guide members with implementation. Additionally, CWW tasked the firm with developing a “brand” for the toolkit including a name, slogan and logo, and with creating initial, basic tools that members could disseminate to their customers/constituents.

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Toolkit Goals:

To support Colorado WaterWise members' efforts to raise awareness of and appreciation for the value of Colorado water among their customers and constituents, and to encourage conservation, protection and needed investment in our water systems for continued water delivery.

Strategy/Target Market:

Based on the analysis of existing research and given the limited resources available to develop toolkit materials that speak to multiple audiences, Sigler Communications recommended focusing on a defined target audience for the initial toolkit to maximize the budget and ensure messages resonate. Based on research analyzed, the firm recommended targeting Millennials, the generation born 1980s-2003, for the following reasons:

- 51% of this group thinks Colorado has enough water to meet current needs.
- 39% feel the state has enough water to meet future needs.
- 27% are more concerned about water quality in the home than older residents.
- They are more concerned about water quality of rivers, lakes and streams than availability, which indicates they may be less likely to support future water infrastructure investments or water storage projects.
- They represent a large segment of the population (86 million nationally, which is about 7% larger than baby boomers).
- They comprise the largest group of incoming customers for water utilities.
- They will be the next generation of residents who will likely experience serious water issues, including drought, funding aging water infrastructure, more stringent water conservation measures, higher water rates and lifestyle decisions.
- They tend to be more civic-minded and environmentally conscious.
- They are better educated, and tend to trust government more than their parents or grandparents.
- They will be entering the parenting stage of life and will be valuable water advocates for the next generation of water customers.

This audience would greatly benefit from education on our state's water future, the importance of this resource and what it takes to get water to the tap.

It appears less necessary to initially target longer-term or older Colorado residents with water availability messages because these audiences already recognize the risk of potential water shortages. Additionally, it would require significantly more resources than currently allocated to target minority audiences, given this would require dual-language campaigns for Hispanics and creative that targets specific demographics. However, certain ethnic groups (Hispanics/African-Americans) would benefit from education about water quality/quantity according to the research findings, and would be good audiences to target for future phases of a long-term campaign.

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By targeting the older segment of the Millennials group, we should align our toolkit to ensure the communications tools we use resonate with this group. We would more heavily rely upon digital and social media to reach this audience. It is estimated 74% of young adults have smartphones, and they switch between communications platforms and devices 27 times per nonworking hour.

Toolkit Brand Name and Slogan:

With research validating that people have an emotional connection to water and to our state, we have opted for a campaign theme that leverages both of these. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to make an emotional connection between Coloradans and the water they need to sustain the quality of their lives. It also plays off of state pride and the fact that Colorado is a source state. A “do the right thing message” will more likely motivate the target audience.

It is beneficial to deliver statewide messages concurrent with individual utilities delivering their own specific water communications. If you look at the tourism industry as an example, the state of Colorado markets the state as a whole, while individual towns and cities market their unique attributes. The statewide messages talk in general terms, allowing more targeted messaging to occur at the local level. This same approach could be used in water education and in fact, is being used by most other large Western states.

The Colorado WaterWise toolkit emphasizes the positive emotional connection people have to their water instead of a punitive or “preachy” call-to-action.

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Name/Slogan: Colorado Water: Live Like You Love It

Calls to Action:

If you live like you love water, you:

- **Conserve** it.
- **Care** for it.
- **Commit** to learning about it and make your voice heard.

Key messages:

- Water is scarce and finite so it's critical that people do their part to conserve.
- The water cycle is a massive recycle, so it's important to care about how our lifestyles may impact water quality.
- Millions of people rely upon Colorado water – in addition to Colorado, 18 other states rely upon Colorado water.
- To ensure Colorado and other states have needed water, we must plan accordingly now and live a lifestyle that shows we love the water that originates here.
- Everyone who benefits from Colorado water needs to be a good steward of this resource.

Communications Tools:

The toolkit materials developed are available to CWW members. They will be accessed in a members' only section of the website. Co-branding is available for the fact sheets and ad. Members can add their logo and website address through an editable PDF.

