

AAUW COS November 19, 2022 Branch Meeting  
**Drought and Our Path Forward**  
Panel Participants: Rachel Zancanella, Amy McCoy,  
Nancy Henjum, Julia Gallucci

Rachel Zancanella: Assistant Division Engineer at the Colorado Division of Water Resources started the discussion by sharing a power point of the geographic location of the Colorado River Basin and the Arkansas River Valley.

The 1922 Colorado River Compact members are Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming as Upper Basin states and Arizona, California and Nevada are in the Lower Basin. The United States delivers 1.5 million acre-feet per year to Mexico as part of the Mexican Water Treaty of 1944, though little to none of that water makes it to the point where the Colorado River empties into the Sea of Cortez. (For more information on the current state of water delivered to Mexico click [here](#).)

Thirty federally recognized Indigenous Tribes are within of the Colorado River basin. Colorado Springs and the Colorado Front Range receive large portions of their water supply from the Colorado River Basin (65% of Colorado Springs' supply). Colorado Springs is in the Arkansas River Basin and is also subject to their own interstate compact, which unlike Colorado's obligations on the Colorado River where we have always been in compliance, Colorado violated the Kansas Colorado Compact and were sued in 1985 for depleting the agreed upon state line flows. Also, Colorado Springs was sued over water quality issues on Fountain Creek by the EPA, Pueblo County, the Lower Arkansas Water Conservancy District, and the State of Colorado. The settlement in this case allowed Colorado Springs to complete the permitting and construction of the CSU Southern Delivery System project through Pueblo County, which allows an alternative path to deliver Colorado River Basin water to Colorado Springs.

Amy McCoy, founding partner of AMP Insights, a consultancy addressing natural resource and socioeconomic issues and applying strategic research to the challenges of water scarcity and climate change, shared this. First comes the legal matters, then the hydrology of the seven basin states dividing the water without Indigenous peoples, Mexico, and the environment

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being considered. The goal in 1922 was to use all the water for economic and population growth. This is not a legal or data problem; it

is a human relations problem! “We shouldn’t be asking about a future with no water but this question: What if we get it right?”

Colorado Springs City Councilwoman and Colorado Springs Utilities Board Member Nancy Henjum posited the challenge through the lens of “individual rights/freedom and collective responsibility.” Both are important values that deserve to be elevated and yet at times they seem in direct conflict with the other. The City Council’s primary legislative responsibility is land use while their role as CSU Board Members is responsible use of our city’s natural resources. Building off the human relations view and “how do we get it right” question by Amy, Nancy shared a concept from Meg Wheatley for tackling these challenges of how we get this right. Better than asking if we have a glass half full or half empty with water, the question is, “There is water here. Who needs it and how can we get it to them?”

Colorado reuses the same water eight times from the headwaters to the state line on average. CSU customers use an average of 75,000 acre feet of water per year and has a water supply portfolio of 95,000 acre feet per year. CSU storage can hold up to a three year supply which helps carry our community through drought.

Julia Gallucci is Water Conservation Supervisor at Colorado Springs Utilities and stated this is at least a 20-year crisis and solutions are needed by working within the current systems. COS has commercial land use policies but not residential land use policies. We develop by annexation. What do we do when the 32 small water districts which surround us ask us for water? Ideally, land and water use is planned and considered amongst city, county and state entities. House Bill 1095 in 2020 sought this goal. House Bill 12-48 allows for pilot projects that encourage cooperation between agriculture and municipal interests.

CSU has 65% of our water coming from the western slope.

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We have 13 Transmountain Diversions that import water into the basin.

CSU has a new IGA (Inter-Governmental Agreement) with Bent County to change flood irrigation to pivot irrigation and make water available to Colorado Springs.

The [Voluntary Flow Management Program](#) operates on the Arkansas River between Twin Lakes and Pueblo, Colorado. The City of Aurora is located in the South Platte River Basin and moves water from the Colorado River Basin and Arkansas River Basin to Aurora. The practice of “buy and dry” or buying historically irrigated agricultural lands and drying up the supply to be moved to municipalities. This has had significant negative impacts on the economies of agricultural communities along the Arkansas River such as Rocky Ford and other areas supplied by irrigation ditches.

The discussion ended with words and actions to provide us hope for our region’s future and its water needs.

Rachel shared the Arkansas River Basin has a roundtable which meets one time a month in Pueblo and by Zoom. This is a great way to get involved with the conversation as interested citizens. <https://www.arkansasbasin.com/>

Amy shared knowledge is a baseline for caring and a foundation for action. Today’s program discussion sets us off in this direction.

What needs to be done and how can I do it? guides Nancy Henjum as she legislates and enacts public policies for our City of Colorado Springs.

Julia mentioned that RetoolCOS (the city’s zoning code update) includes updates to the landscape code which will limit turf grass to 25% for all new development, including residential.

Currently City Council also is considering an ordinance that would require 130% water reserves before approval of new annexations. This ordinance

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was proposed by Norwood Enterprises and is on the agenda for City Council in December.

Vote in the April 4, 2023 mayoral and city council member election!  
COS has had a strong mayor government since 2010 and our council members are only paid \$6,250 a year. These are issues for us to ponder. The balance of executive and legislative branches is unequal due to salary and staffing differences.

A very warm thank you of applause was given to our knowledgeable and impactful panelists. We AAUW members and guests will long remember this morning of shared thoughts and pertinent information.

Pam Maier  
AAUW of COS Branch  
Environmental Action Interest Group Chair