**Action Team – Interview and Data Collection Form**

**Action Team Member:** Karen O’Connell

**How Might We:** Protect/retain senior water rights within Chaffee County

**Data Source:**

 Name: Extensive sources exist on Colorado water

 Contact: x

 Add Contact to Envision Contacts? Y/N

**Insights:**

Extensive materials are available to the public on topics related to water, and from many perspectives—historical, legal, conservation and projected uses. The sub-topic of the “water team” that I am focused on is public education of water activities within Chaffee County. My approach, as discussed with the team, is: As a new member of the community, what materials related to learning about water rights and responsibilities are readily available to educate the new arrival to Chaffee County?

While this sub-topic isn’t a direct link to retention of senior water rights, public education, information and awareness is critical to understanding how it all works and why conservation and protection of senior rights is important. Some of those water educational topics that could be addressed: How the water is being used; where it comes from; what that means to individual conservation efforts; what it means as related to industry/agriculture; and as directly related to the concern of the over-arching Envision Team: How will water be supplied for the growth expected in the future?

For any one of these questions, materials may exist. But a search of Chaffee County website, Upper Arkansas Conservancy District, and many other Colorado Conservancy districts, few did a good or comprehensive job of making these materials accessible.

* I did not find any good source of informational materials (that could be found readily and were mentally digestible) that could reduce the “community headwinds” rancher face around ditches, and rights of ranchers to maintain those ditches. Considering the broader Vision Statement #4, development of a specific document for distribution to all new arrivals on this topic might help mitigate the burden placed on ranchers to explain their own rights and any subsequent litigation they might face to defend those rights.

Upper Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy had the only document that addressed this issue, but it was more ‘legal’ than readable. Link is provided in the list below.

* One document we received upon purchase of our residential property in Chaffee County was “Water Smarts”. This was specific to well and septic system owner’s guide for the area. It was an informative and useful guide. This might be a model for development of additional materials on water rights and responsibilities in Chaffee County.
* The distribution of this could be (how we received the Water Smarts document) via real estate closings as suggested materials for distribution.
* Additionally, these could be posted on several websites: Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, Chaffee County, Chamber of Commerce and others. GARNA, Central Colorado Conservancy. Creation of a sub-topic of “Public Education” (or similar) on these websites could improve visibility and ease of access.
* Development of a bibliography of links for further water research. This would be very difficult to maintain, but given the vast field of information available on water and water rights, there is significant information (and misinformation) from myriad agencies with their own agendas. Trusted, and hopefully, reasonably unbiased sources could be listed to direct new residents wanting to learn about the important topic of water in Chaffee County.

Any reports or maps or web links the team should read/review?

<http://www.uaacog.com/images/Water_Smarts.pdf>

<http://www.riograndewatershed.org/conejos-county/39.html>

Educational experiences from Conejos/Rio Grande conservancy includes Farm/Ranch opportunities for youth.

<https://swwcd.org/programs/water-information-program/>

Southwestern Water Conservation District has some intense water education sessions through their “WIP” Water Information Program, plus they produce an e-newsletter.

 In August of 1994, the Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD), in cooperation with several water agencies and entities in southwestern Colorado, pooled their resources and created the Water Information Program (WIP). Each participating entity has its own set of priorities and issues and the WIP provides an unbiased forum for communicating information. Participating entities contributes to the WIP based on their unique resources ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. In turn, the SWCD contributes a dollar-for-dollar match. In addition, the SWCD provides the equipment and office space for the WIP.

<http://ugrwcd.org/>

Upper Gunnison has a short FAQ for the public including an email contact for further questions, plus a Water district produced blog on water events and education within that district.

<https://bwcd.org/water-terms/>

Basalt Water Conservancy has a specific heading for “Education.” While this is underused, it is an example of a website for the purpose described above. It also has an excellent “water terms” glossary.

<https://www.utewater.org/outreach>

Ute Water Conservancy has a heading for Outreach (as opposed to Education) and includes a good view of links to external resources, plus has a children’s water education event.

<https://www.ccwcd.org/ccwcd-newsletter-august-4/>

Central Colorado Water Conservancy produces a newsletter. The example in the above link is on selling of water rights or “buy and dry.”

<http://www.coloradoriverdistrict.org/water-conservation/>

Colorado River Water Conservancy has heading for Education with multiple uses and good information. Another example of website design that could be emulated with Upper Arkansas specific educational materials.

<http://www.sjwcd.org/>

San Juan Water Conservancy has links to Colorado Water News and Water Reports and Resources.

<https://www.secwcd.org/content/education>

Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy has a conservation and education link.

<http://www.lavwcd.com/>

Lower Arkansas Valley WCD has a “*More*” heading that links to FAQ’s, education events (Children’s Water Festival) and some other educational resource materials.

<http://www.uawcd.com/documents/ditchMemo_090211.pdf>

This is the link on the Upper Arkansas WCD to a memo on “Ditches”. This website also has an FAQ link as well as one to articles and studies.