

Water Literate Leaders
January Session Homework

1. What did you learn today that encouraged you?

- It seems like our watershed has healthy headwaters (snow dependent of course!). There's also a coalition in place actively working on solutions as needs arise.
- As I come from an ag background I was glad to hear that others recognize the importance of ag and the large ownership of many ditch systems.
- We had been talking so much in the realm of water law, history, and regulation, which is certainly critical, but it was encouraging to have a section that talked about river health and environmental health. I was encouraged by all of the efforts taken on by groups like CPRW and BTWC to work on these important ecological restoration projects.
- I was encouraged to hear of Greeley's plans along the Poudre to protect and preserve these natural areas.
- The heart this group shares for regional collaboration in the area of water.
- I enjoyed the various presentations today. Each were filled with lots of information and the presenters have a tremendous amount of knowledge. In my observation and opinion there are things happening to make the river better but am encouraged hearing how making the river "better" may be regarding the environment/ecosystem but it's also better for growth, development, and future events whether planned or unplanned such as fire, floods or who knows. The River Health Report Card is a powerful tool for monitoring and measurement and is incredibly valuable in moving forward. I think it will be a beneficial tool in an adaptive management plan for the whole region. For example, Shayna and the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition used a similar process following the floods to develop a plan. I am encouraged as I believe we realize the importance of planning or anticipating versus simply responding or reacting.
- I was encouraged by the work that the Poudre and Big Thompson watershed conditions are doing to restore the river and help with bank stabilization. I was also encouraged by the work that Greeley is planning to do which will restore health to the riparian ecosystem.
- I began to see a path to progress. The possibility of an on-going working group to tackle issues with the idea of actionable outcomes. Kristin

Stephens raised the idea of shifting focus to areas that more stakeholders might find benefit in. Her example was water quality as opposed to the seemingly polarizing topics of water quantity and ownership. If we combine Kristin's suggestion with the recommendation of thought leader Peter Binney to find and solve the higher order problem I think we can get somewhere. Binney's higher order question is: What problem are you in a unique position to help solve? It would appear we are not in a position to solve the problem of who gets what water, when, where and how much. So...what problem are we in a unique position to help solve? What connections could you partner with to begin solving this problem? One more thing on Action – In Binney's world Action Precedes Clarity. I began to realize that instead of going to the agricultural community with wants, needs and desires it might be better to take a moment to say "Thank you for the 150+ years of community building and economic prosperity you have provided to Northern Colorado – now what can Northern Colorado do for you?" I believe it was Andy Jones who said during his remarks in week 2 – Start with those who are willing to listen. Add John Bartholow and PRTI "Could we do that if." I was encouraged by a story Ken Kehmeier shared with me about a conversation he had with a dairy farmer. The dairyman asked Ken "Why isn't the fishing as good on my land as it was when I was younger." That question opened a door to a conversation that I'm sure included all kinds of information that the dairyman would not have been willing to listen to had it been from the premise of "I'm going to tell you how you can make the river better." Again...what unique position do we have to improve the ag community's quality of life. I guess I saw a lot of building blocks today and a short list of folks that want to try and work with them.

- Water is important to every community, but is especially critical to Colorado. The population is on the East slope and the water is on the West slope. If it were not for irrigation, the plains of Colorado would largely be desert. It is encouraging to see that organizations are springing up to restore and reclaim our rivers and wetlands. I found it interesting that we are adapting a strategy in that we work with the dynamics of river hydrology instead of competing against it. Creating flood planes instead to trenches, for instance.
- By the good work that the Watershed Coalitions are doing.
- The continuing level of cooperation that is expressed by all the presenters in our curriculum.
- People tend to **band together in a crisis (or disaster)**, to solve a common problem, together, with a common goal of recovery, mitigation, and they give thought and planning efforts to avoiding the crisis or disaster in the future. The Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed, and the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition were both created in the aftermath of disasters (fire and

flood), and the desire of affected stakeholders to come together in attempt to recover. I'm encouraged by the human instinct to step up and help in the aftermath of a crisis or disaster.

