Presentation for the Boulder County Nature Association

St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District Overview

October 31st
2026

Sean Cronin, Scott Griebling, Jenny McCarty, and Emily Robinson

Bridge at Bohn Park Photo by Thaddeus Roan

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Challenges
3. District Role
4. Projects
5. Get Involved
6. Questions/Discussion

Bridge at Bohn Park Photo by Thaddeus Roan

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ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Intro











ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Intro

1. Introductions
2. Challenges
3. District Role
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Bridge at Bohn Park Photo by Thaddeus Roan

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

BCNA Concerns

- Snow drought
- Low stream, lake, and reservoir levels
- Colorado River situation
- BoCo wildfire concerns
- Future and climate change?

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

BCNA Concerns

- Snow drought
- Low stream, lake, and reservoir levels
- Colorado River situation
- BoCo wildfire concerns
- Future and climate change?
- Others?

“Nineteenth-century water law, twentieth-century infrastructure, and twenty-first-century population growth and climate change are on a collision course throughout the West.”
(Pelz, 2017)

*"Nineteenth-century **water law**, twentieth-century **infrastructure**, and twenty-first-century **population growth** and **climate change** are on a collision course throughout the West."*

(Pelz, 2017)

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Water Law

NEWS > ENVIRONMENT • News

Colorado River states fail to meet another federal deadline for a deal as disastrous reservoir levels loom

Lake Powell could fall beneath level needed for hydropower as soon as July, new projections show

With the deadline missed, Bureau of Reclamation plans to move forward on Colorado River operations

By **Marianne Goodland** 02/15/2026 | updated 1 week ago

THE COLORADO SUN

NEWS: WATER

Colorado says "yes" to Western Slope plan for Shoshone Power Plant's water rights

CPR News

POLITICS MONEY ARTS JUSTICE ENVIRONMENT NEWSLETTER

Nebraska announces suit against Colorado over South Platte water

By Nebraska Public Media News · Jul. 16, 2025, 2:46 pm

WATER EDUCATION COLORADO

Fresh Water News Publications Programs & Events

In historic vote, water regulators approve first-ever "Waters of Colorado" protection rules

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Infrastructure







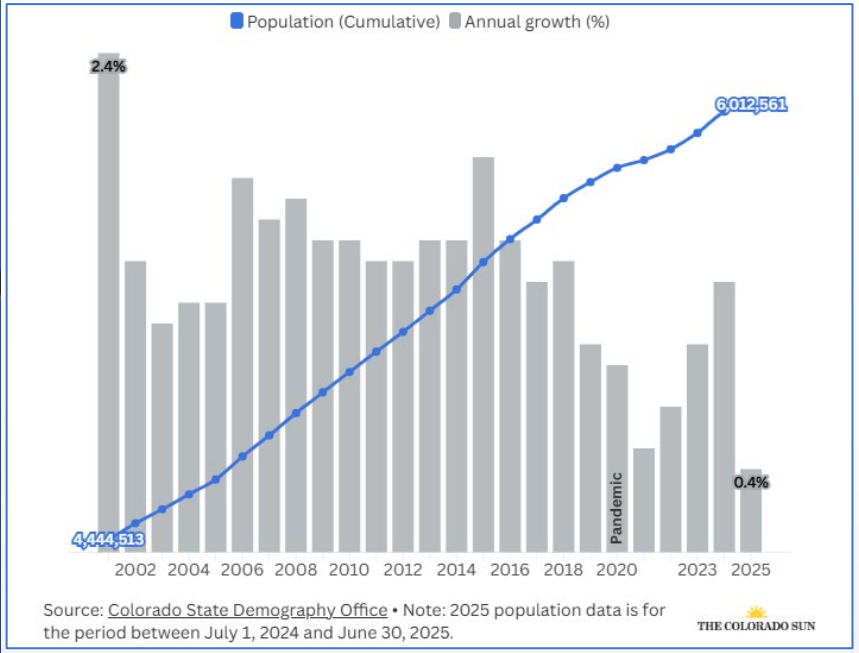






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Population Growth



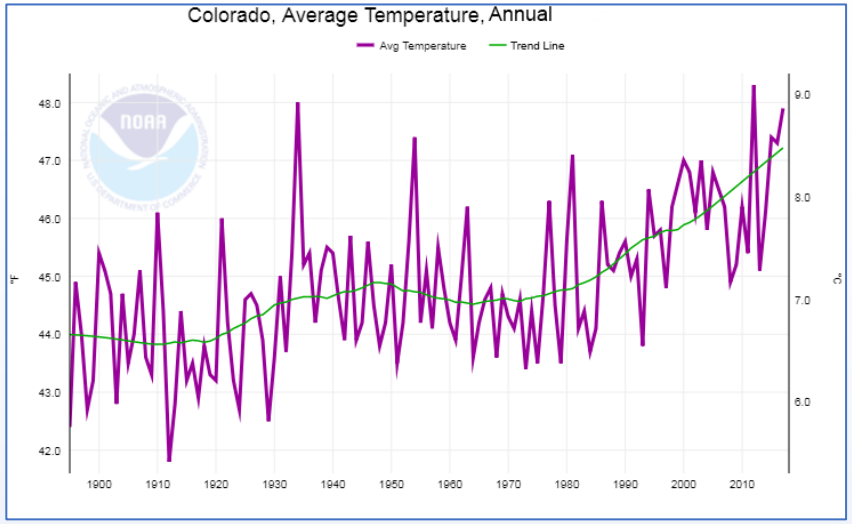
135% Increase



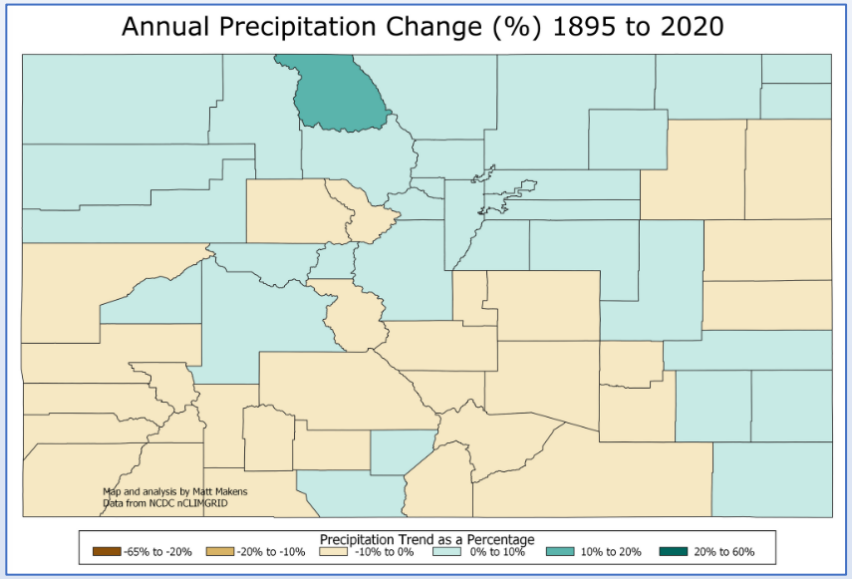
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Climate Change

3.5˚F Increase



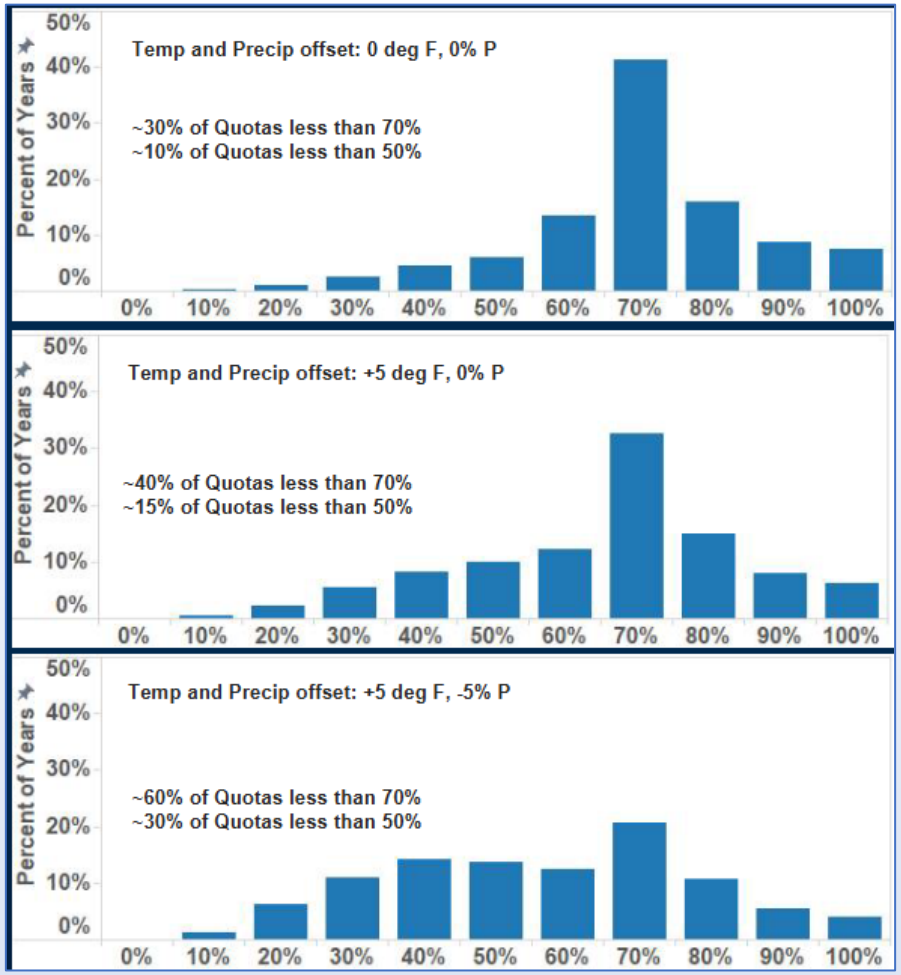
https://waterknowledge.colostate.edu/climate/



