



COLORADO
WATER CONGRESS
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2026 SUMMER CONFERENCE

AUGUST 18, 2026

2026 Summer Conference

Registration Opens (8:00 a.m.)

Outside Ballroom

Workshops (9:00 a.m.)

Workshop 1: Ponderosa Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force Recommendation and Severance Tax Task Force

Spring Creek

9:00 a.m. Pine Beetle Task Force

An update on the work of the Ponderosa Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force during a time of record drought and wildfire threat.

Speakers: Dan Gibbs, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Mireille Gonzalez, Center for Collaborative Conservation

10:15 a.m. Severance Tax Task Force

Senate Bill 25-040 created the Future of Severance Taxes and Water Funding Task Force to evaluate Colorado's severance tax system and its ability to support water projects and local governments into the future. Under the task force's guidance, the Colorado Water Center produced a report that outlines our water and local government funding needs, providing a menu of alternative funding options. This workshop will offer an overview of the report, followed by a panel discussion.

Presenter: Karen Schlatter, Colorado Water Center, CSU

Moderator: Mindy Bridges, Colorado Water Center

Speakers: Brian Jackson, Environmental Defense Fund
Robert Sakata, CO Department of Agriculture
Jim Yahn, Yahn Ranch, Logan County Commissioner

Workshop 2: From Concept to Implementation: Stream Restoration in Colorado

Burgess Creek

Stream restoration projects often raise important questions about water rights, engineering, permitting, and water management. What does it actually take to move a restoration project from concept to successful implementation? This panel brings together experts in watershed restoration, permitting & engineering, and water management to explore the every aspect behind successful restoration projects. Attendees will gain a better understanding of how restoration projects are designed, permitted, and implemented within Colorado's water management framework.

Moderator: Abby Burk, Audubon Rockies

Speakers: Caleb Foy, Colorado River District
Alex Nees, SGM
Hally Strevey, Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed



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2026 Summer Conference

Workshops (9:00 a.m.)

Workshop 3: Scientific Initiatives in the Water Space: Harnessing Technology in Water and Weather Management

Korbel Ballroom

9:00 a.m. Restoring Capacity and Extending Service Life: Practical Water Well Rehabilitation Strategies for Struggling Water Systems

Across the nation, groundwater-dependent communities, rural water districts, irrigators, and industrial users are facing increasing pressure to do more with existing water infrastructure. While new well construction is sometimes necessary, many declining wells can regain efficiency, capacity, and reliability through properly diagnosed and executed rehabilitation. This presentation will provide a practical, field-based perspective on water well rehabilitation as a cost-effective tool for extending well service life, improving pumping efficiency, protecting water quality, and supporting long-term water supply resilience.

Speaker: Donald Teeters, *Continental Technologies, Inc.*

9:50 a.m. SPRINGS (Surface Preservation and Regulatory Integration Network for Geothermal Systems) Initiative

The SPRINGS (Surface Preservation and Regulatory Integration Network for Geothermal Systems) initiative is a U.S. Department of Energy Office of Geothermal Technologies-funded effort led by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) to advance science-based collaborative approaches for understanding and managing interactions between geothermal development and surface thermal features. Examine several real-world case studies that highlight both successful outcomes and instances where geothermal development has adversely affected hot springs and related features, providing practical lessons for future projects.

Speaker: Rebecca Kreuzer, *Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Energy & Environment Directorate*

10:40 a.m. Beyond Conservation: Weather Enhancement as a Supply-side Response to Drought

Weather modification has been used for decades to increase precipitation and improve water resources. Today, climate challenges, water scarcity, increased measurement, and advances in atmospheric science and technology are driving a new wave of innovation. This session explores the history of cloud seeding and why a new generation of companies is bringing renewed attention to this evolving field.

Speakers: Augustus Doricko, *Rainmaker Technology*
Scott Morris, *Rain Enhancement Technologies*
Andrew Rickert, *Colorado Water Conservation Board*

Kick-off Lunch (11:30 a.m.)