2. What did you learn today that discouraged you?

- The health of our rivers is so fragile and there are many factors that threaten it (snow pack again, fire, other man made intrusions).
- I'm discouraged that it takes a disaster or crisis before people tend to care enough to work on a solution to an obvious problem.
- I was discouraged to hear that many times ag producers do not want to come to the table to discuss issues in the area, and they can be perceived as "just leave us alone so we can do what we have always done." It was discouraging, but not surprising that no two people or groups can say what a healthy river is, and this may cause friction in groups having productive dialog if they are unwilling to listen to other's perspectives.
- Nothing really discouraged me at last session. There were things that seemed a little overwhelming, such as the sheer number of different watershed coalitions working on similar issues, but I viewed that more as an opportunity than anything else.
- It was concerning to hear about some of the challenges the river faces (to be healthy) and hoping there can be a bigger, broader opportunity to get out information on this in all the communities participating in this water conversation.
- The challenge to creating a "WE" in regional water. Several times Ag was discussed as an opponent to the environmental interests. The challenge to get Ag to the table to build genuine relationships. I have a growing concern that many of the interests gathered around water do not really view the Poudre water shed all the way to the confluence east of Greeley. All the focus seems to be the reach within Fort Collins.
- I do not think I was discouraged. Rather, the information we learned indicates there is still more to do or can be done. I am reminded how it is like a glass either half full or half empty. One can be discouraged about how much still needs to be done or be encouraged by what is happening and that things are happening and moving forward. (Maybe not at the desired pace or rate.) Water is definitely important and there is so much more that can be done, however is not going to be quick and easy.

- A lot. Snowpack is low. The size of forest fires has grown. We will be facing more extreme climate conditions that can lead to more drought and flooding conditions. I actually knew this, but every time I hear it I get discouraged.
- I was not discouraged by anything.
- There are a lot of competing interests with widely diverse viewpoints of water's importance to them. These diverse views often prevent, hinder or discourage people from coming together to discuss solutions for our rivers. For some, they don't see a need to come to the table.
- There doesn't seem to be a good existing way for all interests to focus on comprehensive water solutions. It also seemed as though we tried to fit in too many speakers and that the panel participants didn't get enough time to talk (session somewhat overrun with audience and moderator participation).
- I wasn't discouraged by anything in our class of January 11. But I was disturbed by the Viewpoints editorial in the Coloradoan on Jan 28, 2018 by Gary Wockner, Director of Save the Poudre, entitled "The PRTI (Poudre Runs Through It) participants are draining the Poudre, not saving it". His last paragraph begins "Listen to this: I'm sick and tired of all the spin about "collaboration" because what you're collaborating on is the near-complete draining the Poudre River through Fort Collins. Once again, I'll skip the forum and continue to prepare for the legal battles ahead."
- I'm discouraged that the farming stakeholders don't tend to participate or come to the table in the discussions about the water crisis. They (as a general group of stakeholders) are in a comfortable position, typically having fairly senior water rights. They, as a group, tend not to have enough discomfort about water issues to care enough to get involved in the discussion.

3. What did you learn today that surprised you?

- The size of wildfires has increased dramatically as we don't let nature do its thing. "Wildfire Season" seems to be a thing of the past.
- Again, the sheer number of different groups and coalitions working on similar issues in local watersheds. I was not aware of all of these efforts.
- It was a bit surprising to me that different people can look at basically the same data and draw different conclusions, or from years of being around a river have a different perspective than what data may suggest. What I am

referring to is the Poudre River and what John Bartholow said was the historical flows compared to what I had as my understanding and perspective. I remember as a 10 – 15 year old that each late summer we would go up the Poudre Canyon for fishing or other recreation, and the river was always low in late summer and early fall. John indicating to us that the historical flows are more than what is proposed with NISP, was not what I was expecting. I would like to check the data, and I plan to try and look this up, but my impression was always that the water projects and water management caused more river flows than what I remember years ago.

- I was surprised to hear mention of the re-establishment of cottonwood trees as I thought they were considered a noxious problematic tree in Colorado?
- This isn't as much of a surprise but a reaffirmation. The forest is our most important storage vessel. This was so much on my mind after the fires but I am concerned about how easy it is to lose focus on this truth. Each water utility should have a part of its structure tied directly to this issue in my opinion.
- The loss of many fish species as identified by Ken's presentation surprised me. I probably am saddened more than discouraged. I grew up in a family who did go fishing but would say I am not a good fisherman. Often it was the main activity of our family vacation and many fond memories are associated with it. Yet today, my family and I do not make it a priority or take the time to plan trips or vacations around fishing. The reintroduction of a species is much more complex than most people realize. I believe Ken mentioned in his presentation about killing off some species to reintroduce native species to a river. What is natural or seems native/natural is not so. It is a matter of perspective that that sometimes determines outcomes.
- I was surprised and impressed by the work that Poudre Runs Through It is doing on flow augmentation.
- I was surprised that things actually began to come together a bit in my mind of where all this might go.
- None
- Prior to this session, I didn't fully understand the importance of the flood plain and flood events (flushes).

- The Thornton project keeps coming up. It seems that the time to protest that project was many years ago, when it was revealed that Thornton was buying up farms.
- I was surprised to hear that the Poudre River used to have an annual minimum flow at the Lincoln Street ridge of about 32cfs, and now it's about 3cfs. I think it was John Bartholow who mentioned that.

