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water





INTRODUCTION

In many respects, water is the lifeblood of Boulder County. Boulder County's rivers, streams, and reservoirs provide clean and plentiful drinking water for our cities and towns; are critical to supporting our economy, from farming to recreational tourism; and provide essential habitat to our abundant fish and wildlife populations.

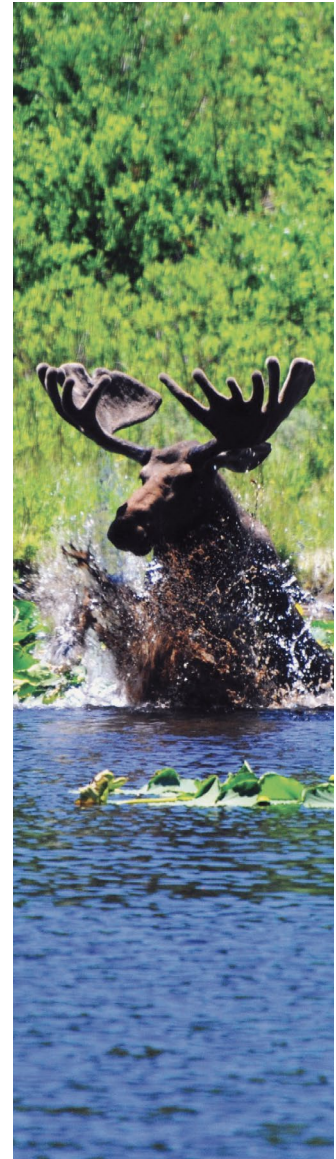
Within this context, Boulder County supports efforts that will lead to the development of sustainable water resource management practices and regulations to achieve greater conservation and more efficient use of our water supply. In Boulder County, we believe that healthy water quality and a sustainable water supply depend on the entire community, from the Board of County Commissioners, who develop and approve policy, to the businesses and residents who conserve water resources.

As a headwaters county, Boulder County enjoys relatively pristine water quality from mountain sources, and it is incumbent upon us to maintain or improve water quality for downstream users. Over the past

decade, Boulder County has committed to partnerships with communities working together to protect our water quality and coordinate watershed management.

In addition, we have learned that conserving water resources is a top priority among Boulder County residents. To this end, we are continuing to expand our sustainability services to offer water efficiency and conservation tools for our residents and business owners.

Water is a precious natural resource, particularly in the semi-arid climate of Colorado, and Boulder County is committed to ensuring that the county's future generations have clean and abundant water.





water goal

Ensure leadership and exemplify best practices in water efficiency and water quality efforts that ensure sufficient clean water for current and future natural landscapes and generations.



COUNTY OPERATION STRATEGIES

Reduce Boulder County facilities' indoor water usage to 20% below the 2018 International Plumbing Code (IPC) requirement by 2020

- Ensure that new county buildings achieve all the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) points within the water efficiency section of the USGBC new construction certification process.
 - Benchmark all county buildings' indoor water use per 2018 IPC by 2019.
 - Develop a plan to reduce water use to 20% below 2018 IPC by 2020.
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Reduce outdoor water use

- Repair, upgrade, and adjust all irrigation systems with the most efficient available technologies.
 - Modify current landscaping practices and sprinkler systems to ensure monthly water usage and budget do not exceed lowest billing rate.
 - Finalize data collection on square feet of landscape being irrigated and service charges for all water-related utilities (drinking water, sewage, storm water).
 - Create and implement a plan to replace 20% of irrigated turf around county buildings by 2020.
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**COUNTY OPERATION STRATEGIES**

Continue improving water efficiency and quality and maintain the water supply on Parks & Open Space agricultural properties

- Use existing Parks & Open Space Water and Cropland Policies and Management Plans.
- Support local and state policies that help maintain agricultural viability and preserve open space values by retaining stream and ditch water supplies on irrigated lands throughout Boulder County.
- Utilize water quality monitoring data from internal and external sources to collaborate and share with other water quality monitoring efforts.
- Continue support of irrigation system improvements on county property that supply water to communities and agricultural producers.
- Support ecological stream restoration and in-stream flow efforts to aid species recovery, improve water quality, and create new areas for aquatic wildlife habitat and recreational activities.

Assess current and future drought and related vulnerabilities caused by increased climate and weather variability, population growth, and development

- Facilitate the collection and sharing of data by all appropriate water-managing agencies and Boulder County departments.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration and data sharing for water quantity and quality monitoring efforts, and identify appropriate uses for this data.
- Gather all existing data on drought from county agencies and incorporated areas.
- Support coordinated climate change response strategies for use by Boulder County water providers through a collaborative forum.
- Enhance water-conservation-related components of the Land-Use Code and participate in regional planning efforts to ensure that planning for new development within Boulder County and the Denver metro region adequately addresses water supply constraints and vulnerabilities.



COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Protect, improve, and ensure watershed health to secure an enduring supply of high-quality source water, while protecting the wildlife habitat, stream system functions, and aesthetics of our natural environment

- Have no stream segments in the county on the state's list of impaired or polluted waters by supporting the Keep It Clean Partnership and other intergovernmental agreements in minimizing pollution impacts in surface waters.
- Work collaboratively with external multistakeholder watershed groups that are engaged in efforts to promote healthy watersheds through water quality monitoring, stream stewardship and restoration projects, fire mitigation, public education, and related other activities.
- Support policies that regulate the negative impacts on water quality from oil and gas exploration and development.
- Devote expanded resources toward reducing storm water runoff in the upper watersheds and non-urbanized areas of the county.
- Maintain healthy forests in order to reduce wildland fire impacts to source waters.
- Ensure responsible natural resource extraction in ways that protect riparian areas and water quality.
- Engage in local source-water protection planning.
- Sustain local stream flows and water quality with minimal reliance on west slope diversions.
- Complete remediation of ranked abandoned mine sites.

**COMMUNITY STRATEGIES**

Ensure that all on-site wastewater treatment systems are permitted and approved

- Make sure all wastewater treatment applications are reviewed and evaluated by Boulder County Public Health to ensure that they meet Boulder County wastewater treatment regulations that are a part of all property sales transactions.
- Conduct outreach to high-risk geographic areas likely to be impacted by aging and unapproved wastewater treatment.
- Maintain regulations to employ the best practices and technologies to protect groundwater.
- Maintain an active outreach and permitting process for unpermitted and unapproved wastewater treatment in Boulder County, with the goal of having all wastewater treatment permitted by 2023.

Expand water conservation education efforts with Boulder County residents and businesses

- Engage with statewide education campaigns and any new collaborative water conservation education initiatives to promote water use of under 85 gallons per day per person.
- Incorporate water conservation education and best management practices into the EnergySmart service.
- Continue water education provided to businesses and municipal agencies by the Partners for a Clean Environment (PACE) service.
- List homes that achieve the EPA's WaterSense certification in the green Multiple Listing Service (MLS).
- Expand existing youth water education programs to include water conservation and source water protection.
- Coordinate water conservation strategies that include similar messaging throughout Boulder County.
- Develop county Land-Use Codes and work with local municipalities to require all new, remodel, and addition projects to incorporate water efficiency measures.



WATER





BUSINESS SAVES WATER

For more than a decade, Boulder County's PACE service has worked with local businesses and municipal operations to reduce their stormwater pollution and systematically standardize water efficiency. In past years, dozens of businesses have become certified in PACE's Water Conservation Area of Excellence. Studio Z Dental in Louisville is now using 77% less water than an average dental office. After installing a waterless suction system and auto shut-off pumps at each hand-washing sink, more than 200,000 gallons per year are being saved. This consciousness of water conservation led the business to voluntarily implement environmentally responsible purchasing practices, as well as composting and recycling programs for their office staff and clients. Water stewardship, just like our Colorado rivers, carries a positive momentum that flows into many other areas of environmental sustainability.



POLICY PRIORITIES

The following are environmental sustainability policy priorities adopted through Boulder County’s legislative agenda:

POLICY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Promote the efficient utilization and conservation of water

Colorado’s lakes, rivers and streams, and water delivery systems provide clean drinking water for our cities and towns and are critical to supporting the state economy, fish and wildlife populations, and our way of life. Within this context, state and local government water policy must result in water supply and management decisions that are environmentally and economically sustainable, in order to conserve, protect, and restore Colorado’s rivers. Boulder County staff participated

directly in the two-year-long effort to draft Colorado’s Water Plan, the state’s first comprehensive water plan. The inclusion of conservation, land-use, and watershed health metrics in the plan will move the state toward sustainable water resource management practices and create public policy incentives to achieve greater conservation and more efficient use of Colorado’s water supply. State legislation and other policy approaches will be important tools in this effort.



POLICY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Support the Clean Water Act

Legislative and rule-making attempts to curtail the authority of the Clean Water Act would unnecessarily undo decades of regulatory effectiveness that Coloradans rely on to protect the quality of our water. These attempts

would undermine 40 years of collective experience and collaboration by numerous nongovernmental and governmental organizations to effectively support the Clean Water Act.

