



2019 Lower South Platte River Basin Tour

June 17-18, 2019

DRAFT Itinerary - Updated 4/12/2019 - 4pm

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Draft Theme: A tour highlighting a hard-working prairie river and the people striving toward a water future for the local economies and habitats in Colorado's northeastern corner.

Draft Goals:

- Illustrate strategies from the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan and their broader application to statewide issues in Colorado's Water Plan.
- Showcase the nexus between water and local priorities for agricultural viability, energy development, recreation, and environmental restoration.
- Convey the importance of partnerships and collaborations in water resource management, water supply planning, and habitat restoration.
- Help elected officials, community leaders and interested citizens gain a well-rounded, objective look at regional water management considerations so they leave feeling more equipped to engage in local and statewide water conversations and to approach leadership and decision-making roles with confidence.

Day 1- June 17, 2019

7:30* Meet at Holiday Inn & Suites, Sterling - Welcome, tour packets.

8:00* Depart Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Drive to Quail Ridge Dairy (10 min load bus, 45 min drive)

Discussion Topic(s):

Welcome and overview of lower South Platte River Basin, including the unique qualities, challenges and opportunities that exist in the basin. Overview of the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan that is included in Colorado's Water Plan.

Speaker(s):

Joe Frank, Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District
Jim Yahn, North Sterling Irrigation District

Discussion Topic(s):

How do we envision the future of agriculture in Colorado?

Speaker(s):

Kate Greenberg, Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture (to be confirmed)

8:45* **Quail Ridge Dairy** (75 min minute tour)

Discussion Topic(s):

Dairy tour and overview of farm operations and growing forages for regional milk production. How does a dairy use, manage, and steward water?

Speaker(s):

Chris or Mary Kraft, Colorado Dairy Farmers

10:00 **Load Bus, Drive to Pawnee Station Power Plant** (10 min load bus, 15 min drive)

Speaker(s):

Rich Belt, Xcel Energy

10:25 **Pawnee Station Power Plant, Xcel Energy** (15 min talk, 15 min Q&A, 10 min snacks/restroom)

Discussion Topic(s):

This coal-fired power plant cannot operate without water. How does the power plant use, reuse, and manage water? What has the plant done to ensure it has the water needed to operate? How is water used by the plant important for wildlife?

Speaker(s):

Rich Belt, Xcel Energy

11:05 **Load Bus, Drive to Riverside Park** (7 min load bus, 18 min drive)

Speaker(s):

Representative Dylan Roberts, Chair of the Interim Water Resources Review Committee, Colorado General Assembly

11:30* **Riverside Park, Fort Morgan** (15 min talk, 15 min Q&A, 30 min lunch/restrooms/explore)

Discussion Topic(s):

The South Platte is a dynamic river with many uses and a diversity of users. How has the city responded to recent flood impacts? How does the city allow for recreation on the river? How have habitat projects benefited the river ecosystem?

Speaker(s):

TBD, City of Fort Morgan

Lunch Sponsor Recognition

Kent Pflager, Morgan County Quality Water District

Lunch sponsored by Morgan County Quality Water District

Discussion Topic(s):

Sugar beets have been critical to the agricultural economy of northeastern Colorado since the early 20th century. Western Sugar Cooperative is a grower-owned by 850 grower/owners and plants up to 134,140 acres of sugar beets and produces over 10 million cwts of locally grown sugar per year. The cooperative has processing facilities in four states. What does the Fort Morgan facility mean for the agricultural economy of the South Platte Basin today?

Speaker(s):

TBD, Western Sugar Cooperative

12:30* **Gather for Post-Lunch Group Activity** (5 min gather, 10 min activity)

Activity:

Water-based group activity.

Lead:

Scott Williamson, Water Education Colorado

12:45 **Load Bus, Drive by Western Sugar Cooperative** (5 min load bus, 5 min drive, 5 min stop)

Speaker(s):

TBD, Western Sugar Cooperative

1:00 **Drive to Dearfield** (25 min drive to Dearfield)

Discussion Topic(s):

Dearfield, CO was founded as a self-sufficient all-black agricultural colony during the Jim Crow Era. How did the colony come to thrive during this time? How did the availability of water and the Dust Bowl impact the colony?

Speaker(s):

KCUR radio story featuring Professor George Junne, professor of Africana Studies, University of Northern Colorado

1:25 **Drive from Dearfield to an Oil and Gas Operation** (10 min drive to 70 Ranch)

Speaker(s):

TBD, Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission

1:35 **Oil and Gas Operation (TBD)** (15 min talk, 15 min Q&A, 5 min load, 5 min drive)

Discussion Topic(s):

How do oil and gas operations use and manage water in the South Platte Basin? What are current water-related innovations and challenges in the industry?