The components of the toolkit include:

- A general overview fact sheet
- Three Colorado "Fourteener" fact sheets on indoor and outdoor conservation and protecting water quality
- A 1:40 animated video on value of Colorado water
- Facebook posts copy and photos
- One print ad
- Web banner ad
- PowerPoint slides
- Water cycle infographic
- Water use infographic

Suggested Implementation Strategies and Tactics:

Fact Sheet: The general fact sheet developed for CWW serves as the toolkit’s message platform. Information can be extracted and shared through social media, websites, newsletters, customer communications, media relations and other methods. It also can be used as a mailer to customers, be posted on a CWW member’s website, and distributed at conferences and events.

Video: A 1:40 minute animated video explains to the target audience why Colorado water is such an important topic and provides a visual overview of the water cycle in Colorado. The video could be posted on the CWW members’ websites, used in presentations, posted as a link in social media posts and housed on the members’ YouTube channels. Additionally, CW-LLYLI will post the video on a CWW YouTube channel.

Fourteener Fact Sheets: Three “Fourteener” fact sheets each contain 14 tips that address the topics of indoor and outdoor water conservation and water quality protection. The Fourteener theme reinforces Colorado water and where our water comes from. Tips can be used as part of customer education in social media posts and in website content.

Sample Ads: A sample ad has been created and can be sized for a newspaper or magazine. A web banner ad is also included to drive traffic back to a member’s website.

PowerPoint Slides: Five PowerPoint slides can be incorporated into a larger presentation to educate the public on the value of water. Presentations to internal audiences, local civic groups, environmental groups, clubs and other organizations are a common way many CWW members engage with their customers and the local communities they serve.

Social Media: Social media is a key communications strategy to reach and engage multiple audiences, but Millennials in particular use this medium. CWW members who already have Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram or Twitter accounts can share posts provided in the toolkit via these platforms. Facebook copy and images have been provided. Specific engagement strategies for Facebook include:

- Asking questions about why people love their water.
- Encouraging people to post photos of how they demonstrate their love for water.
- Asking questions on the water cycle and Colorado water.
- Hosting contests for the best suggestions of living like you love your water. Ask fans to post photos.
- Running contests with a prize drawing to increase likes.

When posts have links to them (fact sheet, video, infographics, etc.), they will need to be physically housed on a website or blog.

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Facebook Ads: Facebook ads are an inexpensive way to draw followers to your site. A [tutorial](#) on Facebook walks users through the advertising process. For the CW-LLYLI campaign, participants could target Millennial homeowners. Facebook allows you to set a not-to-exceed budget so the advertiser can control costs. Ads to boost page likes are probably the best way to increase your page followers with this demographic. Once you have met your goal for followers, you can start using more creative ways to engage your audiences. A CW-LLYLI Facebook page has been created. Content from this page can be shared on CWW member Facebook pages.

Social media posts should include the hashtag, #LiveLikeYouLoveIt. Regular features can be started to guide weekly posting including:

#WaterWednesday

#LiveLikeYouLoveItWeekend – all about water and recreation, winter and summer

Other Channels:

Pinterest: Create a Love Colorado Water board and post the photos and graphics with a link to educational content on the member’s website or blog. Hashtag #LiveLikeYouLoveIt

Twitter: Twitter can be used to share water news, photos and links to news stories. Social media management platforms, such as Hootsuite, allow you to share your posts and monitor conversations from a single source.

Media Relations/Social Media Event: Target media pitching should be done to announce CW-LLYLI via consumer and trade press including CWFE and CML magazines.

One idea to garner significant media attention to Colorado water through traditional and social media would be through a Colorado Water: Live Like You Love it Cairn-stacking event. To spread the message of ‘Live Like You Love It’ in a both a literal and fun visual way, we recommend an event launched in late spring 2015 with the goal of stacking rocks inscribed with the “Colorado Water: Live Like You Love It” slogan on top of all 53 Colorado Fourteeners. These Cairns would be an environmentally sound way to symbolize where water starts in Colorado and the importance of caring for and conserving it. It also would give each climbing team a way of promoting their favorite water conservation tips and post photos of their trek on the CW-LLYLI Facebook page.