https://climatechange.colostate.edu/chapters/2_temp_precip.html

COLORADO CLIMATE CENTER

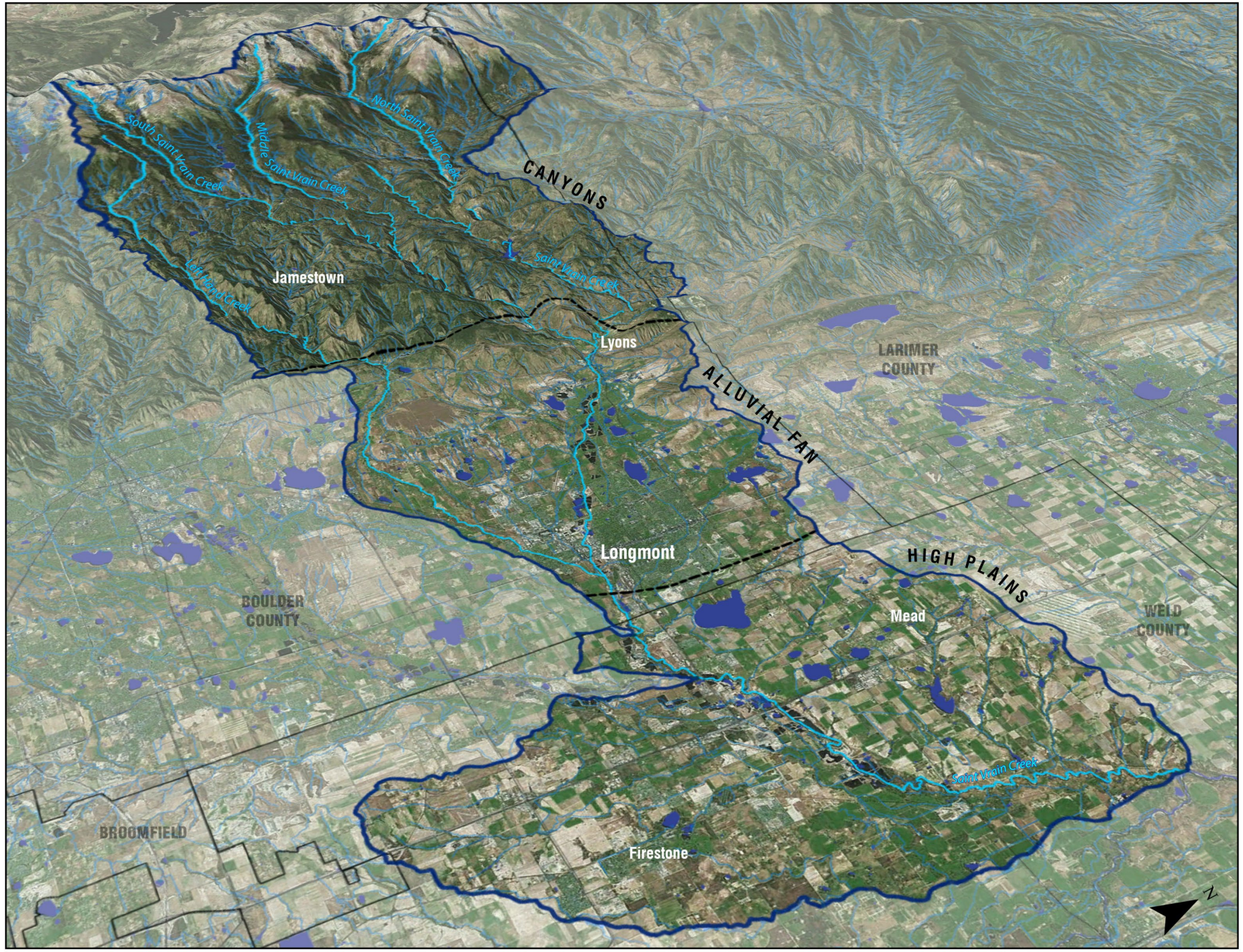
City of Fort Collins



https://records.fcgov.com/CityCouncil/DocView.aspx?id=3487347&dbid=0&repo=FortCollins&cr=1

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Large Area



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

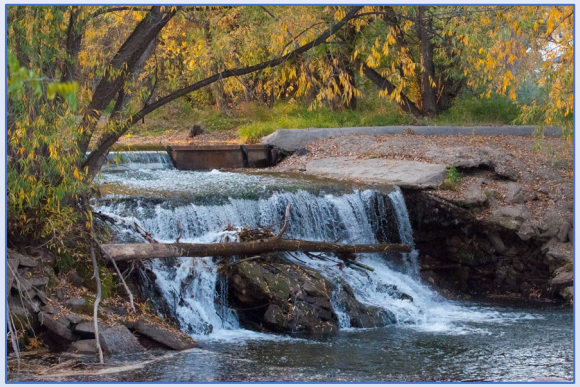
…with a variety of stakeholders











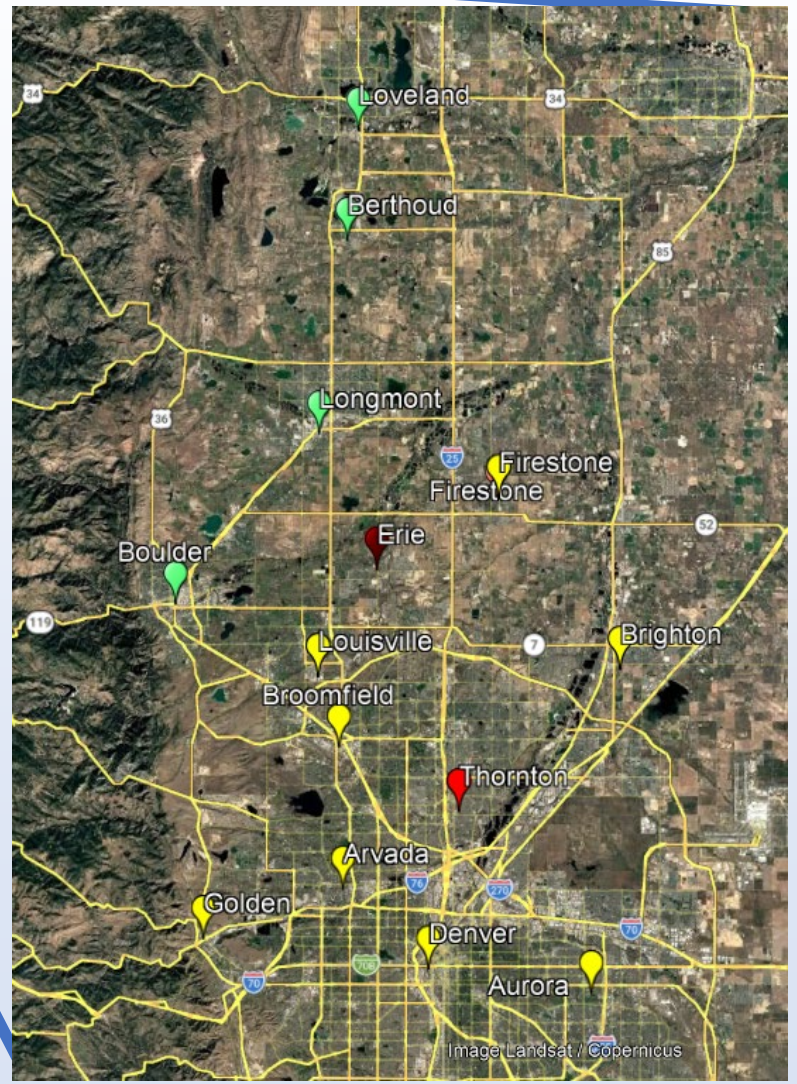



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

…and different water portfolios and approaches

Colorado cities split on use of permanent watering restrictions





ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Challenges
3. District Role
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5. Get Involved
6. Questions/Discussion

Bridge at Bohn Park Photo by Thaddeus Roan

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

District Background

Conservancy Districts

- Water Conservancy Act: 1937
- Mission
- Taxing authority
- Board of Directors
  - Appointed by Judge(s)

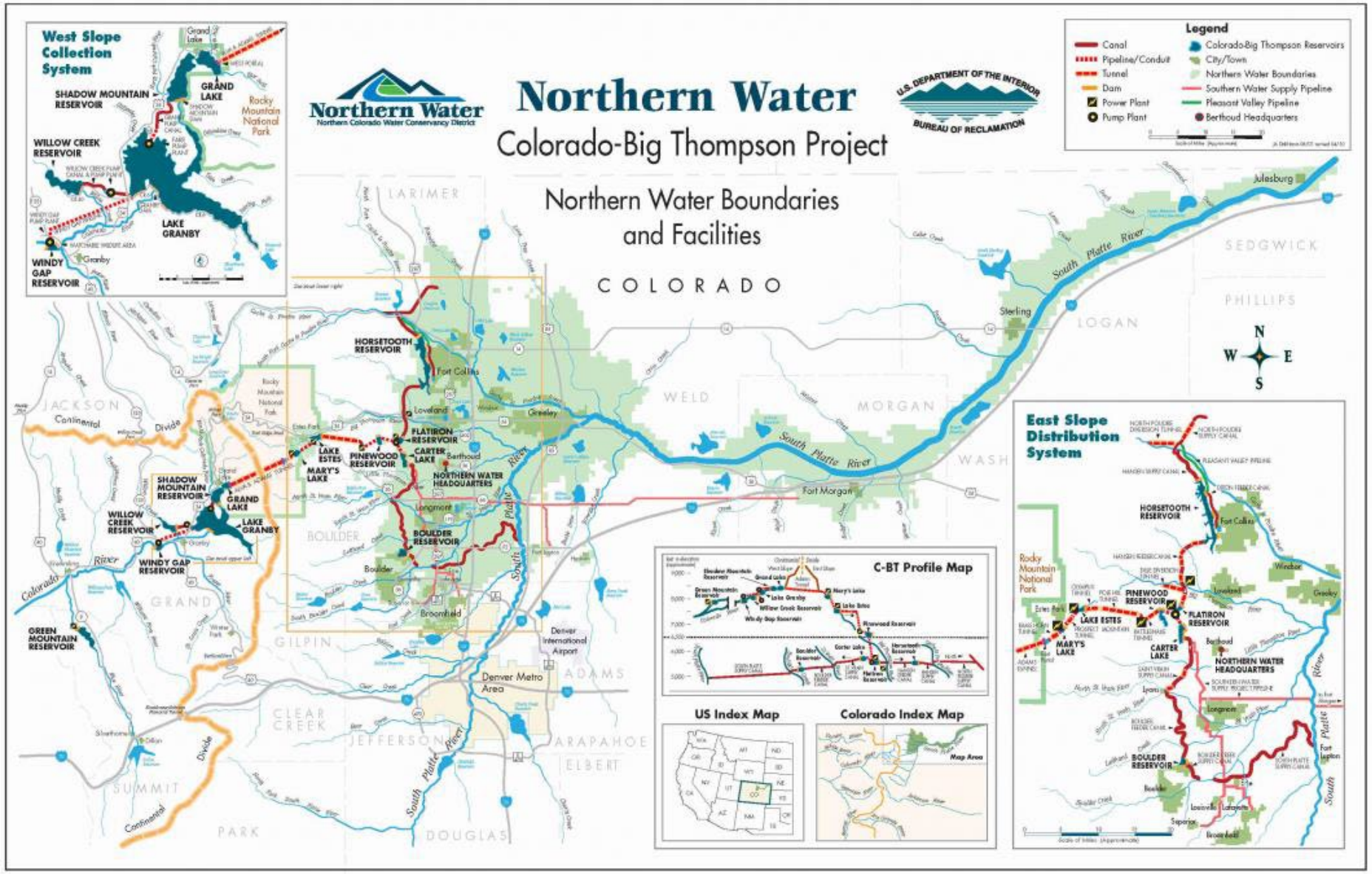
District Background

Conservancy Districts Continued…

- Total Water Conservancy Districts = 49
- Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District – est. 1937
- St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District – est. 1971
- Some overlap in boundaries