Speaker(s):

TBD, Anadarko Petroleum

- 2:15*** **70 Ranch Reservoir** (15 min talk, 15 Q&A, 15 minute for restroom, snacks, water, and touring the site)
Discussion Topic(s):
United Water and Sanitation District was formed in 2003 to be a water district for other water districts. How do the projects of United Water relate as a system? How does United Water's efforts relate to the larger picture in the lower South Platte?
Speaker(s):
Drew Damiano, United Water and Sanitation
Stephanie Ruiz, United Water and Sanitation

Refreshments served
- 3:00** **Load Bus, Drive to FMIC/Groves Pipeline** (5 min load bus, 35 min drive)
Discussion Topic(s):
Central Colorado Water Conservancy District is a major contributor to water management in the lower South Platte River, from the management of two Augmentation Plans to education efforts like the annual Children's Water Festival. How does the District deal with the complexities of managing two Augmentation Plans? What are the District's priorities and how do they fit in the big picture?
Speaker(s):
Randy Ray, Central Colorado Water Conservancy District (Bus Sponsor)
- 3:40** **Fort Morgan Irrigation Company, Groves Pipeline** (15 min speaker, 15 min Q&A)
Discussion Topic(s):
In this example project, surface water from the Fort Morgan Ditch is pumped to a set of recharge ponds to augment pumping from groundwater wells. The sandy soils in this part of the lower South Platte Basin are ideal for infiltrating water. What were the lessons learned from this project? How does this project relate to larger trends in the South Platte water system?
Speaker(s):
Mike Groves, Bijou Irrigation Company
- 4:10** **Load Bus, Drive by Groves Recharge Ponds** (5 min load bus, 10 min drive)
Speaker(s):
Joe Frank or Mike Groves
- 4:25** **Drive to Narrows** (3 min side-of-road stop, 17 min drive)
Discussion Topic(s):
What was the Narrows Dam Project? How did the project relate to the formation of the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy? What happened to the project and what was the impact on water in the Lower South Platte?
Speaker(s):
Joe Frank, Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District

4:45 Drive by Narrows, Drive to North Sterling Reservoir (75 min drive)

Discussion Topic(s):

Conservation easements are a long-standing method of conserving farmland. Alternative Transfer Methods (ATMs) for water are a relatively newer framework for allowing water rights holders, such as agricultural producers, the flexibility to lease water while maintaining the water right. How do these two frameworks intersect with agricultural productivity? What are new innovations that are emerging to maintain agricultural productivity and provide a secure future for water users?

Speaker(s):

Carmen Farmer, Conservation Project Manager, Colorado Open Lands
Greg Dewey, Project Manager/Water Resources Engineer, Northern Water

6:00 North Sterling Reservoir - Overlook (15 min talk, 15 min Q&A, 5 min load, 5 min drive)

Discussion Topic(s):

Learn about the history and management of this irrigation reservoir within a state park and the water users who depend on it. How has the North Sterling Irrigation District used alternative transfer methods (ATMs) to benefit water users?

Speaker(s):

Jim Yahn, North Sterling Irrigation District

6:40 Dinner Program at North Sterling Reservoir Swim Beach

Dinner Speakers:

Jayla Poppleton, Executive Director, Water Education Colorado

Sponsor Recognition:

TBD, CoBank

Joe Frank, Lower South Platte Conservancy District

Jim Yahn, North Sterling Irrigation District

Entertainment:

TBD

BBQ dinner provided by TBD

**8:10 Depart for Holiday Inn & Suites, Sterling
8:40 Tour Adjourns for the day**

Day 2 - June 18, 2019

- 7:45*** **Depart Holiday Inn & Suites, Sterling** - Orientation to the day, load the bus (7 min load, 13 min drive)
Discussion Topic(s):
What led to the current state of regional cooperation on South Platte water issues? What will the task force for the South Platte Regional Water Development Concept be doing? What are opportunities, challenges, and next steps for this partnership?
- Speaker(s):
Joe Frank, Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District
- 8:05** **Smart Brothers Farm** (15 min talk, 15 min Q&A)
Discussion Topic(s):
What led to one of the first recharge projects and the formation of Logan Well Users following the 2002 drought? How does augmentation through recharge relate to the operation of a farm and cattle feedlot?
- Speaker(s):
Joe Frank, Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District
Carson Smart, Smart Brothers Farm
- 8:35** **Load Bus, Drive to Water Quality Site** (5 min load, 10 min drive)
Discussion Topic(s):
What are the current water quality regulations related to nutrients? What is Regulation 85? How do agricultural Best Management Practices fit in?
- Video:
Regulation 85, Colorado Ag Water Quality
- 8:50** **Water Quality Site (TBD)** (2 x 15 min talks, 15 min Q&A)
Discussion Topic(s):
Why is salinity a water quality concern for some agricultural producers? What are the initial findings of the Historical Analysis of South Platte Salinity to Identify Severity, Trends, and Potential Sources?
- Speaker(s):
Mark Sponsler, Colorado Corn
TBD, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- 9:35** **Load Bus, Drive to Sterling** (5 min load, 10 min drive)
Discussion Topic(s):
Sterling is home to a world-class, state-of-the-art reverse osmosis drinking water treatment plant. How did this treatment plant come to be?
- Speaker:
George Good, Director of Public Works, City of Sterling