The climb teams could be comprised of CWW members, customers (Millennial demographic), members of local climbing clubs, local businesses, recreational interests, local breweries, etc. This would be a highly visible outreach activity for CWW members and their customers/constituents.

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CWW would schedule a summer weekend where 53 climb teams would summit all 53 Fourteeners in the same weekend and build their Colorado Water: Live Like You Love It Cairns. Videos and photos of the Cairns could be posted on social media channels.

The story also could be pitched to both Denver TV and to the local mountain community newspapers like the *Telluride Daily Planet*, *Durango Herald*, *Vail* and *Summit Daily News*, *Steamboat Pilot*, etc.

Stakeholder Engagement: To engage a younger demographic, CWW members should explore creating targeted education programming on the value of water. For example, hosting water tours with a strong watershed component in conjunction with a local restaurant or brewery as a starting or concluding location could serve as a way to provide these younger customers a firsthand look at a water system or program.

Bringing in speakers that resonate with this audience (high-profile local skiers, hikers, brew masters, urban garden experts, local celebrity chefs, etc.) to keynote on their topic of interest as part of a broader symposium or panel on the value of water would be draw. This could be timed to be held during World Water Day (March 22), Colorado Day (August 1) or even the start of the spring planting season, when the use of water increases. The CW-LLYLI fact sheet, video and PowerPoint slides can be distributed as part of these activities.

Measurement: There are two stages of measurement for the toolkit. CWW will measure success by the number of members/sponsors who utilize/download the campaign. Increase in membership would also be a measure of campaign effectiveness.

Individual members will need to evaluate effectiveness through their individual communications channels including:

- Web hits for pages listing CW-LLYLI
- Social media engagements (increasing page likes/engagement on CW-LLYLI posts)
- Participation in the Fourteener campaign
- Quality and quantity of news media articles
- Attendance at and audience response to presentations
- Pre- and post-customers surveys about awareness of the value of water (include value of water questions in consumer surveys)

Future Phases of Colorado Water -- Live Like You Love It:

Colorado is one of the only Western states with a large population that does not have a statewide water campaign underway with unifying and consistent messages. [Arizona's Water Use it Wisely campaign](#) is a good example of a very robust and cohesive statewide campaign that has garnered broad support.

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It is not contradictory to deliver statewide messages concurrent with individual utilities delivering their own specific water communications. If you look at the tourism industry as an example, the state of Colorado markets the state as a whole, while individual's towns and cities market their unique attributes. The statewide messages talk in general terms, allowing more targeted messaging to occur at the local level. This same exact approach could be used in water communications and in fact is being used by most other large western states. The Colorado Water – Live Like You Love It campaign would emphasize the importance of Colorado water and support the water conservation messaging delivered by individual water providers and other campaign supporters.

To increase broad-scale awareness, the toolkit could evolve into a more sustained information campaign. Again, one only has to look at the successful campaigns in the states of Arizona, California and Texas to see the potential for a Colorado Water – Live Like You Love It campaign. A campaign could have these elements:

RESEARCH

Comprehensive baseline research in the form of statewide surveys and focus groups would be critical to measure shifts in attitudes and awareness. Public opinion research will be important pre- and post-campaign.

WEBSITE AND MORE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS (see www.usewaterwisely.com as an example)

A CW-LLYLI website could be developed to provide a consumer friendly “one-stop information hub” for conservation and care tips and water resources for consumers. The site could feature:

- Additional fact sheets, brochures and other materials to further education people on how to conserve, care and commit to water;
- Blog authored by a rotating group of CWW members and other water experts;
- RSS feed for water related news;
- Additional videos;
- News page for CWW member news;
- Event calendar;
- Opportunity to sign up for regular water tips and a water eNewsletters, etc.; and,
- Links to resources, how to become a campaign sponsor/supporter.