4. What did you learn today that you want to know more about?

- Jen Shanahan's example of her team reaching out to Ag contacts with solutions already in place. They sought to solve problems, not by blaming or putting the onus on Ag but in creating solutions that didn't have a negative impact on them.
- I very much like to hear about the historical aspects of the river and this area, and hearing Ken Kehmeier talk about the Poudre River having trout as far east as almost to the South Platte was very interesting. This would be great if we still could enjoy this today, but if the river had never been used for development of this area for business, residences, and agriculture there would not be as many of us in the area as water would have been significantly limited for use. There are always going to be tradeoffs in using a resource. The challenge as we have discussed is how do we ever get some agreement on what the beneficial use is to a vastly diverse area that we are. The various interest groups such as the environmental community, agriculture, municipal, and businesses will have to work on this and in my opinion will need to gain the trust of the various interest groups to have any chance to work together. I think this will take many years.
- Similar to my comment from December regarding more information on the Tri-districts- If possible, maybe we can have more details re: the relationships between all of these watershed efforts; What are the details of the challenges and opportunities here?
- I had never thought about the fire and flood effect and how the aftermath impacts the flow of the river. I learned how plans to mitigate and proactive management is necessary to maintain our water resources and make sure they continue even after a natural disaster has taken place.
- The quality of the river to the east of I-25. Could the same Fort Collins model be used for the balance of the river?
- I want to read and review the State of the Poudre, A River Health Report Card publication, generated by the City of Fort Collins. I especially like

that it was a collaborative effort and likely will have significant effects down river.

- I want to learn more about the drought planning that John Bartholow suggested, e.g. going to 1 in 40 year drought planning vs. 1 in 50 year planning. What does this look like for municipalities?
- I want to know more about:
 - All of it. All of the books sound great. I really appreciate the book report aspect of this project.
 - What struggles do those that own the water have? How might their lives be improved? Not just in the area of water but in total. What are their challenges (other than being pestered by outsiders interested in their water)?
- I was unaware of the many coalitions that have sprung up to address our rivers. I would welcome more information on what coalition(s) are doing for the Big Thompson. I don't see the same level of activity in Loveland as there is in Fort Collins regarding the restoration of the river. Activity is currently directed at repairing highway 34 with "limited" focus on restoration of the natural water flow.
- Managed flows and how/if water can be stored while still periodically flushing the river.
- Water issues persist many years after a fire. With our beetle kill areas, global warming, changing weather patterns, and increasing population, more fires seem more certain. What more can be done post-fire to mitigate water issues?
- It was mentioned that the Coalition of the Upper South Platte has been around a long time, and they may be a good example for newer coalitions to look at for lessons learned, and examples of what to do (or not to do). I'd like to learn more about the specifics of Coalition of the Upper South Platte.

5. Was there anything today that captured your attention to the extent that you could see yourself engaging in it further—to study it further, to play a leadership role in bringing it to the attention of others?

- I enjoyed the discussion that Ken led on getting water users to agree to withhold water use during peak flow to create a flushing flow.
- It is very true that the "hat" you wear has an impact on how you approach the position you have on water. I have a couple that I have to be cognizant about as being on a municipal water board and being in a business that

can have customers competing for some of the water makes me think about the different positions. I feel I am very fortunate to be able to do this as I can have some understanding on each perspective and I hope to continue to do this. I would encourage others to try and be part of different groups to get various perspectives.

- Still the concept of regional collaboration on water services.
- I definitely like the idea of a regional look at water. It can't hurt for everyone to sit down and discuss issues that will affect all of us. I think we can use PRTI's model of spending less time on divisive issues.
- Engaging further to me would be working on the on-going subgroup (Roy Otto, Carol Cochran, Leah Johnson I believe were also on that list. I'm hoping Tony Miller might be in that group)
- Not from this session.
- The concept of a MPO that focuses on water issues may be of further interest to me.
- As a member of the Windsor Water & Sewer Board, I want to raise the awareness of the citizens of Windsor to water issues.
- "Pain" will cause people to come to the table for the conversation about water. Unfortunately, unless there's pain, there's typically not enough desire from affected stakeholders to participate. With more and more demand on a finite resource, such as water, it will get more and more painful for more and more stakeholders as time goes on. Something's gotta give at some point, and it will take a critical mass of stakeholders to have a critical amount of pain for a long enough period of time, before that will happen. One critical problem that has captured my attention is **the depletion of our aquifers**, and in particular, the depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer. There has been more water being removed from this aquifer than the amount of water recharging it. That is not sustainable. On another note, aquifers can store a lot of water. Reservoirs are expensive and time consuming to get approved and constructed. **I am interested in engaging further in the notion of recharging aquifers as a water storage strategy**, particularly if we can recharge the aquifer in wet years so that water is available to withdraw in dry years.