10:10* **Sterling Drinking Water Plant (75 min tour)**

Discussion Topic(s):

How does an advanced treatment (reverse osmosis) and deep injection of drinking water work to help solve previous drinking water issues in Sterling? What are the benefits and challenges of managing the plant and its water?

Speaker(s):

George Good, Director of Public Works, City of Sterling
David Beck, Lead Plant Operator, City of Sterling

11:25 **Load Bus, Drive to Overland Trail Museum (10 min load, 5 min drive)**

***11:40** **Overland Trail Museum - High Plains Education Center (10 min welcome/talk, 30 min talk, 15 min Q&A, 25 min for lunch, restrooms, tour of facility)**

Discussion Topic:

Welcome and orientation to the Overland Trail Museum. What connections can be drawn from history between the people of northeast Colorado and water?

Speaker(s):

Kay Rich, Curator, Overland Trail Museum (Welcome)

Discussion Topic(s):

Overview of Republican River and Ogallala Aquifer issues. What are the current priorities for the Republican River? What is the state of Republican River Compact Compliance? How has the RRWCD used Stream Management Planning? What are legislative priorities and recent legislative developments for the RRWCD?

Speaker(s):

Deb Daniel, Republican River Water Conservation District (RRWCD)
Rob Lenz, Board President, RRWCD

Lunch sponsored by TBD

1:00 **Load Bus, Drive to Tamarack (10 min load, 25 min drive)**

Discussion Topic(s):

Four species: piping plovers, pallid sturgeons, whooping cranes, and Interior least terns are listed under the Endangered Species Act and covered by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP). What is the PRRIP? How this three-state agreement work? What is the PRRIP's future as the Colorado's response to the Endangered Species Act listings?

Speaker(s):

Don Ament, former Agriculture Commissioner, Governor's Appointee to the PRRIP governance committee.
Scott Griebeling, Headwaters Corp.

- 1:35 Arrive Tamarack, Drive to Monday Pond (5 min drive)**
Discussion Topic(s):
What is the history of the Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area and how, for what, and for whom is it currently managed?

Speaker(s):
Levi Koke, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- 1:40 Tamarack - Monday Pond (2 x 10 min talks, 10 min initial Q&A)**
Discussion Topic(s):
What is the role of the State of Colorado's government in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP)? How does the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) implement this role?
Speaker(s):
Jojo La, CWCB

Discussion Topic(s):
How does Tamarack work as a site in the context of the PRRIP?
Speaker(s):
Jon Altenhofen, South Platte Projects Manager, Northern Water
- 2:10 Load Bus, Drive to River Access, Walk to River (5 min load, 5 min drive, 10 min walk)**
Discussion Topic(s):
Why was the South Platte Water Related Activities Program (SPWRAP) formed? How does SPWRAP work and what service does it provide its members?

Speaker(s):
Dan Gallen, South Platte Water Related Activities Program
- 2:30 Tamarack - South Platte River (10 min 5 min load, 5 min drive, 10 min walk)**
Discussion Topic(s):
Tamarack was hit by major flooding. What were the flood impacts, and what partnerships were formed to restore the river? How will recent restoration efforts benefit the river and its species?

Speaker(s):
TBD, Ducks Unlimited
Kelsea Holloway, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, NRCS or biologist TBD

2:50 Tamarack - River Access - Group Walk and Talk (20 min walk and talk)

Discussion Topic(s):

What do you want to get out of our last discussion of the day? What more questions do you have about Tamarack and the PRRIP? Walk along the river with groups of 10-15. Ask questions of experts on the PRRIP and the Tamarack site.

Group Leaders and Group Names (to be confirmed):

Piping Plovers: Don Ament, Kelsea Holloway

Pallid Sturgeons: Scott Griebeling, Dan Gallen

Whooping Cranes: Jojo La, Jon Altenhofen

Interior Least Terns: TBD - Ducks Unlimited, Levi Koke

3:10 Gather for Group Activity (10 min activity)

Activity:

Water-based group activity.

Lead:

Scott Williamson, Water Education Colorado

3:20 Load Bus, Depart for Holiday Inn & Suites, Sterling (10 min load, 30 min drive)

4:00 Tour Adjourns