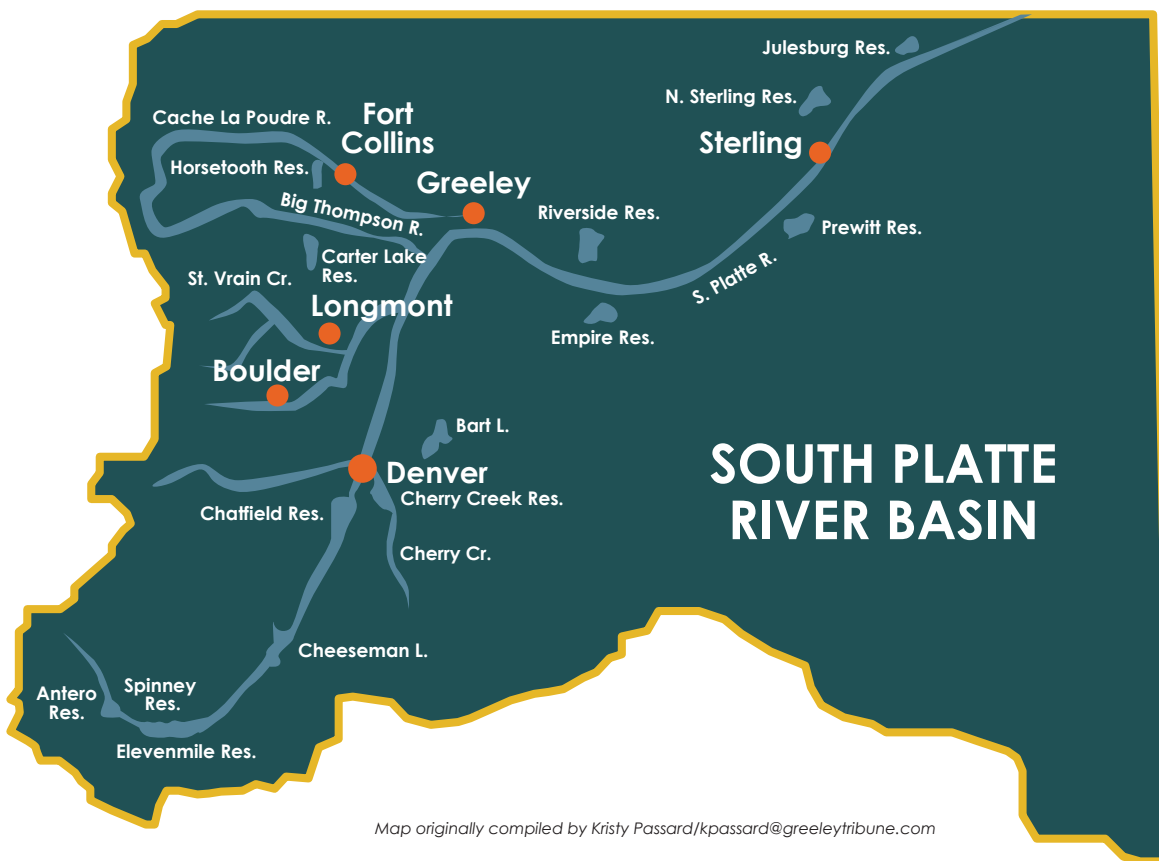


South Platte Regional Opportunities Water Group (SPROWG) Study

Fact Sheet

About the South Platte River Basin

The South Platte River originates in Colorado's Park County and flows for about 380 miles before reaching the Nebraska state line. The South Platte Basin (Basin) encompasses 23 counties and is home to approximately 3.8 million people, which includes the Denver Metropolitan area and growing northern Colorado communities such as Loveland, Greeley and Fort Collins. Seven of the 10 top agricultural producing counties in Colorado are in the Basin as well as recreational amenities for fishing, hiking, boating, skiing and visitors to state and national parks – all which contribute to the state's economy.



Basin water managers rely on a network of facilities and a vast system of public and privately-owned water rights to provide water for their customers. Limited water supplies have resulted in long standing efforts by water managers and citizens to conserve and maximize the use of water in the river. It is estimated that river water is used seven times before it flows into Nebraska.

Identifying Needs and Solutions

The Basin is challenged with the greatest projected water supply gap of any of Colorado's river basins and home to most of the state's population, which is expected to grow from 3.8 million to 6 million people by 2050. Colorado's Water Plan projected a municipal supply gap in the Basin of about 365,000 acre-feet annually.¹

Diverse interests in the Basin are working to develop water supply and infrastructure projects that benefit municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreational and environmental considerations. The South Platte Basin Roundtable and Metro Basin Roundtable published the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan which identified water demands and evaluated various strategies that could be used to meet the identified water supply gap. Included in the plan, a "Conceptual Future In-Basin Multipurpose Project" is identified as one strategy in which South Platte supplies can be used with the greatest potential benefit (SP BIP, Section 4.6.2). This conceptual project relies on capturing and developing several types of South Platte water supplies to meet multiple benefits.

