

Basin Roundtable Summit
March 6, 2014
Watershed Health: A Cross-Basin Approach
Summary

A one-hour session on watershed health was held during the March 6, 2014 Basin Roundtable Summit. Following an overview and status update of the Watershed Health Basin Plan Working Group process, session participants were asked to contribute their thoughts and ideas on key values and threats affected by watershed health, as well as barriers to the protection of these key values. Finally, the group was asked to identify key partners in future watershed health discussions. The values, threats, barriers, and partners identified by the group are summarized below.

Values

- Diversion structures
- Human safety
- Infrastructure for water supplies and energy production
- Wildlife habitat (natural, social, and economic values)
- Native riparian vegetation
- Natural infrastructure
- Water quality (for drinking water and ecosystems)
- Oil and gas wells (both a value and a threat)
- Terrestrial and aquatic recreation (economic and social values)
- Ecosystem processes, including fire and floods
- Resilience of ecosystems and human communities
- Surface and groundwater intakes
- Water rights
- Transportation infrastructure leading to water supply infrastructure

Threats

- Fire
- Floods
- Failing septic systems
- Leaking aboveground and underground storage tanks
- High wind leading to widespread tree damage
- Insect outbreaks
- Invasive vegetation
- Invasive and native riparian tree species exacerbating flood problems
- Land use changes leading to changes in hydrology
- Water infrastructure and transportation infrastructure as threats
- Treatment plants unable to handle sediment loads
- Debris flows after fires

Barriers

- Communication between players, either because key players have not been identified or because joint advance planning has not occurred
- Time
- Money
- Deciding about whose time and money should be used
- Laws
- Deciding what and where to protect
- Willingness of key players to participate
- Boundaries of authority among and between parties, especially federal agencies
- Public acceptance of measures that improve forest health (e.g., forest thinning, prescribed fire); without public acceptance, lawsuits often occur
- Lack of trust and lack of understanding between parties
- Insufficient information and inventories about places and values to protect

Potential Partners

- US Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- National Resources Conservation Service
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Local fire protection districts
- Non-profits (e.g., Coalition for the Upper South Platte, National Forest Foundation, Trout Unlimited)
- Community foundations
- Watershed groups
- Industry (Coke, Coors, Vail, etc.)
- County offices, especially emergency response
- Water providers
- Private landowners