ADDITIONAL CONTENT

Ideas for additional content to further develop the toolkit include:

- More Fourteener fact sheets on how to further conserve water and water quality protection tips;

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- More infographics;
- An electronic newsletter to provide regular and seasonal information;
- Specific brochures to address: how to a home water audit; water-saving products; landscape watering guide; plants the require less water; and landscape care tips; and,
- Additional fact sheets on such topics as water infrastructure, water treatment and reuse, water supply gap, the true cost of water, water for food production, water for recreation, water for power generation and water for industry.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

CW-LLYLI content could be added to a Pinterest page, Instagram and Twitter. Additional videos could be added to a YouTube channel. A program could be developed to increase the followers to these channels and the engagement.

ADVISORY GROUP

A Millennial advisory group could be formed with a representative from various water interests and/or geographic reach. This group could serve as a sounding board for creative concepts, program ideas and messaging.

ADDITIONAL AUDIENCES

The CW-LLYLI toolkit targeted Millennials, but future phase of a campaign could also target minority audiences (also identified as having low awareness levels of various water facts) and school children.

MEDIA SPONSOR

Statewide media sponsor(s) could be secured to help carry the message to a broader audience and provide on-air talent for public service announcements and other educational messaging. A media sponsor would be very helpful in executing the Cairn stacking event.

MASS MEDIA ADVERTISING

In research evaluated regarding water education campaigns, nearly 85% believe an advertising campaign would be most effective when it comes to increasing the public's appreciation of water. A campaign should be developed to emphasize the value of water and incorporated mass media advertising (print, radio, TV, billboards) to heighten awareness and reinforce the messages.

EVENTS

Campaigns in other state have successfully created creative and visual ways to enforce the value of water and water conservation at event, festival and other public venues.

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Funding

A statewide campaign will require significant resources to do well and be effective. As the research has revealed, if one really wants to move the “public opinion” needle, you have to do mass media advertising.

In researching costs, the Arizona Water Use It Wisely team revealed that campaign cost in excess of \$500,000 to launch and requires at least \$300,000 annually to maintain. But the campaign taps numerous funding partners categorized as regional campaign steering committee, regional campaign additional partners, and city, state and federal partners.

For a Colorado campaign, it has been suggested that the following potential partners be approached for sponsorship: Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado-based businesses, products/companies that skew the millennial demographic (beer companies, sports drinks, etc.) U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Reclamation, local foundations, Front Range Utility Council, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, state legislature, State Board of Agriculture, water conservancy districts, engineering firms, water attorneys, landscape companies, etc. Eventually, organizations outside Colorado could be brought into the fold, as the message that you should live like you love Colorado water should resonate downstream states as well.

It will be necessary to devote resources for grant writing and outreach to funders to be successful in securing funds necessary to make this campaign effective. But there is a great window of opportunity that exists for CWW. The seeds of a campaign have been sewn with the toolkit. If launched in 2015, a campaign would be well underway by the time the state water plan is completed. The Colorado water community and those who support this effort will be even further ahead in educating Colorado citizens on the importance of water to our state, our lives and the West.

Appendix A

WaterWise Research Summary The Value of Water Campaign Summarized May 7, 2014

Information Sources

1. Value of Water Index, Xylem 2012
2. Public Opinions, Attitudes and Awareness Regarding Water in Colorado, Colorado Water Conservation Board, 2013
3. Colorado's Water Future: A Communications Roadmap for Enhancing the Value of Water, GBSM for Colorado Water Conservation Board, 2011
4. Conservation in the West Survey: A Survey of the Attitudes of Voters in Five Western States, 2011
5. Colorado River Water Conservation District Survey, 2009
6. Public Opinions on Water Quality Issues, State of Colorado Water Quality Control Division 2007
7. Value of Water Survey: Americans on the U.S. Water Crisis, ITT 2010
8. Conservation in the West, 2014 Water Report
9. Public Perceptions, Preferences and Values for Water in the West, Colorado State University Colorado State University, 2008
10. A Survey of Denver Latinos and African-Americans, Denver Water, 2010
11. Water Education Survey & Focus Group Report, Colorado Water Education Task Force, 2008
12. GBSM Stakeholder Survey Results

Target Audiences

Residents rank water concerns in the following order:

1. **Water quality** – Locally, protecting community drinking water is the issue with the most public support.¹⁰ In Colorado:
 - a. 80% of respondents felt the quality of surface waters where they live were fair, good or excellent. However, 25% indicated that these waters were “good, but deteriorating.”²
 - b. One in 5 respondents thought repairs/new infrastructure would improve water quality.²
 - c. 71.5% are moderately to very concerned with water quality in their homes, while 82.7% are concerned about quality of water in rivers/lakes.²
2. **Water availability** – Long-term and older Colorado residents are most concerned about water availability in general.² Respondents have a moderate to high concern about water supply for:
 - a. Farms/ranches – 84.8%²
 - b. Cities/towns – 83.4%²
 - c. Fish/wildlife – 5%²

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- d. 51% say the low level of water in rivers in Colorado is seen as a serious problem.⁸
- e. 46% do not think Colorado has enough water to meet its current needs; 25-30% say more conservation is needed ²
- f. 68% does not think Colorado has enough water available to meet our needs for the next 40 years²
- g. 59% does not think Colorado has enough water to meet future water needs²

Most Americans are largely unaware of their water footprint. More than half believe they use 50 gallons or less daily, when it is actually closer to twice that amount.¹

- 3. **Aging water infrastructure** – Nearly 75% of Colorado respondents would pay \$10-\$25 more per month for repairs or replacement. Another 19% think repairs/new infrastructure would improve water quality.²

Snapshot of Attitudes

We cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach to communications. Younger people (ages 18-34), who have lived in Colorado less than 10 years, are the least concerned and informed about water quality, availability and infrastructure. Additionally, ethnic minorities are more concerned about water-related issues than Caucasians.

Demographic	Water Quality	Water Availability	Water Infrastructure
Men		Less convinced about water scarcity and value of water in Denver particularly ¹¹	
10+ yr. residents	76% are more likely to be paying increased attention to water issues ²	More concerned about water availability for farms and ranches ² 49% does not think Colorado has enough water to meet its current needs and 67% believe the state does not have enough water to address future needs ²	Shared the same concern as shorter-term residents about the condition of infrastructure; ranks third behind availability and quality ²
Hispanics	More concerned than Caucasian respondents on all water-related issues ² 24% said quality of water in home is the most important issue to them ² More likely to drink bottled water as their primary source of	There is much more doubt, particularly among Latino men, as to whether there is a “real danger” we will run out of water, with 48% of Latinos, 45% of Blacks and 62% of Spanish-Only saying this is “definitely” or “probably” true. ¹¹ Spanish-only respondents – as well as younger Latinos and Blacks - are less likely to say they take steps to conserve water. ¹¹	Infrastructure concern ranked third behind quality and availability ² 34% think water services are too expensive ²

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	drinking water ¹¹		
Caucasians	<p>Less concerned about water quality and water-related issues than Hispanics and other minorities²</p> <p>18% said quality of water in home is more important²</p>	<p>More are concerned about amount of water available for Colorado's farms and ranches²</p>	<p>Infrastructure concern ranked third behind quality and availability²</p> <p>23% think water services are too expensive ²</p>
African American/other minorities	<p>31% said quality of water in home is the most important issue to them²</p> <p>More concerned about water issues in general than Caucasians ²</p>	<p>Less likely to conserve</p>	<p>Infrastructure concern ranked third behind quality and availability²</p> <p>27% think water services are too expensive ²</p>
Young (under 34)	<p>27% are more concerned about water quality in the home than older residents²</p> <p>Water quality in rivers, lakes and streams is more important than availability²</p>	<p>51% thinks Colorado has enough water to meet current needs and 39% feel state has enough to meet future needs ²</p>	<p>Infrastructure concern ranked third behind quality and availability²</p>
Older (35+)	<p>More concerned with the amount of water used for energy development than quality of water in homes²</p>	<p>More concerned with the amount of water available for farms and ranches than quality in homes²</p> <p>54% does not think Colorado has enough water to meet current needs and 72% does not think the state has enough water to meet future needs ²</p>	<p>Infrastructure concern ranked third behind quality and availability²</p>

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Awareness

More people in Colorado are paying more attention to water issues today than in the past (72%) and 73% are paying more attention to their own water use than they have in the past. ² However, respondents said Coloradans continue to be minimally aware of³:

- The state's present and future water supply challenges and the reasons behind the projected shortfalls.
- Water runoff and its impact on water quality.
- The many uses of water beyond meeting residential needs.
- The important role of infrastructure improvements in addressing the state's water challenges.

