

Colorado WaterWise Board Meeting

Thursday, April 8, 2021
Conference Call
10 a.m. to noon

P: Called-in via phone
X: Attended in-person

Board:

	Alyssa Quinn	Platte Canyon W&S District	alquinn@plattecanyon.org
P	Amy Volckens	Brendle Group	avolckens@brendlegroup.com
P	Brad Brady	Yearout Energy Solutions	brad.brady@yearoutenergy.com
P	Courtney Black	Intera	CBlack@intera.com
P	Diana Denwood	Aurora Water	ddenwood@auroragov.org
	Don Drew	Courageous Marketing	d.drews@courageousmarketing.com
P	Eric Olson	City of Fort Collins	eolson@fcgov.com
P	John Berggren	Western Resource Advocates	john.berggren@westernresources.org
P	Katie Helm	City of Fountain	khelm@fountaincolorado.org
P	Lance Ackerman	Colorado Springs Utilities	lackerman@csu.org
	Laura Wing	City of Thornton	laura.wing@cityofthornton.net
	Lindsay Rogers	WaterNow Alliance	ler@waternow.org
P	Lyndsey Lucia	Northern Water Conservancy	llucia@northernwater.org
P	Quint Redmond	Agriburbia	qredmond@agriburbia.com
P	Ruth Quade	City of Greeley	ruth.quade@greeleygov.com
P	Thomas Riggle	Centennial W&S District	triggle@highlandsranch.org
P	Tyler Kesler	Town of Erie	tkesler@erieco.gov
P	Melissa Brasfield	CWW Board Staff	admin@coloradowaterwise.org

Guests:

Tom Swihart – Wild Ones Front Range and CO Native Landscape Coalition
Lisa Olson – Wild Ones Front Range and CO Native Landscape Coalition

Call to Order

Diana called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM

Board Business and Action Items

- Approval of March Board Minutes. Ruth motions, Lyndsey seconds. March minutes are approved.
- Moment of silence for the Boulder shooting victims and families.

Committee Update – Newsletter

Diana provided details on the recent Spring Newsletter that was sent out. The committee was able to get some additional assistance from committee members with article submissions and layout. Diana discussed a new “Member Spotlight” section that will continue to occur in each edition. It will be a one-page question/answer style article. We also received a few paid ads which was great and part of our goals in the 2021 Action Plan.

Colorado Native Landscape Coalition

Tom noted that last year we had more wildfires, more hurricanes and CO2 levels were on the rise. Climate change is related to the work of native landscapes. The group is relatively new with 5 organizations leading – Front Range Wild Ones, People Pollinator Action Network, Rocky Mountain Audubon, Colorado Wildlife Federation and Colorado Native Plant Society. The

Coalition's goal is to redefine the term xeriscaping, emphasize native landscaping, and develop regenerative and biodiverse soil practices. The Coalition developed a fact sheet about the group. They do not have a website yet and they are talking about a draft strategic plan and a draft document titled "Recommended Native Landscaping Policies for Local Governments and Water Providers".

Diana mentioned that Laura and Ruth expressed interest in working with the Coalition and thought CWW could share information related to document, possibly host a webinar and more. Diana asked about the document that Tom references and if we might review it. Lisa added that many of the items in the document are things already happening at many utilities. Ruth added CWW can help distribute the document for review or once it's no longer draft. Tom agreed that a review would be great to help build the partnership. Tom said he will follow up with Ruth regarding sharing the document after the Coalition's meeting tomorrow. Amy asked about the reference to environmental justice and native landscapes. Tom noted that underserved communities tend to have less access to nature and native landscaping is one way to address that access. Tyler asked about municipalities that have already implemented policies for native landscapes, what sort of recognition is available currently? And if there aren't any, what areas are there to improve that? Tom noted the document would benefit from a list of municipalities that have policies. Tyler added that having a resource to allow contractors to connect on this topic could be a good resource as well. Lisa added the coalition members are conservation groups initially and not industry groups, and the coalition is interested in bringing those groups into the conversation in the future. Ruth said this topic might be a good section for the BMP manual update. Katie asked about the workshops that Wild Ones has hosted. Lisa said they are geared more toward the public and the most recent topics include propagation of plants, passive rainwater harvesting, tours in the spring and summer. Ruth asked if they were part of the workshops with Audubon, Lisa said she attended one and has been following and promoting the programs. Ruth added that developing a CO native label would be good to do. Tom said they do have a logo which is similar to the CO flag.

Diana recapped that the coalition would like feedback on the document and assistance with the sharing of that document. There could also be a webinar or a session at the Symposium. Tom added that the BMP addition would be a great idea as well. There is potential for a more formal working relationship between the coalition and CWW.

BMP Manual

Courtney reviewed the comments from the board on the strawman. One comment was related to the budget, which the committee came up with between \$70-100k for a supplemental document and \$100-150k for a full document. Courtney noted the final product format would greatly control these costs—this must be decided. Courtney is proposing that additional board members join that discussion. There were also a number of questions or comments on the funding options and grants. Courtney said it makes sense to go through the state Water Reserve Fund or Colorado Water Plan grant program. The Water Reserve Fund programs could be time consuming with going to each roundtable. The benefit would be earlier funding versus a CO Water Plan grant which we wouldn't see until Spring 2022. However, Courtney added that the Colorado Water Plan grants would only be a little longer wait for funds but might be less labor intensive. There was also discussion among the planning group about hiring someone to do a lot of this work. We need to determine those details before we apply for grants, as well. There was a question on copyright which Courtney noted is something to be developed later. There was also a request for a Gantt chart which could be developed as we get some additional details together.