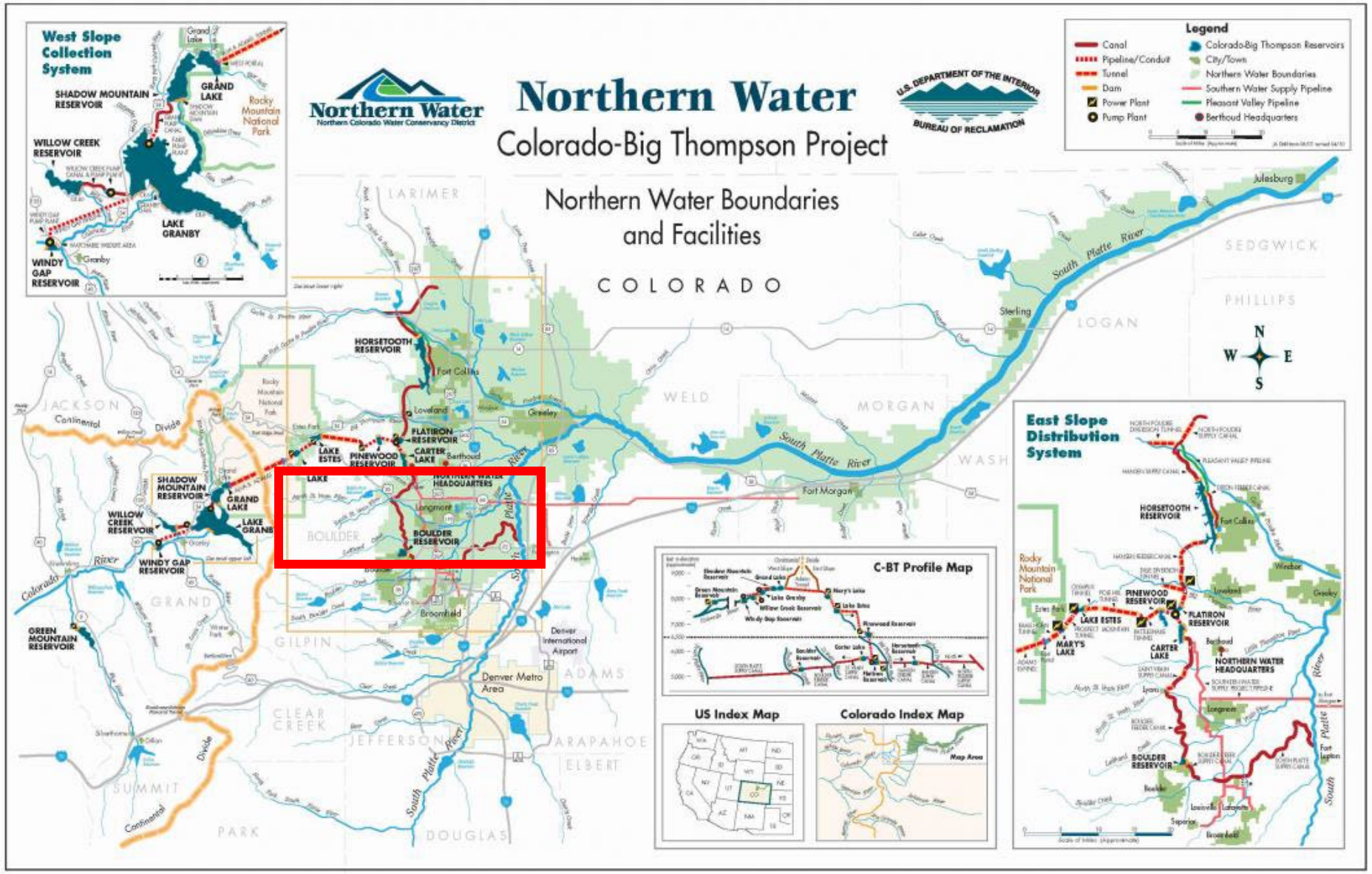
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

District Background

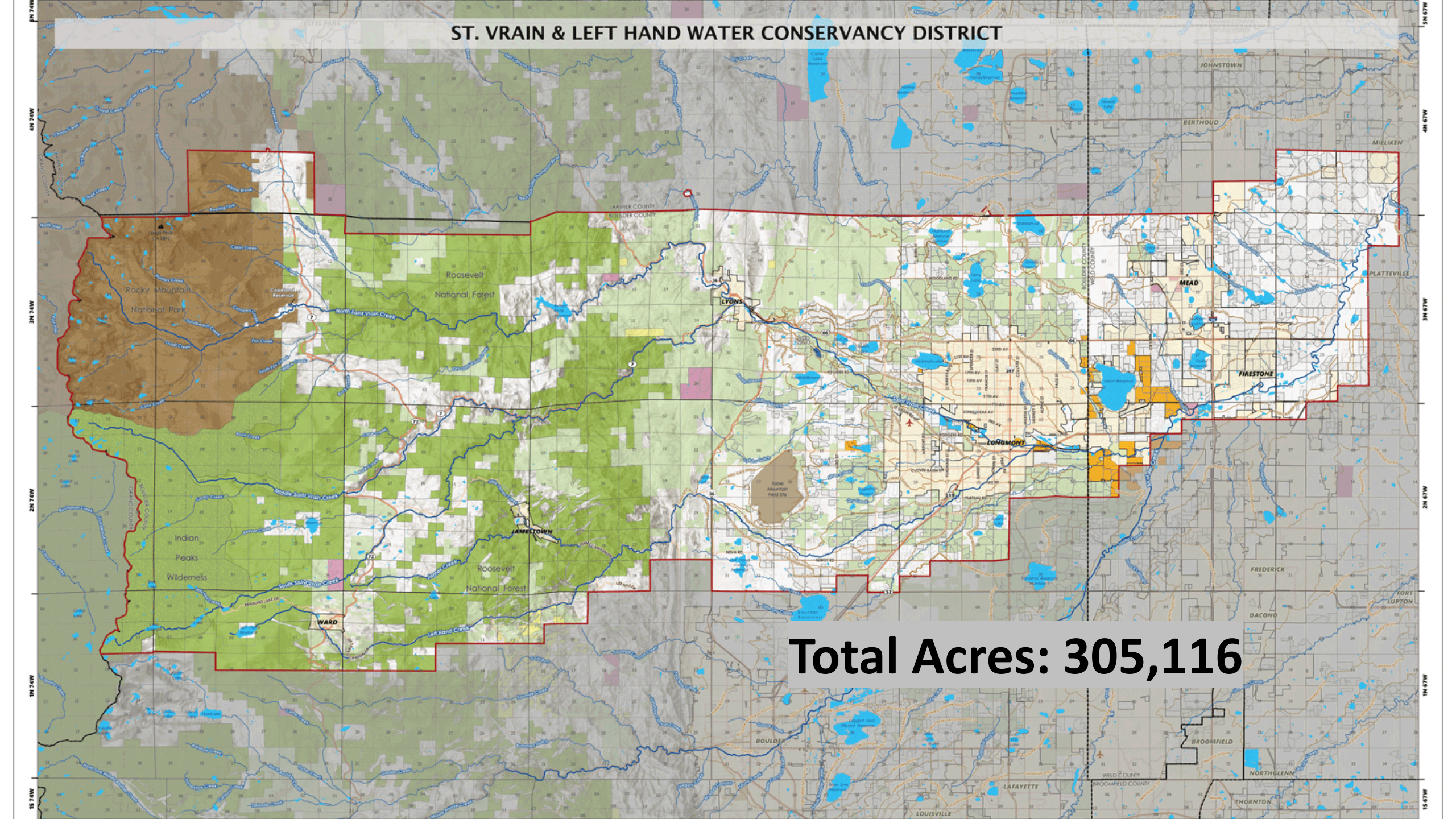


ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

District Background



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT



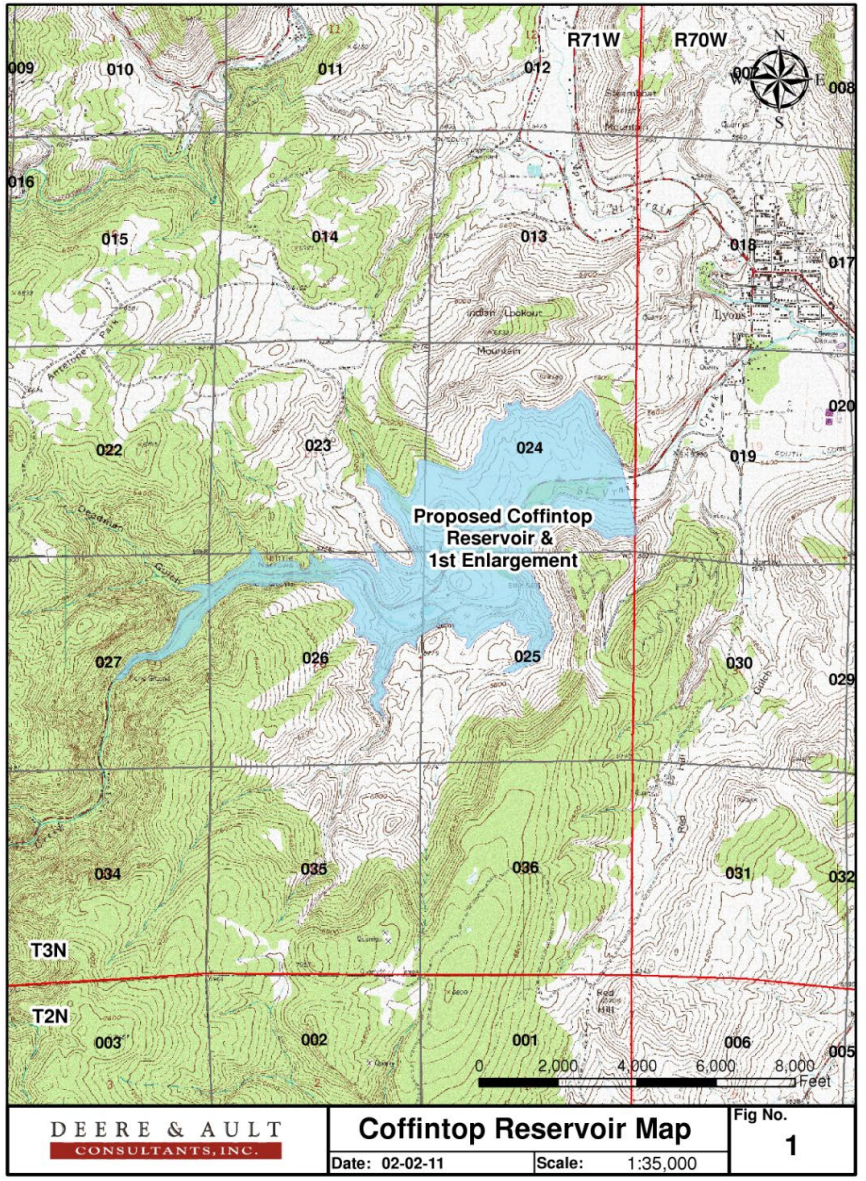
Total Acres: 305,116

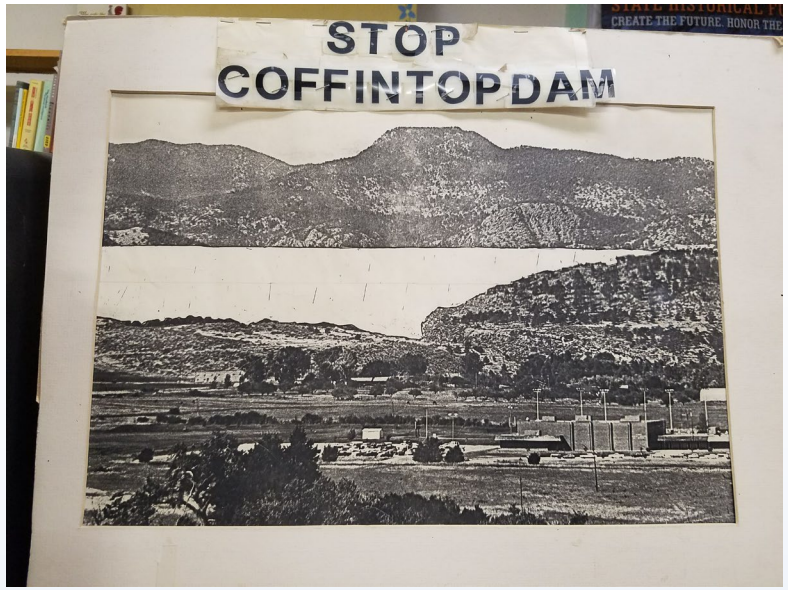
District History

- **1971** Creation
- **1970's-1980's** Reservoir Development
- **1990's-2000's** Augmentation Program
- **2013** Flood Recovery
- **2020** Water Plan, Stream Management Plan, Ballot
- **2024** Ballot
- **2022 & Beyond** Leveraging Funds & Implementation