Tent and Pavilion

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AUGUST 18, 2026

2026 Summer Conference

Sessions (beginning 12:30 p.m.)

Ballroom (Unless Otherwise Indicated)

12:30 p.m. Andrea Travnicek, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science

1:00 p.m. Conference Welcome

- Christine Arbogast, President, *Colorado Water Congress*
- Ken Brenner, Yampa Basin Board Representative, *Colorado Water Congress*

1:15 p.m. Rep. Joe Neguse, Dem. Nominee, 2nd District

1:30 p.m. Colorado's 150th Historical Perspective with Dawn DiPrince of History Colorado

2:00 p.m. Tim Bennett, GOP Nominee, 7th District

2:15 p.m. Rep. Jeff Hurd, GOP Nominee, 3rd District

- 2:30 P.M. BREAK -

3:00 p.m. Ballot Proposal: a Tutorial on Protecting Our Water and Land and Preventing Wildfire

This session will thoroughly explain the intent of this ballot proposal and respond to questions which have been raised. It's important to understand what you are voting on in November, and this session will provide valuable details on the initiative.

Speakers: Aaron Citron, *The Nature Conservancy*
Alan Salazar, *Denver Water*

3:45 p.m. Dwayne Romero, Dem. Nominee, 3rd District

4:00 p.m. Rye Resurgence Project in the San Luis Valley

In southern Colorado, the Rye Resurgence Project (RRP) is working to grow markets for low-water crops to help farmers save water, adapt to changing water supplies, and recover aquifers. The panel will discuss the project's origin, commitment to farmers, and marketing strategies. The panel will highlight the partnership with Mythology Distillery from Steamboat Springs.

Moderator: Heather Dutton, SLV Water Conservancy District and RRP Co-Founder

Speakers: Sarah Jones, *Jones Farms Organics and RRP Co-Founder*
Marielle Cowdin, *RRP Marketing and Communications Director*
Morgan Neely, *RRP Project Manager and Rio West Farms*
Scott Yeates, *Mythology Distilling*

Immediately following the panel, Mythology will open slopeside for a special tasting event including rye cookie pairings. Food and drinks will be available and all are invited to join the RRP team at the event!

POND Reception (5:00 p.m.)

Tent and Pavilion

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AUGUST 19, 2026

2026 Summer Conference

Breakfast (7:00 a.m.)

Tent and Pavilion

Sponsored by United Water

Sessions

Ballroom (Unless Otherwise Indicated)

8:30 a.m. Colorado Ag Water Alliance

For three years, The Colorado Ag Water Alliance (CAWA) has been managing the Ag Drought Resiliency Project. This program has provided a low-barrier opportunity for farmers and ranchers around the state to implement projects around the state that help them with drought. CAWA has been collecting data from these projects and learning about what strategies provide the most opportunity to focus on in the future.

Speakers: Phil Brink, *Brink, Inc.*
Greg Peterson, *Colorado Ag Water Alliance*

9:15 a.m. From Crisis to Catalyst: Building Colorado's Forest Restoration Economy

Colorado faces a growing mismatch between the scale of its wildfire and forest health crisis, and the capacity of existing restoration programs to address them. This session will examine the limitations of Colorado's current forest restoration model and explore the emerging Forest Restoration Economy framework, a vision for aligning restoration, watershed protection, economic development, manufacturing, workforce development, and private investment to achieve restoration at meaningful scale. Drawing on perspectives from water providers, industry leaders, forest practitioners, and community stakeholders, the discussion will explore what it will take to build a more resilient future.