Ensure safe and high-quality drinking water

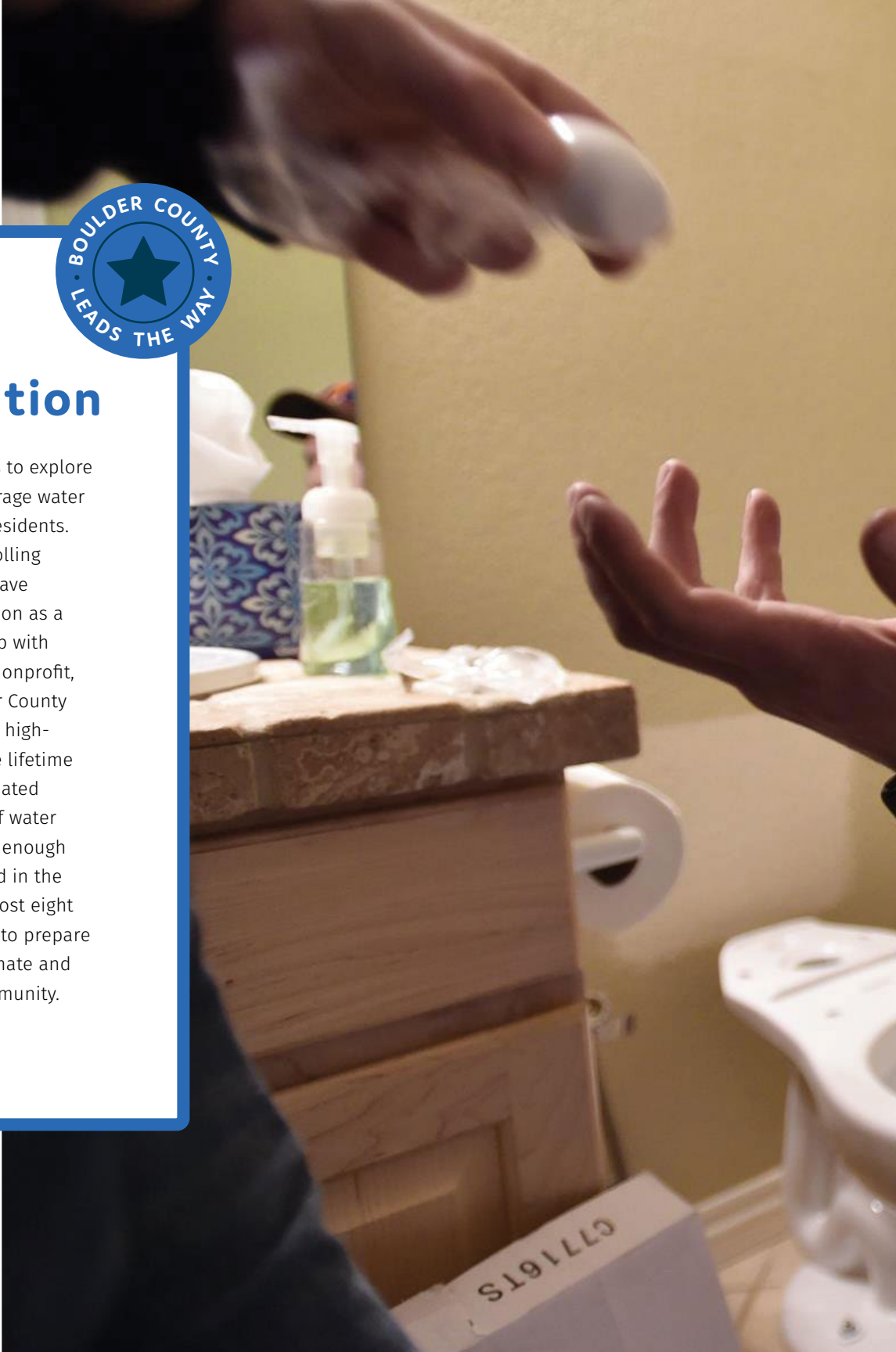
Access to safe drinking water is vital to life. Millions of Coloradans receive access to drinking water that is protected by the Colorado Department of Health and the Environment. However, funding levels for the Colorado Safe Drinking Water program have been flat since 2007 while the population of the state and the costs of protecting drinking water continue to rise. In August of 2017, the Colorado Safe Drinking Water program announced staff and service-level reductions that will result in “less staff time reviewing

self-reported monitoring data, less support to ensure required sampling is completed, and less time reviewing and addressing system operator qualifications,” among other program reductions that will “increase the number of violations issued to public drinking water systems.” Boulder County supports funding for the Safe Drinking Water Program to effectively serve the state’s growing population, to comply with the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act, and to follow recommendations from the Flint Water Advisory Task Force.



Water Conservation

Boulder County continues to explore innovative ways to encourage water conservation among its residents. For years, public policy polling and community surveys have reported water conservation as a top priority. In partnership with our local environmental nonprofit, ReSource Central, Boulder County has installed nearly 2,000 high-efficiency toilets. Over the lifetime of the program, it is estimated that 539 million gallons of water will be conserved. That is enough to supply every household in the county with water for almost eight days. This is just one way to prepare for the ever-changing climate and remain resilient as a community.







TAKE ACTION



Saving Water

There are myriad ways to take action to save water. Here are just a few:

- Install water-efficient toilets, showerheads, and faucet aerators.
- Check all faucets, toilets, and showerheads for leaks.
- Only run the dishwasher when it is completely full.
- Have your irrigation system audited for leaks, broken equipment, overspray, or inefficient watering schedules.
- Share information with coworkers about how to conserve water indoors and outdoors.
- Learn and share about where your community's water supply comes from and how it is treated through a community tour.



RESOURCES

More Information

**Parks & Open Space
Water Policy**

assets.bouldercounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/water-policy.pdf

**Parks & Open Space
Cropland Policy**

bouldercounty.org/open-space/management/cropland-policy

Ways to Save Water

ResourceCentral.org

LoveColoradoWater.org

ColoradoWaterWise.org

PACEPartners.com

**Help Prevent
Water Pollution**

keepitcleanpartnership.org/pollution-prevention

