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Mike Applegate Awarded Prestigious 2026 Aspinall Award
Presented by the Colorado Water Congress

Steamboat Springs – Aug. 20, 2026 The Colorado Water Congress awarded Mike Applegate, a life-long advocate of Colorado water issues, the 2026 Wayne N. Aspinall “Water Leader of the Year” Award. The Aspinall Award is given annually in recognition of a career of service and contribution to Colorado’s water community. It is awarded to a person who has dedicated a significant part of his or her career to the advancement of the state and its programs to protect, develop and preserve the state’s water resources.

About Mike Applegate

Mike Applegate served as a Northern Water Board of Director from 1991 to 2023, serving 35 years total and 25 of those years as President of the Board. He was appointed Director Emeritus in fall 2023 and sworn in on Jan. 11, 2024.

Applegate was the CEO, president and major shareholder in the Applegate Group, Inc., a consulting engineering firm specializing in water resource services in the Western United States. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Colorado State University and was a water resources engineer working on planning, water rights evaluation, river basin modeling and design.

Applegate has served as:

- Northern Water and Municipal Subdistrict Board of Director from 1991 to 2023.
- Northern Water Board President from 1998 to 2023.
- A CSU advisory board member and guest lecturer on ethics to the College of Engineering since 2008
- A member of a CSU organizing committee to raise funds for the Water Resources Archives since 2005
- A CSU advisor to the Civil Engineering Department for strategic direction since 2004

In 2023, Applegate was honored with the 2023 Board Member of the Year Award by the Special Districts Association. He received the George Washington Award for Community Service from the American Council of Engineering Companies in 2005, and was named Engineer of the Year by the Professional Engineers of Colorado in 1993.

Applegate grew up on a ranch in the mountains west of Fort Collins and learned irrigation via manual labor. In 1972, he filed a water court application for the family ranch and decided to pursue a water resources engineering degree. Applegate worked as a consulting engineer his entire 36-year career.

About the Wayne N. Aspinall Award

The Colorado Water Congress presents the prestigious Wayne N. Aspinall Award annually to a Coloradan who has long demonstrated courage, dedication, knowledge and leadership in the development, protection and preservation of Colorado water - those attributes possessed by Mr. Aspinall. The late Wayne Aspinall, a lawyer and former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, remains one of the most influential water leaders in Colorado history.

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