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Coffintop







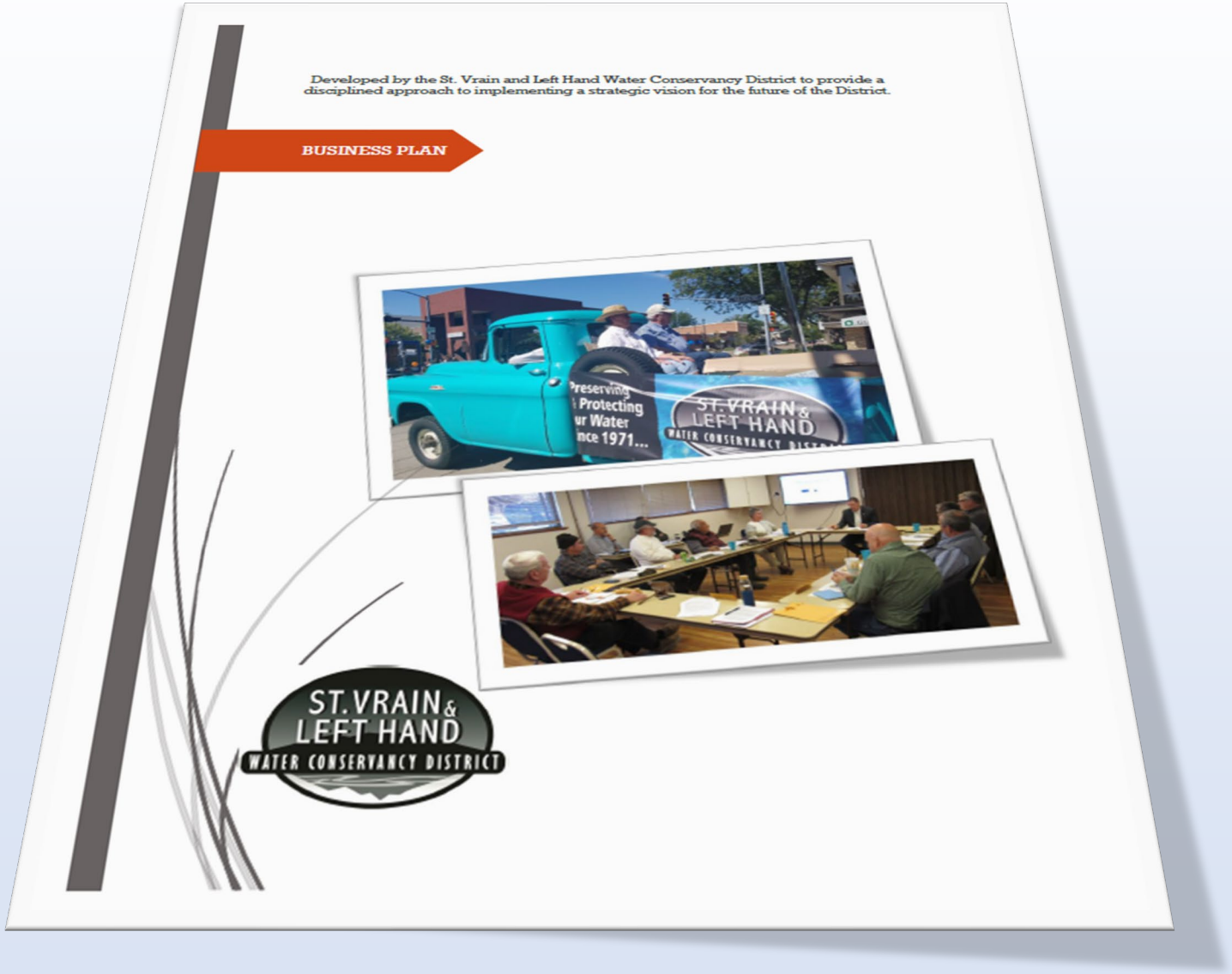
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

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Water Plan

Adopted February 2020



Stream Management Plan

2020

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

St. Vrain & Left Hand
Stream Management Plan

Phase 1 Summary Report

October 2020



First CWCB-sanctioned on Front Range!

2025

St. Vrain & Left Hand
Stream Management Plan

Implementation Priority Initiatives Report

2025



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Stream Management Plan



THEME 1:

Flow Management

- Fill data gaps and develop the framework for enhancing stream flows
- Establish reservoir operation agreements



THEME 2:

Habitat Restoration & Protection

- Restore habitat and floodplain connectivity
- Protect wetland and riparian buffers



THEME 3:

Water Quality Improvements

- Increase project implementation
- Enhance water quality monitoring



THEME 4:

Flow Water Use & Management (Infrastructure)

- Manage diversion structure, ditch improvements, and irrigation practices
- On-channel measuring devices
- Fish passage
- Impediment removals and coordinated management

Adopted October 2020

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

5 Pillars



Funding

	2024 (Extension)		2020 (Sunset)	
Yes	59,469	84.07%	48,411	67.81%
No	11,268	15.93%	22,986	32.19%
	70,737		71,397	

1.25 Mill

2026: $5.3M

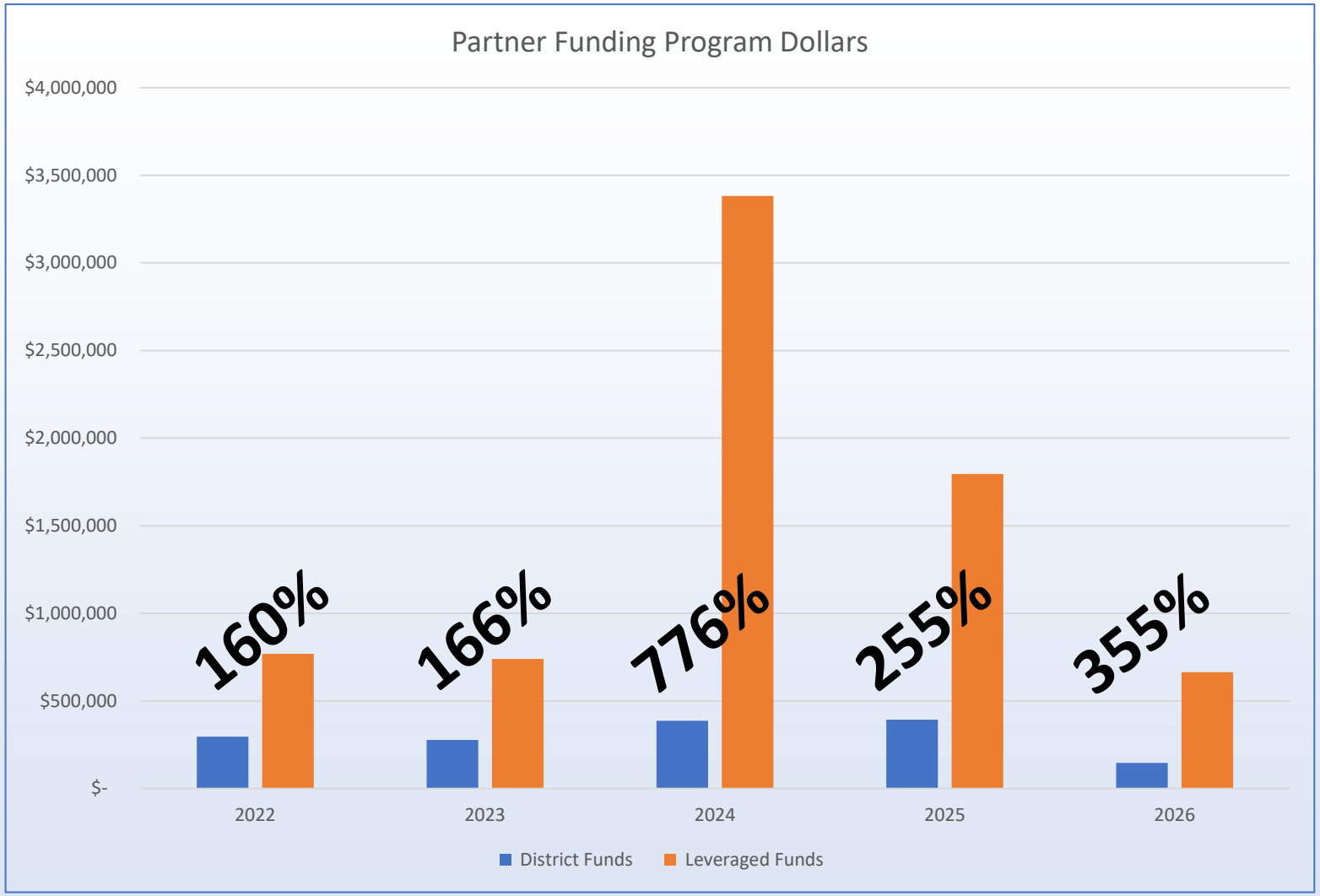
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

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ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Partner Funding



$1.5 >>> $7.4 = 391% increase

Agenda

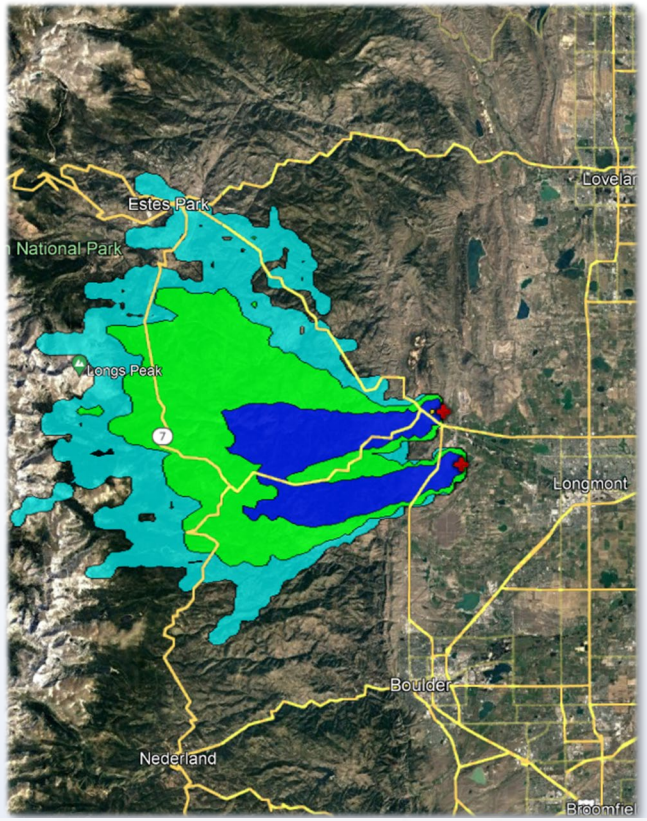
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Bridge at Bohn Park Photo by Thaddeus Roan