Moderator: Jonathan Geurts, *The Keystone Center*

Speakers: Aaron Green, *Colorado State Forest Service*
Megan Maxwell, *Colorado Timber Association*
Dave Payne, *Ute Water Conservancy District*
Molly Pitts, *National Wild Turkey Federation*
Travis Smith, *National Wild Turkey Federation*
Esther Vincent, *Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District*

10:45 a.m. Victor Marx, GOP Nominee, Governor of Colorado

- 11:00 A.M. BREAK -

11:30 a.m. Rep. Lauren Boebert, GOP Nominee, 4th District

11:45 a.m. CO Sec. of State Jena Griswold, Dem. Nominee, Attorney General



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Lunch (12:00 p.m.)

Tent and Pavilion

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Afternoon Options

1:30 p.m. POND Outdoor Activities

Join the POND committee members in outdoor fun! You do not need to be a member of the committee to join; all are welcome. All activities are meeting at approximately 1:20 p.m. before carpooling to their destination. Activities include:

- Golf (prior RSVP required)
- Mountain Biking (equipment required)
- Hiking/Trail Running
- Distillery Tour (ID required)
- Yampa Botanic Park

1:30 p.m. Film Screening: American Southwest

Ballroom

The American Southwest is a family-friendly wildlife movie that takes viewers on an unforgettable journey down the mighty Colorado River. Narrated by Quannah Chasinghorse, the film beautifully showcases the region's abundant wildlife, confronts the ecological impacts of dams and water overuse, and advocates for better management of the river. Made in association with Natives Outdoors, the movie incorporates an indigenous storyline and is told through the perspective of some of the Southwest's most charming characters... such as industrious beavers, bugling bull elk, and soaring condors. Between its legendary landscapes and fascinating wildlife, The American Southwest aims to endear millions of people to better cherish, love, and conserve this unique region.

2:00pm-5:00pm
CWRPDA Open Board Meeting
Burgess Creek

Water Buffalo Reception (4:30 p.m.)

Tent and Pavilion

Sponsored by the Colorado Bar Association Water Law Section

*Honoring Lee Miller, Esquire and John Currier, P.E.
All conference attendees welcome to join!*

5:00 p.m. Water Buffalo Presentation



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2026 Summer Conference

Breakfast (7:00 a.m.)

Tent and Pavilion

Sponsored by Colorado River District, Hazen and Sawyer, and South Metro Water Supply Authority

Sessions

Ballroom

8:30 a.m. Drought Impacts on Local Economies

In 2012, the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Water Quality/Quantity Committee (QQ) commissioned the first report on economic activity in the Headwaters Counties (Routt, Grand, Summit, Eagle, Pitkin, and Gunnison Counties) and updated the report this year. The 2026 report update underscores the value in water availability of the right quantity, quality, time, and place in the Colorado headwaters and illustrates economic growth and hydrologic strain in the Headwaters Counties. This panel shares highlights from the 2026 report update and experiences of drought in the headwaters.

Speakers: Kristin Green, NW Colorado Council of Governments
Mike Ritschard, Colorado River Water Conservation District
Nina Waters, Summit County Commissioner

9:00 a.m. AG Phil Weiser, Dem. Nominee, Governor of Colorado

9:15 a.m. Michael Allen, GOP Nominee, Attorney General

9:30 a.m. You Can't Step in the Same River Twice: The Changing Colorado River and How Our State Is Responding

As the headwaters state for the Colorado River, our team is leading during an unprecedented time for the resource that supports millions of people in a seven-state basin whose economy and culture is dependent on that resource. Hydrology has changed drastically, but the demands of the river are no less. A panel of our state leaders on the front line of the Colorado River challenges will discuss the most recent federal actions and their impact, and the current state of discussions with the six other states who share the river with us.

10:30 a.m. Eileen Laubacher, Dem. Nominee, 4th District

10:45 a.m. CWC Awards Ceremony and Aspinall Award Presentation

Presentation of the 2026 Wayne N. Aspinall Award by 2025 Recipient Russell George, as well as other CWC awards.

11:45 a.m. Closing Remarks

- Christine Arbogast, President, Colorado Water Congress
- Chané Polo, Executive Director, Colorado Water Congress



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