In Colorado, 95 percent of those surveyed thought residents need to know more about the state's water situation and potential future water issues or concerns.²

Additionally:

- There is a high level of concern among Coloradans about the fragility of the environment, including having clean water, clean air, natural areas and wildlife.⁴
- The perspectives of Coloradans on various water issues, including future water supply, varies by age, education level, ethnicity, political party affiliation and geographic location.⁵
- There is a low level of awareness among Coloradans about where their water comes from and the varied uses of water within the state.⁶
- Some Coloradans recognize the importance of the state's water resources to our economic prosperity and to them personally.⁴

One survey showed that concern for protecting natural resources was highest among the residents of Colorado's mountain regions and that Front Range residents were less likely to know where their water comes from.⁴

Finally, most organizations believe they would achieve the following as a result of greater water awareness¹²:

- Support for individual organization's projects and goals
 - Investment in infrastructure
 - Conservation
 - Rate increases
- Greater conservation, less water use
- Greater appreciation, more awareness, leading to more informed development of opinions and actions
 - Less extremism
- More balance between water uses
- Statewide cooperation
- More engagement in water issues

The majority of water education efforts in the state have not focused on the appreciation and value of water.¹¹ With many residents taking water for granted, it would serve us well to demonstrate what life would be like with little to no water (e.g., no water for coffee, shower, meals, laundry, or lawn/garden).

Emotionally connecting residents to that loss would help them realize the value of water firsthand. A campaign about the water cycle or what it takes to get water from snowflake to tap would be informative, but less likely to change the appreciation for water.

Value of Water

A 2010 national *Value of Water Survey* by ITT Corporation found that voters value water more than any other service. Electricity and heat were second and third, ahead of Internet, cellphone and cable television. Industrial and agricultural businesses rank it second.⁷

In terms of costs, 2% of Colorado respondents indicated that water was “inexpensive” or “priced about right,” compared to 28% who indicated that water was “too expensive.”²

Respondents believe that greater understanding of certain facts would have a significant impact on how Coloradans value water, including³:

- Its true cost
- Why conservation alone won’t secure our water future
- The link between the tap and the source:
 - How variability in snowpack impacts water supplies
 - The full cycle – the connection between water, skiing, agriculture, economy and the individual user
- The significance of the investment in water infrastructure
 - The supply gap and the potential consequences of shortages
 - The many uses of water and the competition and conflict between users

Additionally, nearly 71% said enhancing Coloradans’ appreciation of water is either extremely important or very important to their organization.¹²

Messaging

Messages about the value of water generally fall into one of four categories: the importance of water to public health, the environment, supporting the economy or the overall quality of life.³

There are several barriers and obstacles to increasing the appreciation of the value of water among Coloradans, including³:

- The complexity of the issues
- The limited interest and attention span for water issues among the public
- The low price of water
- A lack of overarching, consistent and compelling messages about water across the state; instead, communications efforts are “balkanized” among individual providers and regions

We can demonstrate the value of water by showcasing the role it plays in people’s lives. Reminding residents of how they depend on water for living, drinking, bathing, cleaning, pets, healing, exercising – and their overall quality of life – is critical to driving appreciation.

Understanding what is at stake without water will ultimately boost awareness, investments and other actions needed to preserve water quality and availability.

Lessons from others:

1. Explain water issues and impacts in lay terms. Avoid jargon.
2. Toolkits must be customizable and go above and beyond what is typically used.
3. Connecting to people’s emotions and values is recommended.
4. Use a variety of channels to deliver messages about water.