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Snowpack Enhancement

Cloud Seeding







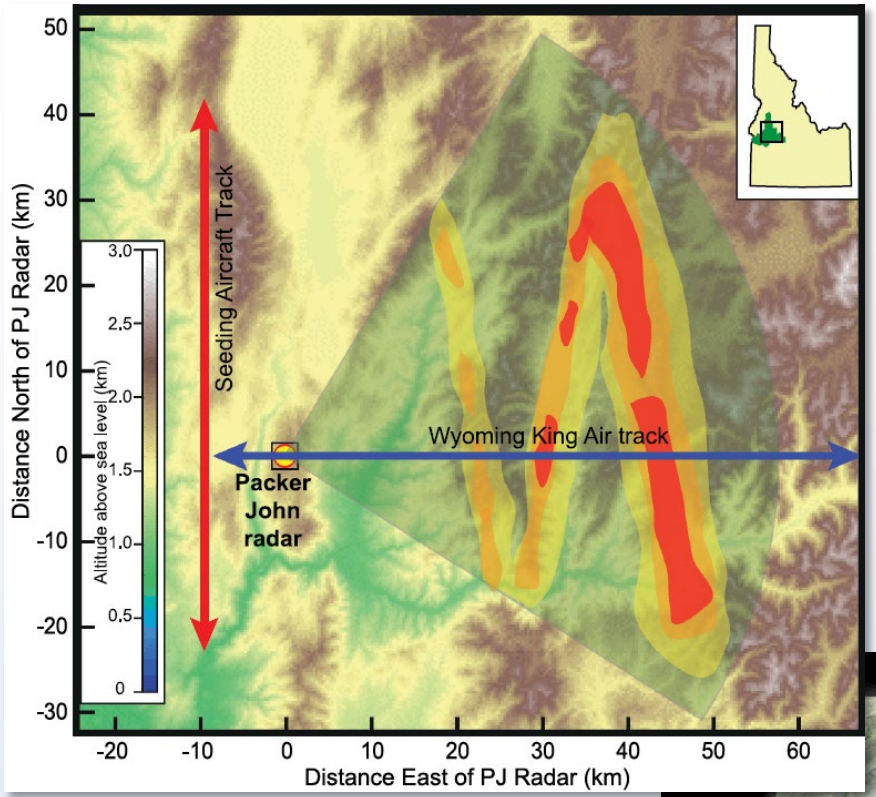


NAWMC

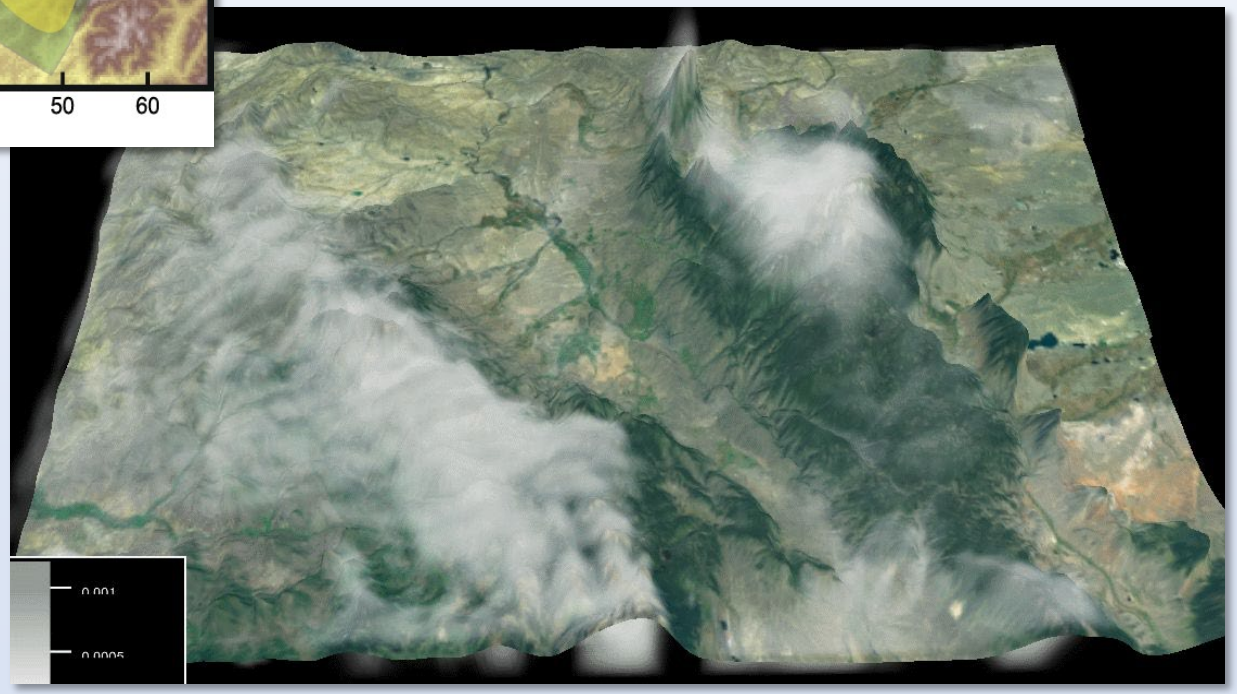
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Snowpack Enhancement

Cloud Seeding



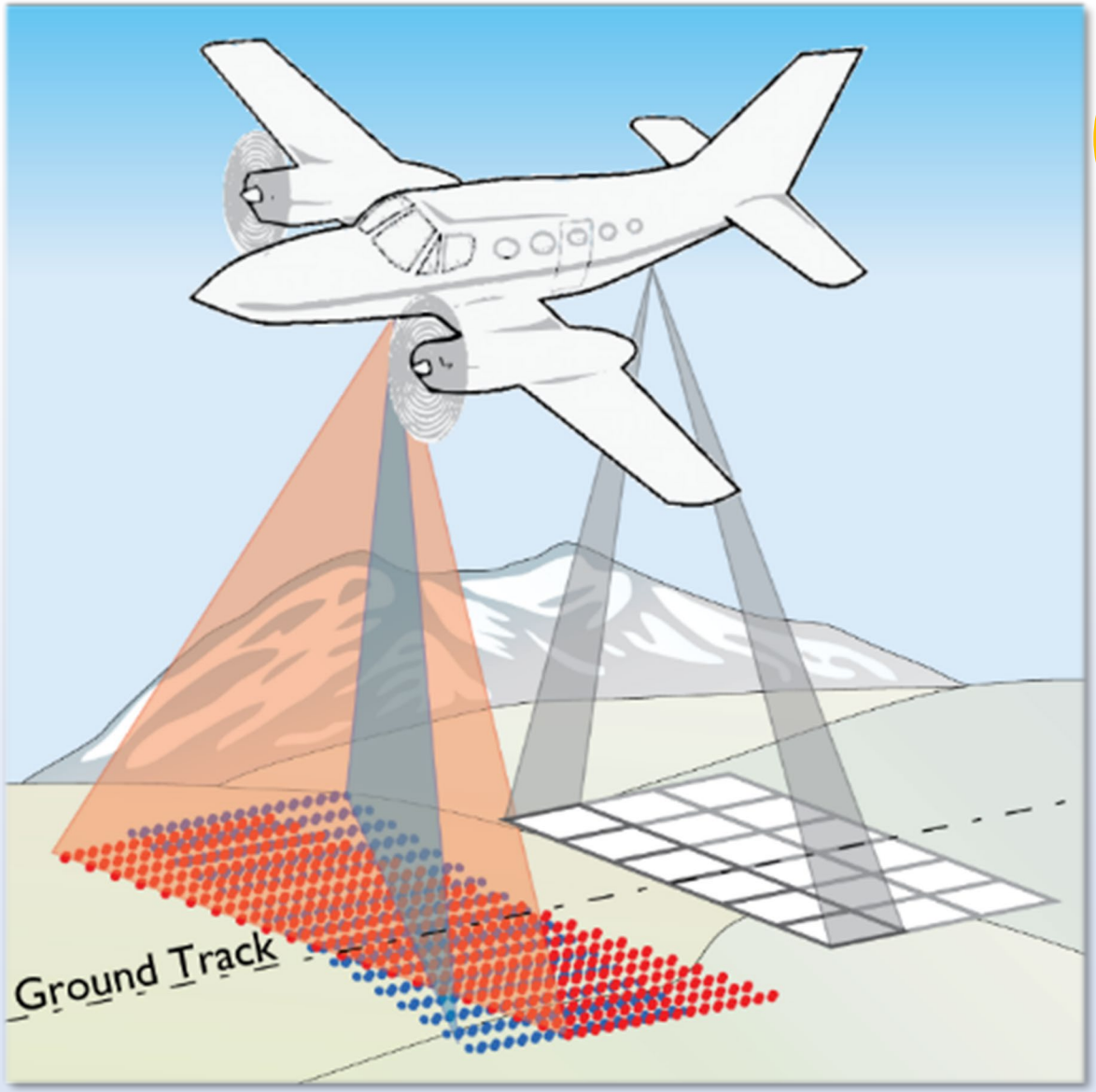
Season	Additional Snow (acre-foot)	$/acre-foot
2022-2023	5,000	$9
2023-2024	2,500	$22
2024-2025	700	$87
2025-2026	4,000	$16
Average	*3,050*	*$37*



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WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Snowpack Enhancement

Airborne Snow Surveys

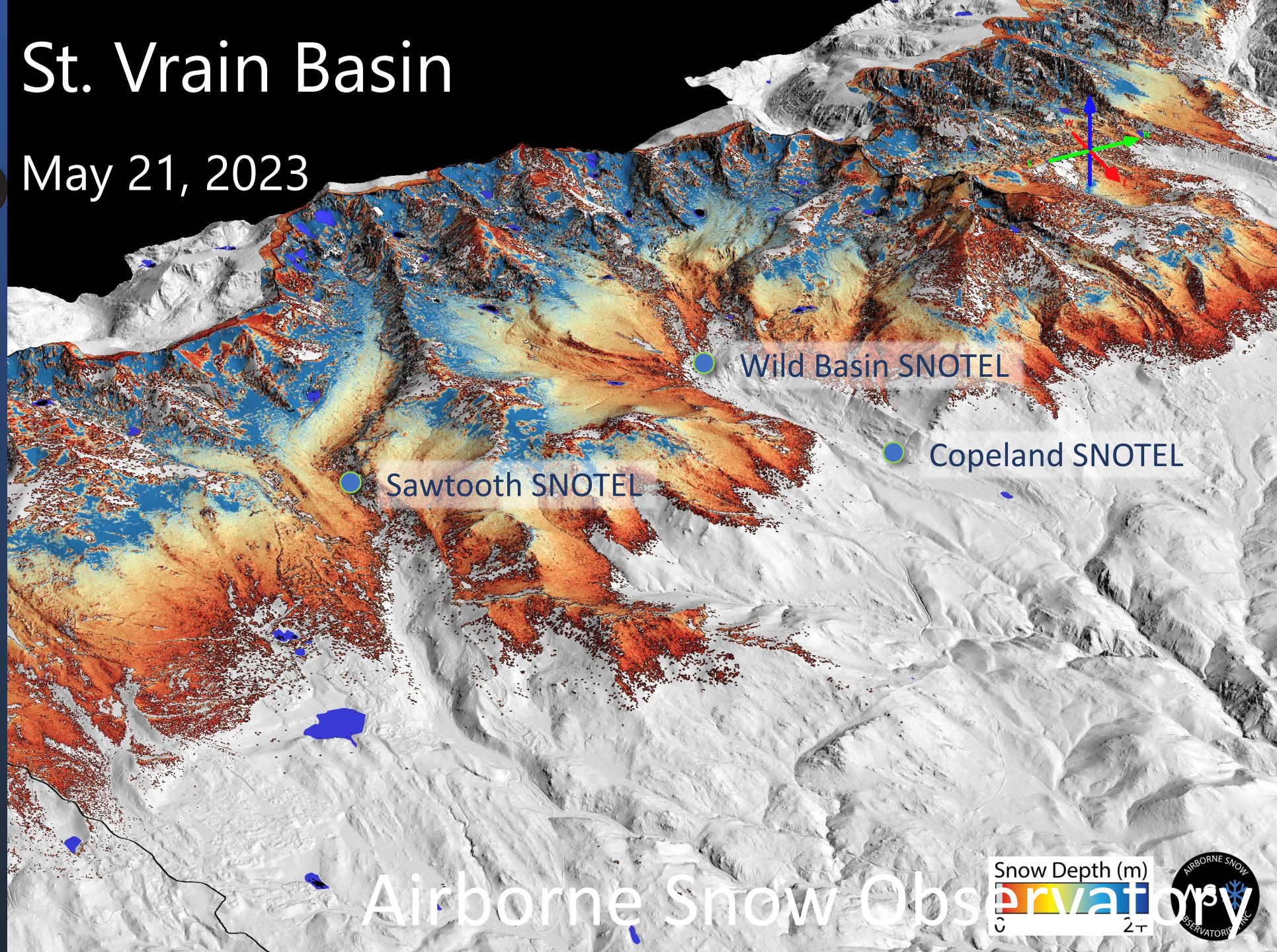




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WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