In 2015, a group of Front Range water managers called the South Platte Regional Opportunities Water Group (SPROWG) began exploring strategies for advancing the "Conceptual Future In-Basin Multipurpose Project" described in the SP BIP. Their work resulted in the framework addition study now underway. In a parallel effort, the South Platte Storage Study, authorized by the Colorado General Assembly (HB 16-1256), evaluated the South Platte River between Kersey and the Nebraska state line for potential water storage that could meet the considerable water gap identified in Colorado's Water Plan. It found that on average, the South Platte River carries almost 300,000 acre feet of water per year out of Colorado in excess of the amount needed to satisfy the South Platte River Compact with Nebraska.

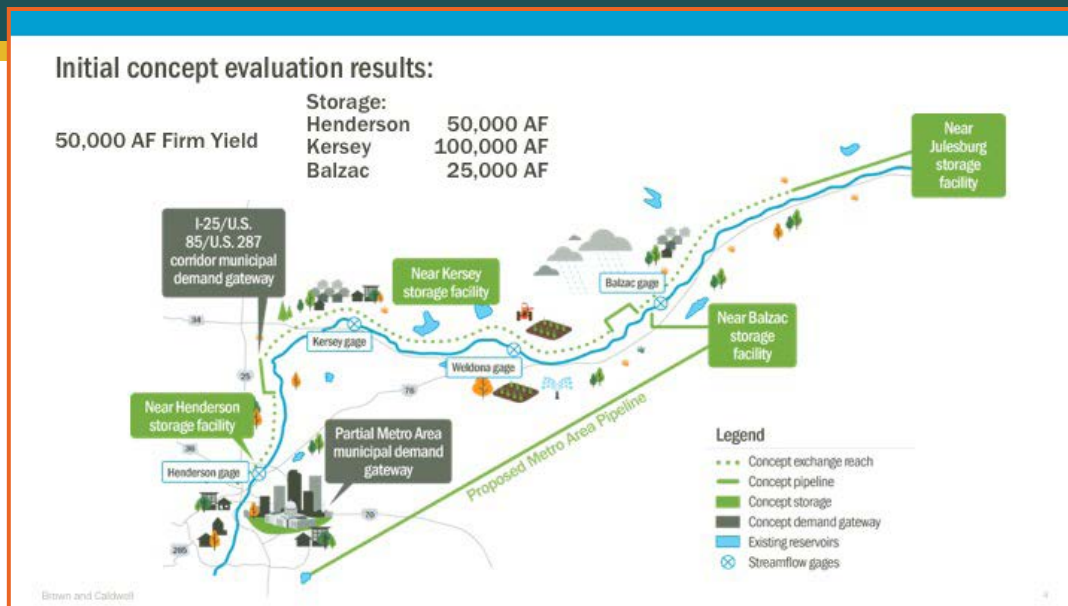
Current SPROWG Activities

To further develop these concepts, the Colorado Water Conservation Board provided a grant to fund the South Platte Regional Water Development Concept Feasibility Study (renamed the South Platte Regional Opportunities Water Group (SPROWG) for familiarity purposes).

A contractor team was selected in February 2019 and is led by an advisory committee comprised of members from the South Platte Basin Roundtable, the Metro Roundtable, and other interested stakeholders. Additionally, a task force, which is open to any interested stakeholder, will provide input on the project. Meetings with the advisory committee and task force began in March 2019 and will continue for the duration of the project. The study approach includes gathering input from a broad and diverse group of stakeholders to ensure that all interests are heard and considered. A major part of the effort will focus on outreach to municipal, industrial, agricultural, recreation and environmental interest groups. A draft report will be completed by March 2020.

The SPROWG study envisions a holistic approach to meet diverse water needs in the Basin. Initial concepts to be studied include multiple, operationally linked storage facilities (above and/or below ground) capable of holding more than 150,000 acre-feet of water in total at various locations between Denver and the state line. In addition, infrastructure is being considered to transport the water to users within the South Platte Basin, and water treatment strategies are being investigated.

¹ To be updated in July 2019



This infrastructure network would store water that could be drawn from the unappropriated native flow, reusable return flows, agricultural water derived from Alternative Transfer Methods (ATMs) and groundwater.

The study intends to provide at least 50,000 acre-feet of water annually to meet part of the municipal and industrial water supply gap and also additional supplies for the agricultural gap in the South Platte Basin. A significant portion is targeted for smaller rapidly growing communities along I-25, Highway 85 corridor between Denver and Greeley, larger communities in the metro Denver and northern Colorado, and smaller communities east of Greeley.

The study will look at the timing of a project(s), the location and amount of stakeholder's water needs, possible organization structures to construct and manage the project(s), water treatment strategies, and other drivers deemed critical to the potential success of the project.

Guiding SPROWG Principles

A set of principles agreed to by stakeholders will guide the study.

SPROWG will:

- Meet a portion of the municipal, industrial, and agricultural water supply gaps
- Address environmental and recreational needs in the basin
- Enhance the ability to conduct alternative water transfers or leases with agriculture
- Use multiple sources of available water (e.g. available river flows, existing reusable return flows, etc.)
- Maximize use of in-basin supplies
- Improve integration of water quality and quantity planning

SPROWG is not intended to:

- Be a substitute for existing or planned water projects
- Facilitate the permanent dry up of farmland in the basin
- Store supplies from an existing or new transmountain diversion project (though it will provide a means to utilize unused reusable return flows from transmountain diversions)

To learn more about the SPROWG study or participate in the process, please visit

www.southplattebasin.com.