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By elevating Coloradans' consciousness about the value and importance of water, they will be more receptive to the pleas from providers to conserve, from the environmental community to protect and from the agricultural community to preserve, thus benefiting the entire state.³

Other messaging themes identified include:³

- **The Life Cycle of Water:** Help Coloradans understand the life cycle of water, including the long journey it takes from source to tap to treatment plant, as well as the effort and infrastructure required in this elaborate process.
- **The Finite Nature of Water/Projected Shortfalls:** Most residents do not have the level of awareness required to instill an appropriate sense of urgency and value for the state's water resources.
- **The True Cost of Water:** Respondents cited the low price of water as one of the greatest barriers to increasing appreciation for the resource. Messages can help communicate the true cost of water in terms of how much is spent annually on infrastructure, water quality and wastewater treatment.
- **The Varied Uses of Water:** Helping people to understand all of the multiple uses of water – and connect the state's water supply to its economic prosperity could prove to be effective.

Additionally, messages Coloradoans are NOT hearing today that may have a significant impact on how they think about water and their appreciation of its value¹²:

- They get it in chunks – need to understand the full cycle and the full picture
- Need a coordinated message that is simple, clever, meaningful and resonates
- Why conservation alone won't secure our water future
- The link between the tap and the source
 - How the variability in snowpack impacts water supplies
 - The full cycle – the connection between skiing, rafting, other recreation and the tap
 - The connection with a healthy economy
 - The connection with agriculture

Findings from Water Communications Campaigns

- Comprehensive baseline research in the form of statewide surveys and focus groups is critical to developing highly effective messaging and branding that will produce the desired results.³
- Efforts with a strong strategic mass media component, including TV, radio and billboards, were found to be the most effective in moving public opinion.³
- Connect to core values (such as family, faith and future generations) among ethnic customer groups in a culturally appropriate way.¹¹
- Communication toolkits may be helpful but have limited effectiveness. They need to be customizable and complemented with other tactics. Also, most utilities did not need the basic tools, but something above and beyond.³
- Create a comprehensive, yet scalable, campaign that can be implemented as funding becomes available.³
- Many Coloradans are unfamiliar with basic water terms, indicating a need to communicate water issues using language that is understandable to the average person.⁹
- Nearly 85% believe an advertising campaign would be most effective when it comes to increasing the public's appreciation of water; 80% believe a grassroots public education program; and 50% believe social media.¹²

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- Many respondents named social media and events as effective; printed materials and a website were ranked last in terms of effectiveness.³
- Of the various mediums used to communicate with stakeholders, the methods found to be most effective include:¹²
 - Printed materials (bill inserts, newsletters)
 - Web-based (website, e-newsletters, emails, social media)
 - Advertising (noted for its high numbers and consistent message)
 - Events
 - Media
 - Grassroots outreach (noted for its low reach but high effectiveness)
 - Meetings and presentations
 - Educational outreach (meetings, seminars, school programs)
 - Partnerships
 - Commitment from customers – pledge
- The likelihood of organizations deploying the following communication tools/programs is as follows:¹²
 - Organizations would be *highly likely* to use web content about the value and appreciation of water and campaign videos, while they would be *highly unlikely* to use campaign bill inserts
 - Organizations would be *highly likely* to use:
 - Web content about the value and appreciation of water
 - Campaign videos
 - Organizations would be *somewhat likely* to use:
 - Campaign fact sheets
 - Campaign brochures
 - Campaign messaging platform
- Organizations would define the success of campaigns by:¹²
 - Specific percent have heard of campaign and have changed behavior
 - Specific decrease in water demand
 - Specific increase in knowledge of where water comes from
 - Citizens taking action
 - Better success passing water-related legislation
 - Reduced demand for ag to muni transfers
 - Support for WaterSense products and programs
 - A roadmap that stakeholders agree on

Trusted Information Sources

Statewide, the percentage of Colorado residents who believed the following were trusted sources of information includes:

- Colorado regional water conservancy and water conservation districts (29%)
- Environmental and conservation organizations (18%)

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- Colorado state government (15%)
- Local water utility (12%)
- City or county government (9%)
- Federal government (2%)