St. Vrain Basin

May 21, 2023



Snowpack Enhancement

Airborne Snow Surveys

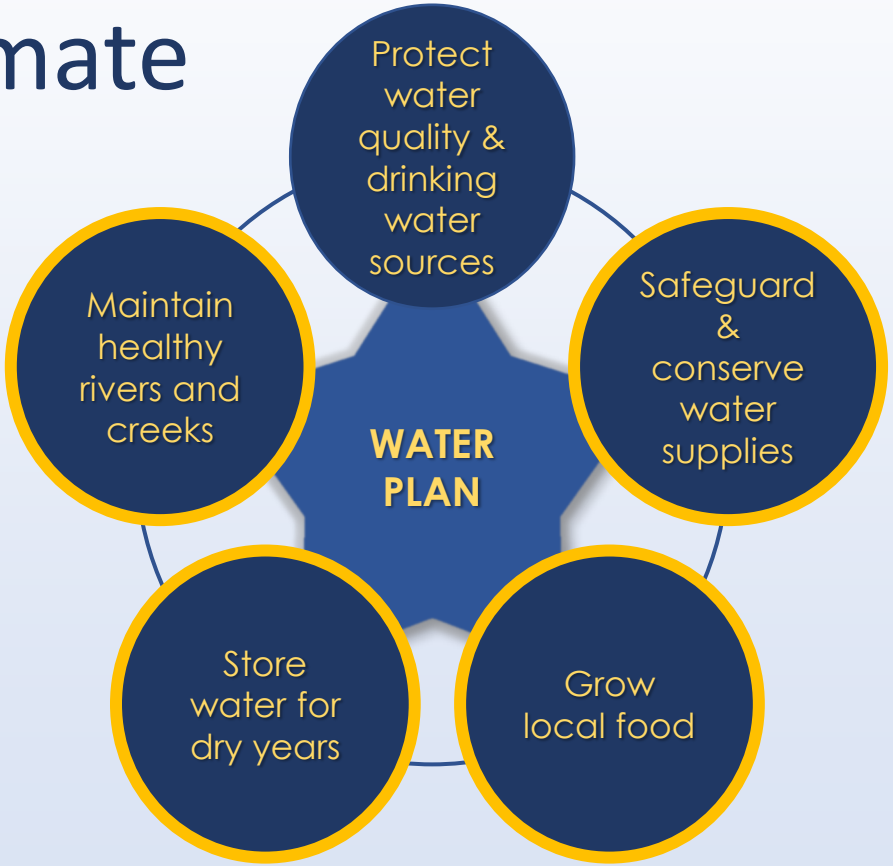
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Creek Improvement Facilities

Creek Improvement Facilities

- Integrated water management
- Multiuse
- Mitigate against climate uncertainty






Off-Channel Storage
Instream Flows
Creek Improvement Facilities
Exchanges
Dead Storage



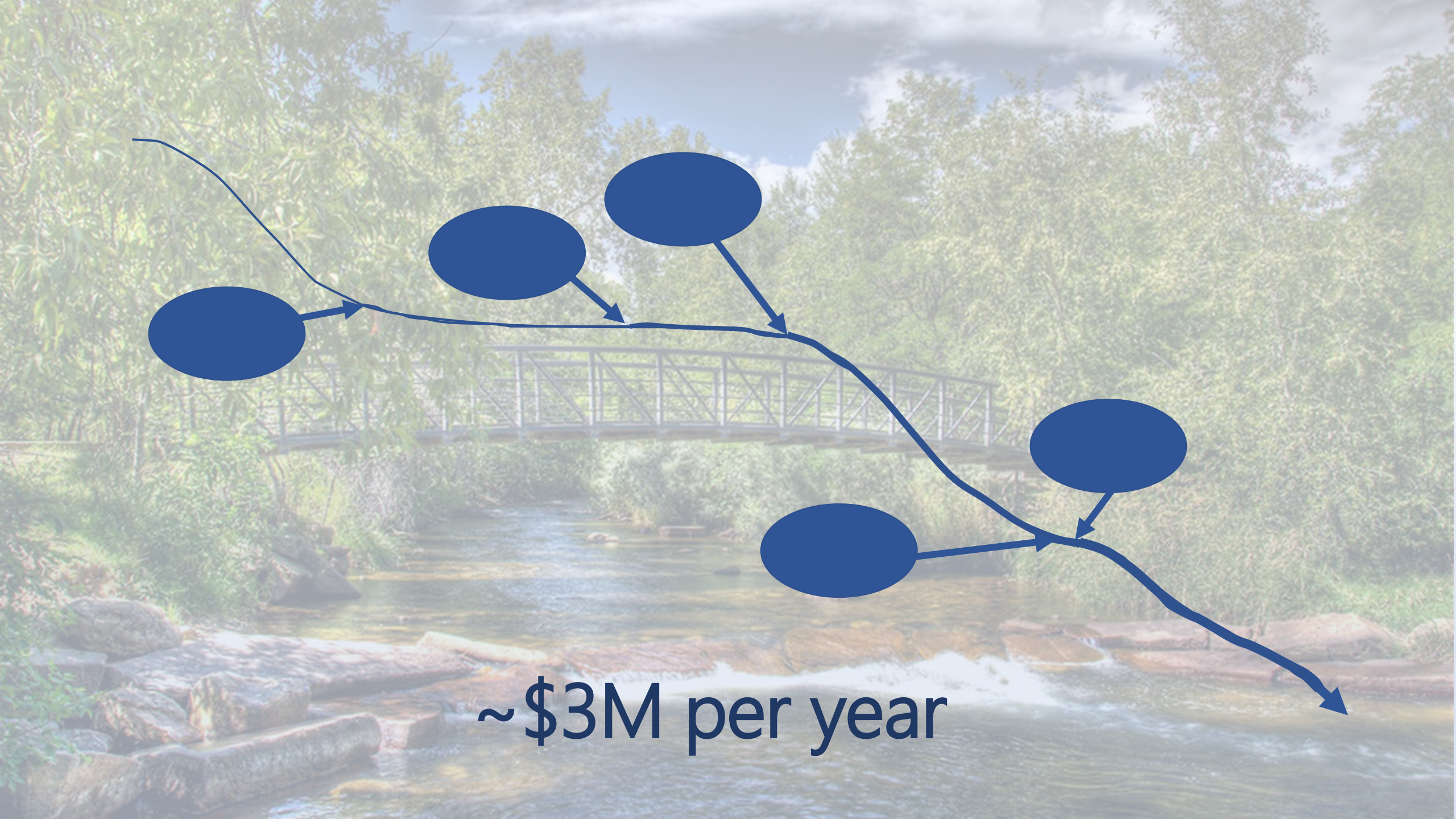


ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Creek Improvement Facilities







~$3M per year

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Flow Advisory Group

2025 | 2026 | 2027

- Process & Approach
- Flow Recommendations
- Implementation Guidance

Low Flows

- Methodology & Prioritization
- Field surveys, R2Cross, hydrologic analysis
- Operations, infrastructure, voluntary agreements

High Flows

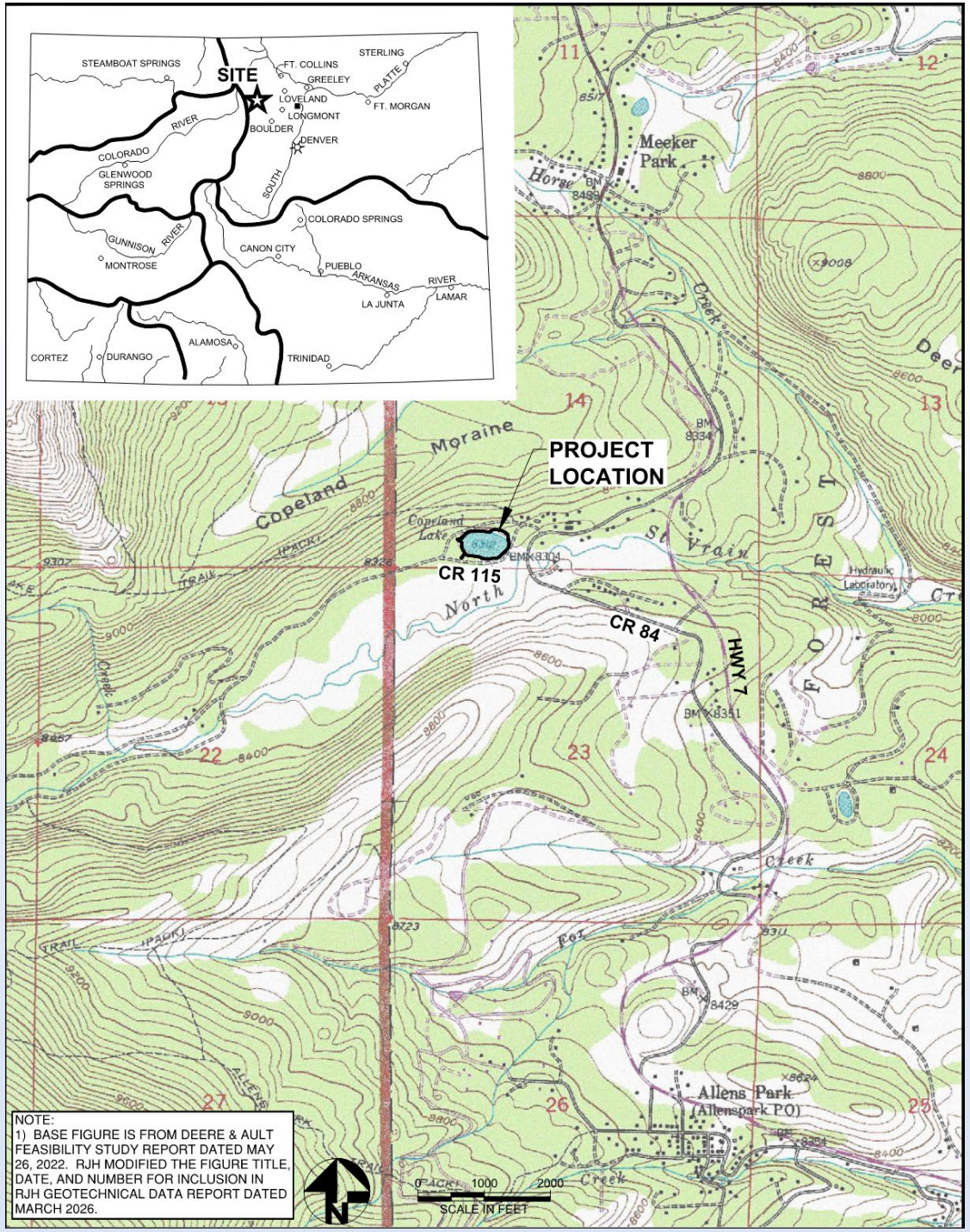
- Species & habitat needs, priorities
- Surveys, modeling,
- Guidance & ideas for implementation





ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Copeland

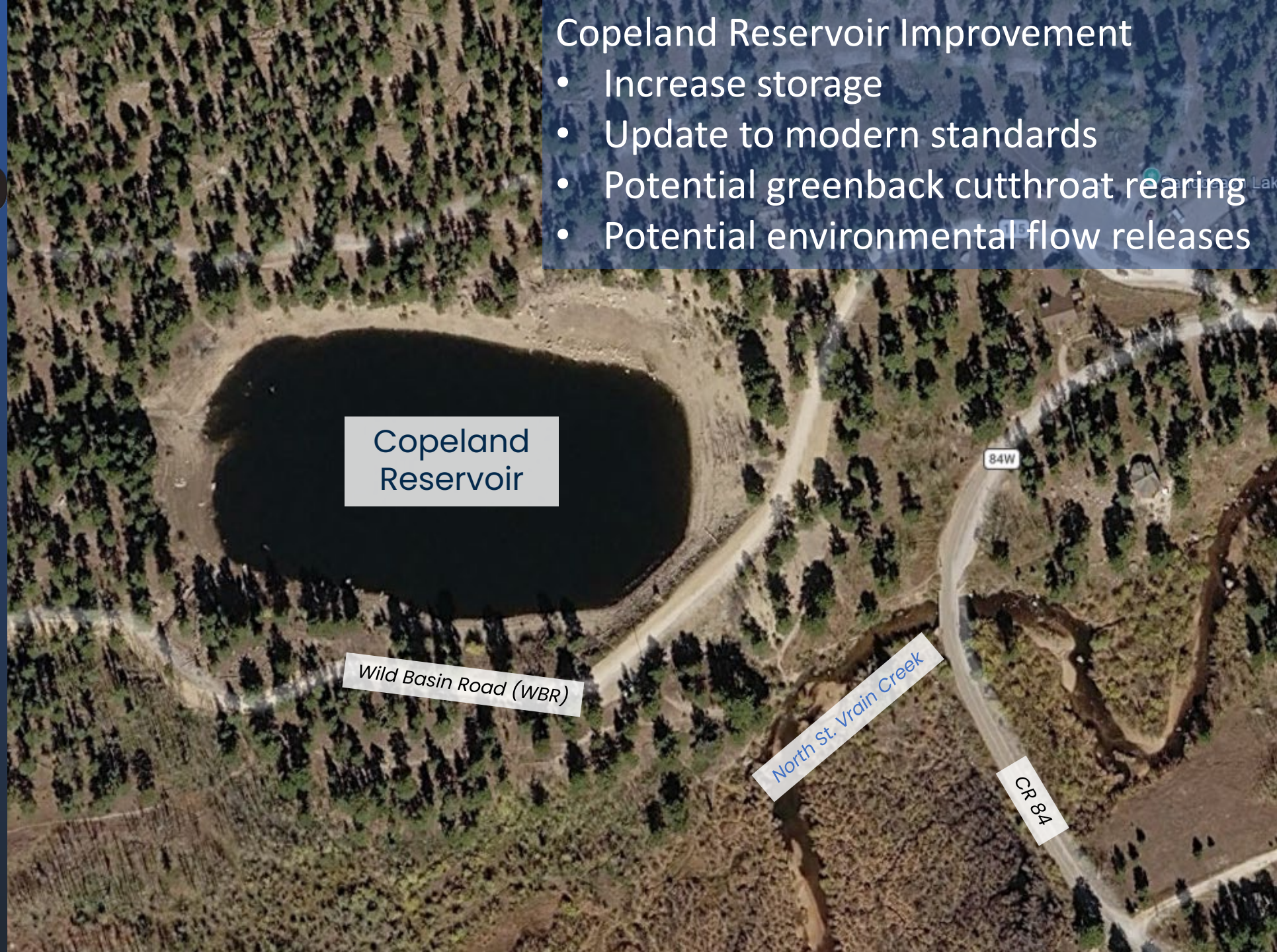






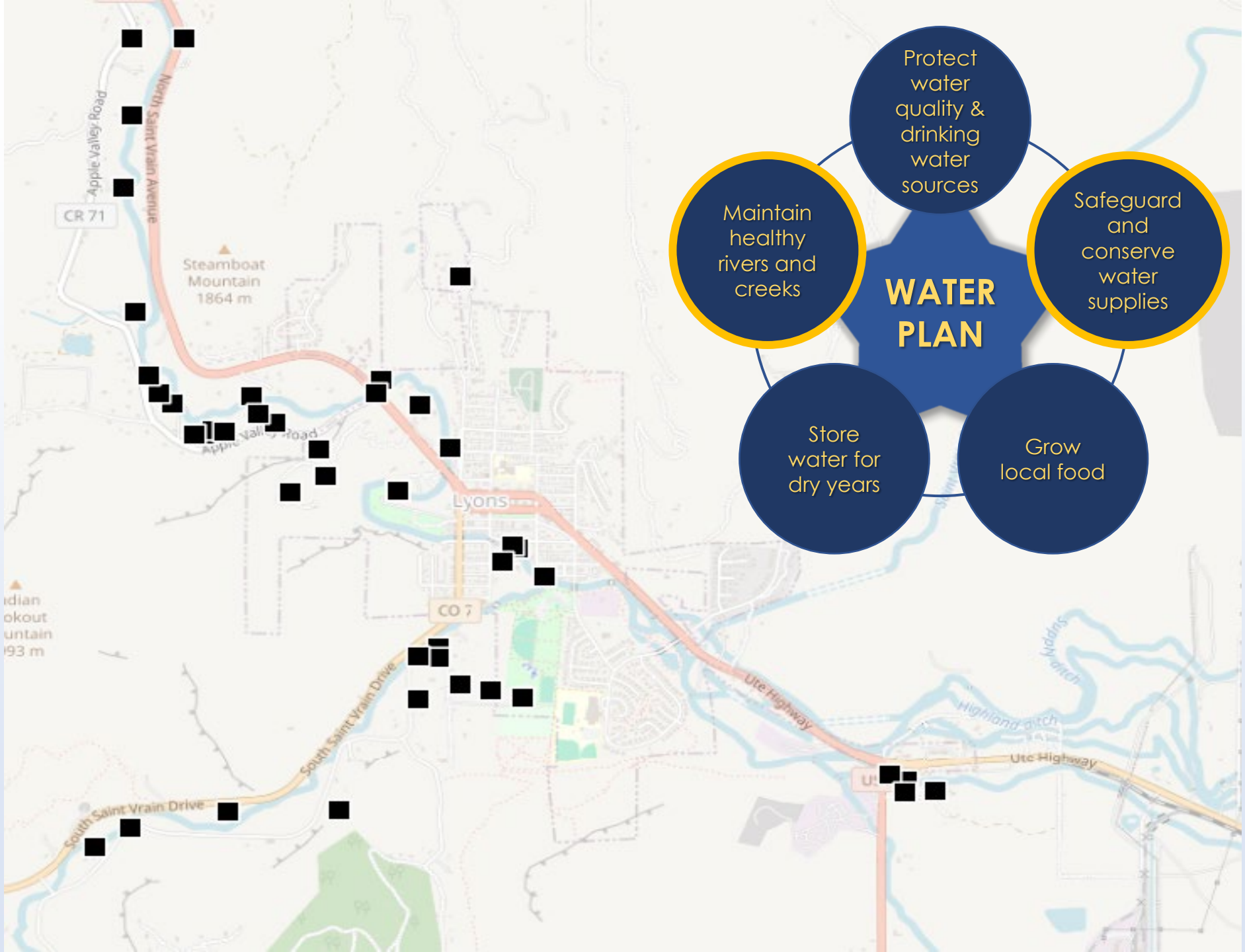
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Copeland



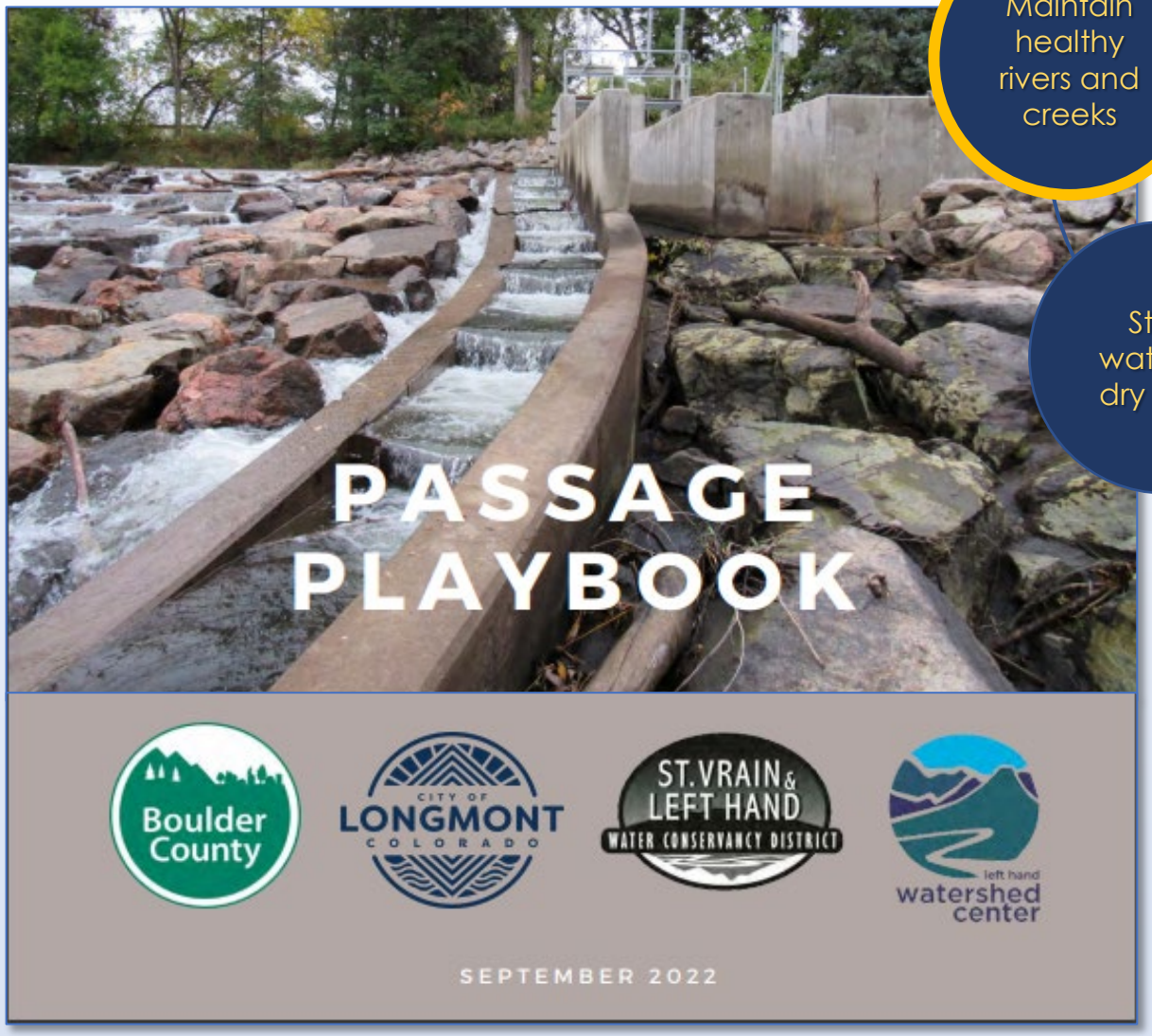
ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Augmentation Program