Courtney asked about next steps with the strawman. Diana said the board will need to vote to approve the strawman so the committee can move forward. Diana's biggest concern is the budget and where those budget estimates came from. Courtney replied that if we go the route of a full update, we will have stakeholder engagement, research, writing, review. However, if we are doing supplemental documents and just creating addendums or case studies, it will be less costly. Amy speaks from the experience of leading the CO conservation study that she fully supports going after a grant. There are 14 BMPs and if we have a board member lead each one, it would help spread the load out. Quint asked about the stakeholder portion, and if we dial that back we might lose some weight behind the document. Courtney agreed. Brad asked about the grant matching. Courtney said she needs to confirm these details. Amy added it generally could be a 50% match or as low as 25% for different topics. Ruth asked if we would investigate a WaterSmart grant. Courtney said she talked with Lindsay about that grant and you usually have to show water savings. John added that you might not have to have that component on the smaller grant options. Courtney said we should really dive into what we want then we can get a better understanding of funding options. Diana clarified this vote is not a blank check, but an approval for the committee to move forward and develop the details. Tyler agreed with the structure of the vote. Courtney added that this may not hit until 2022 budget. The board voted; all board

members present voted to approve the strawman. Courtney asked who else would be interested in joining the discussion. Quint, Ruth, and Katie agreed to join that discussion.

CWW Certification Program

There is still concern about if the program is going to be a certification or recognition program. Diana had a strong opinion on it being a certification. However, her mind was changed after a thorough discussion and the committee agreed to create a recognition program that transitions to a certification in the future. She added there are potential partners—like AWE—to build this into a certification program but we aren't there yet. Diana noted it could grow to something that is available at a national level as well. The committee decided to table the vote to allow additional time to develop the details of a strawman. Lyndsey asked about the national certification and how it would grow. Diana responded that it would be dependent on a partnership. Lyndsey asked if it would then be absorbed into another organization. Diana is not sure. Amy asked about the special partnership with the California organization and noted they also have a new Executive Director, and we may want to reach out to Don and invite him to a board meeting. Diana agreed. John asked if there was some possibility to have a pilot project start in 2021 on a small scale to work through some of the logistics. Diana liked that idea and said that the committee discussed an announcement at the Symposium and we could do some recognition of members that would be eligible for certification when it launches.

Colorado Water Plan

Thomas mentioned that Kevin, with CWCB, has been talking with groups on the CO Water Plan and how to improve it with the upcoming update. Kevin is looking for bold ideas. The CWW management team discussed creating a breakout group to meet with Kevin after April 19. Thomas, Ruth, Katie and Amy volunteered to participate in a breakout group. **Thomas will send out a Doodle Poll.**

Drought Coalition Update

Diana talked about the drought coalition development. There are many drought groups popping up; Metro, Front Range and a North Metro group. There was a Metro Coalition meeting last month and a working group was formed to discuss the general drought messages that CO wants to get across to see how LLYLI might fit that role. Alyssa, Don and Diana are representing CWW and communicating that we have developed LLYLI drought messaging and we are interested in serving the community with no-cost, shared messaging.

Diana also noted how we can provide a drought hub on our CWW website and there may be an opportunity to host information on drought management plans. Katie added that by posting the same messaging throughout utilities we are really validating the drought message. Diana agreed. Diana added our water systems are very different based on the utility and where they are located which is something the public may not understand. Diana noted there may also be some funding opportunities to make these edits and updates. Tyler mentioned the disconnect he's seeing in Erie between departments and what's been interesting is some higher public works director level discussions have been happening at the same time as the communication groups, but they may not be talking to each other to share information. He encourages championing the resources that are available. A tracker on our website that shows what municipalities have restrictions would be really great. Amy noted that CWCB has that tool on their website.

Round Robin

- Diana wanted to remind people to complete the in-kind hours for 2020. **Please complete that as soon as possible.**
- Diana thanked everyone for completing their pledge commitment. A tracker sheet will be provided to celebrate the additional resources.
- Katie is continuing to offer their seminars on BMP for outdoor watering. They are also offering a fire wise class. They are still not doing any events. Fountain did partner with Resource Central on a Grass to Garden program. This is a cost-share program that pays \$1/sq ft of turf removed and provides a Garden in a Box and irrigation converter. Tyler asked about much admin time is spent on this. Katie said all that work has probably been 40 hours.
- Eric is creating residential irrigation codes. They also have a new "Go Native" program where if you use more than 80% native plants you get bonus points.
- Northern Water has partnered with ALCC to offer SLM certification at a lower cost.
- Aurora was able to bring on all their full-time staff this summer.

- Thomas added that they are also hiring all their intern staff this summer, as well. They have also converted all their irrigation customers to AMI which should be helpful for HOAs and landscape customers.
- Tyler mentioned they have a program that all new constructions or remodel above a threshold must install a smart meter. They have had some concerns about RF radiation.
- Greeley is wrapping up their lecture series in May. They had very good interest. The Life after Lawn program is continuing but customers will not receive a Garden in a Box like in the initial roll out. They are also continuing with AMI updates.
- Brad offered a solution through performance contracting. Thomas mentioned they looked into it, but their water loss was too low and it drew out the payback period.
- John talked about the kickoff for statewide landscape certification program. Working on a strategic plan for this project. They are also looking into funding options for this. WRA also received a grant to look into “non-essential” turf and finance options to remove that non-essential turf with native and xeric landscape.
- Courtney mentioned they are wrapping up Erie’s Water Efficiency and Drought Plans.
- Quint mentioned a project they have related to artificial turf and the heat that is produces and trying to use geothermal heat from that area to heat the turf in the winter.

Wrap Up and Adjourn

Diana adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Submitted by:
Melissa Brasfield