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Passage Playbook



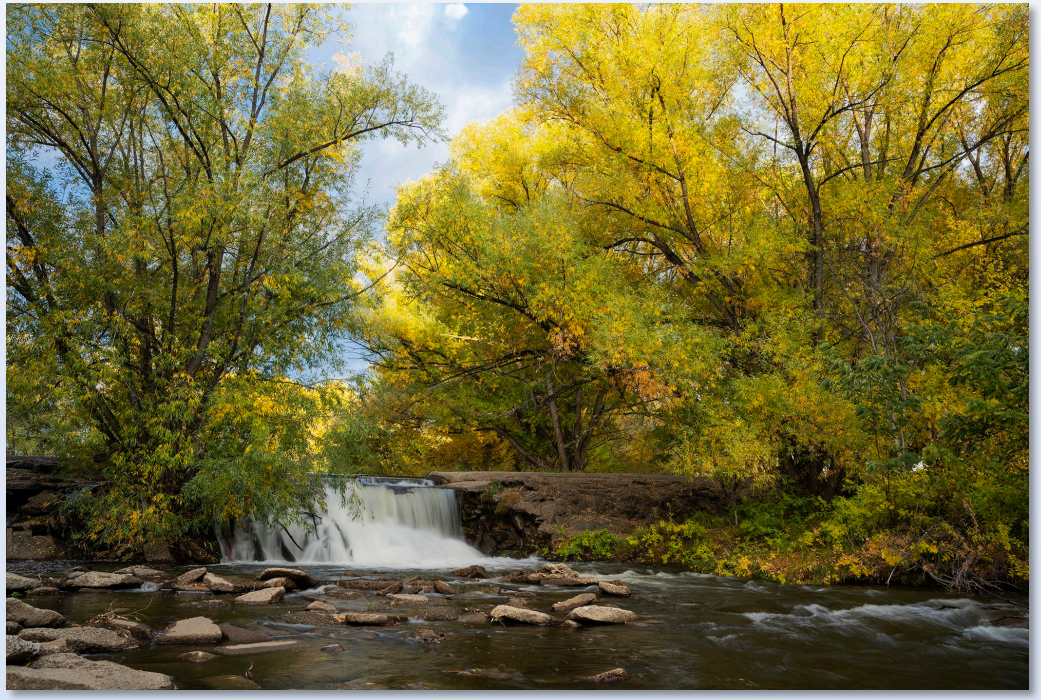


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Passage Projects



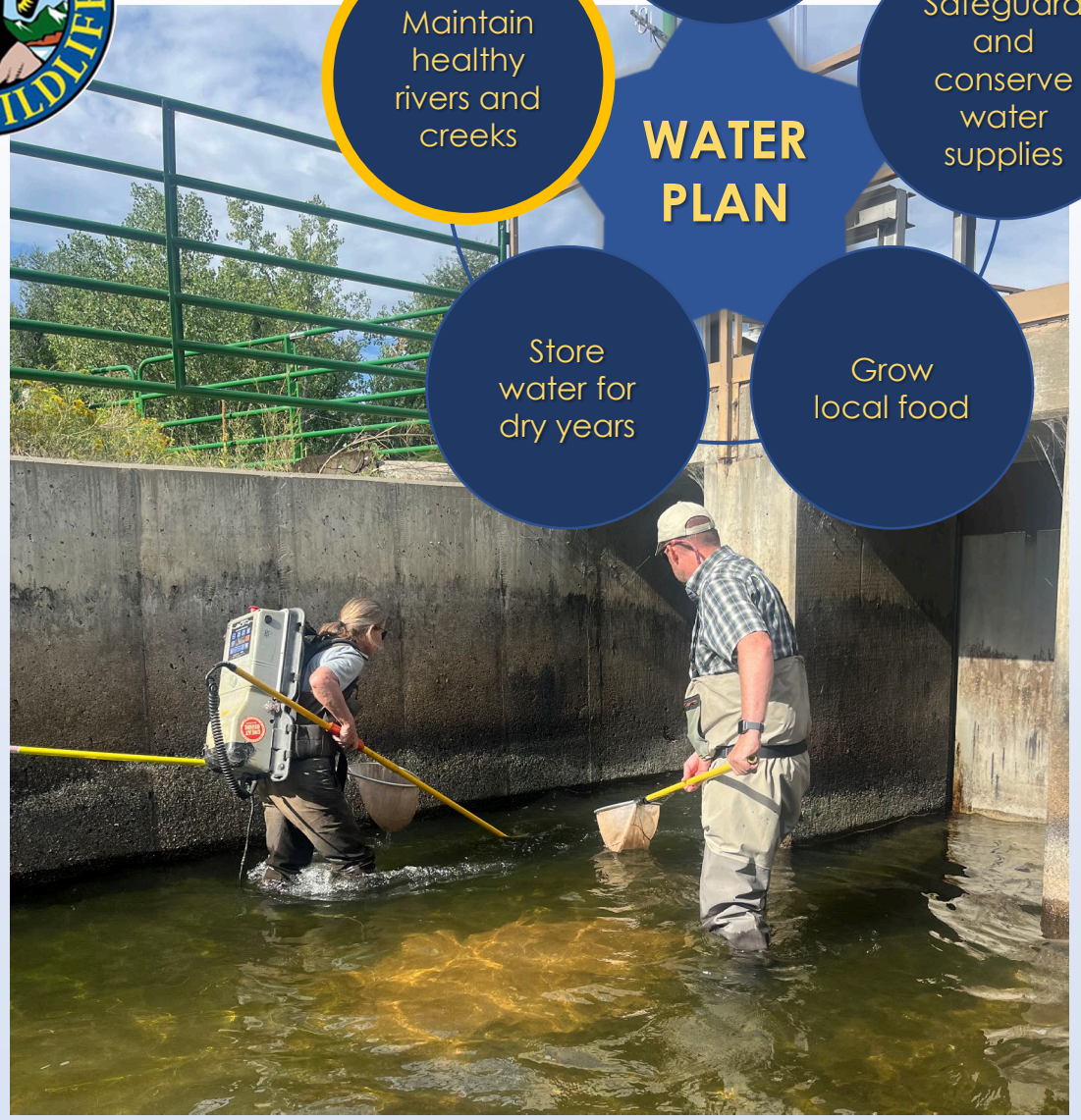




Fish Salvage

Highland Ditch Company





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Ditch Inventory Program

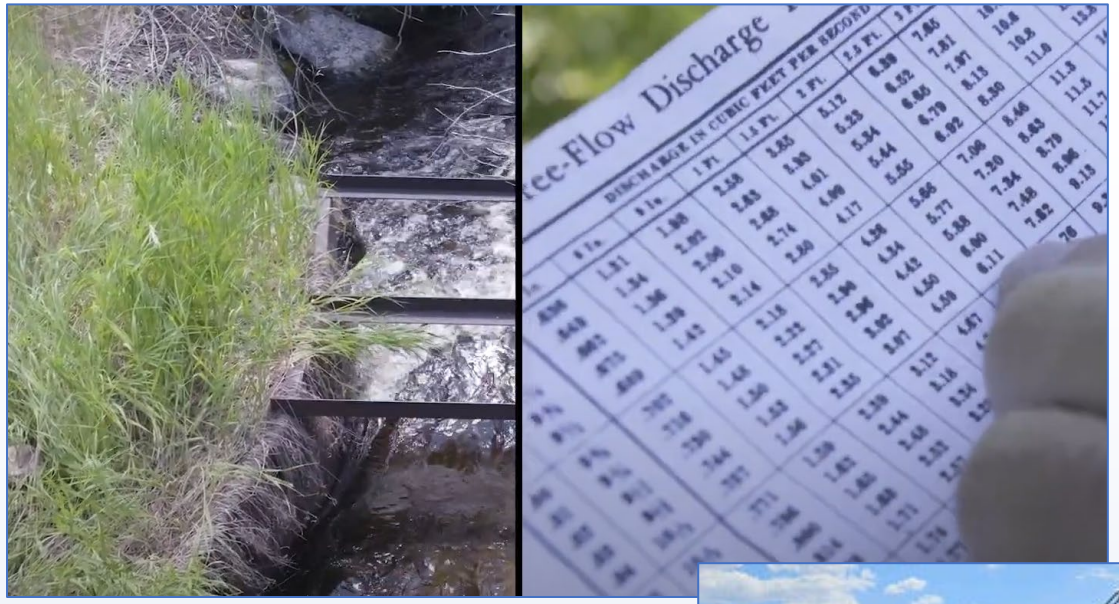






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Challenges for Ditches:
Water Administration







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Challenges for Ditches:

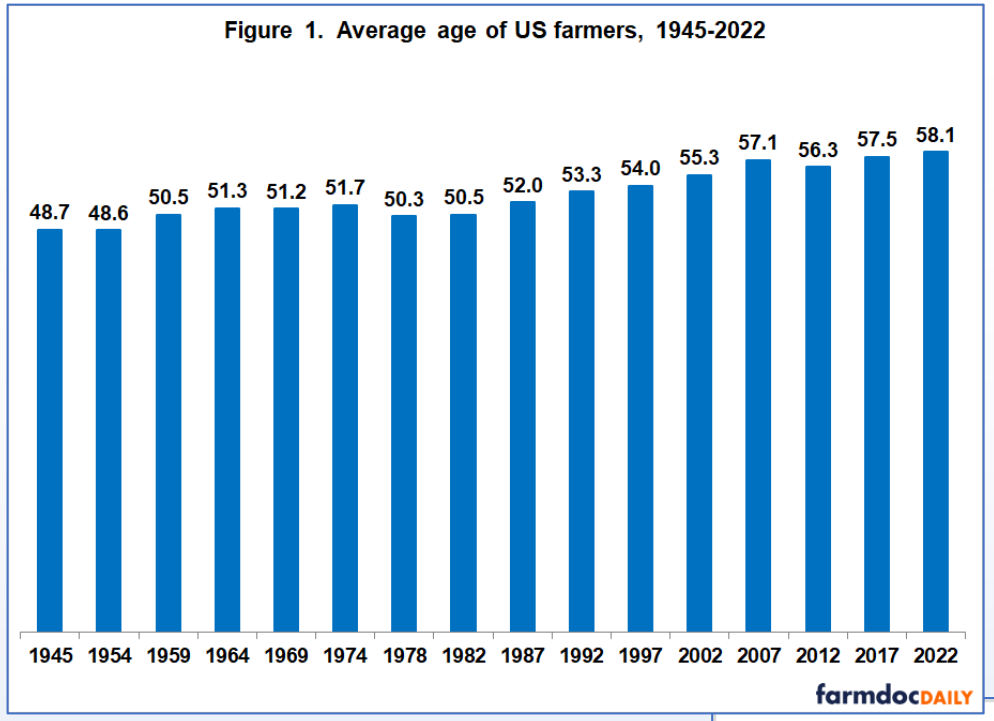
Aging Infrastructure



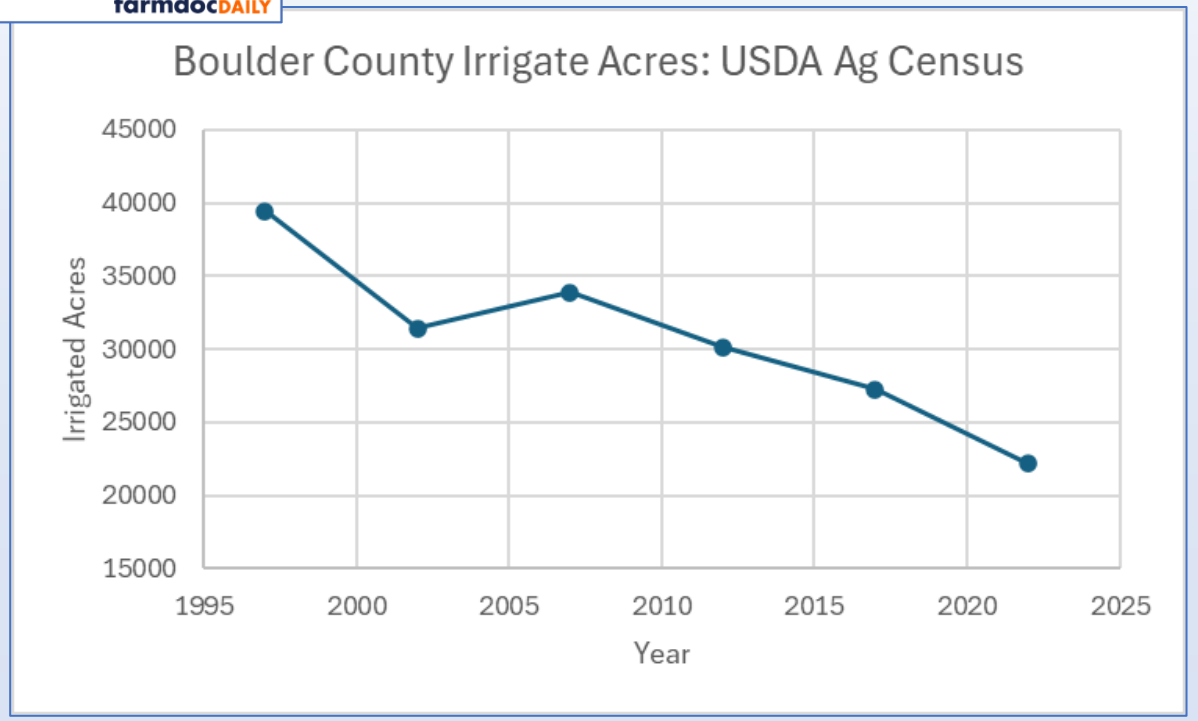




Challenges for Ditches:
Population



43.88% Decrease



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
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Challenges for Ditches: etc.





KRCC

NEWS COMMUNITY CALENDAR SCHEDULE NEWSLETTER KRCC GIVEAWAYS ABOUT

Farmers fear laws meant to protect agricultural workers could put them out of business, end iconic Colorado crops

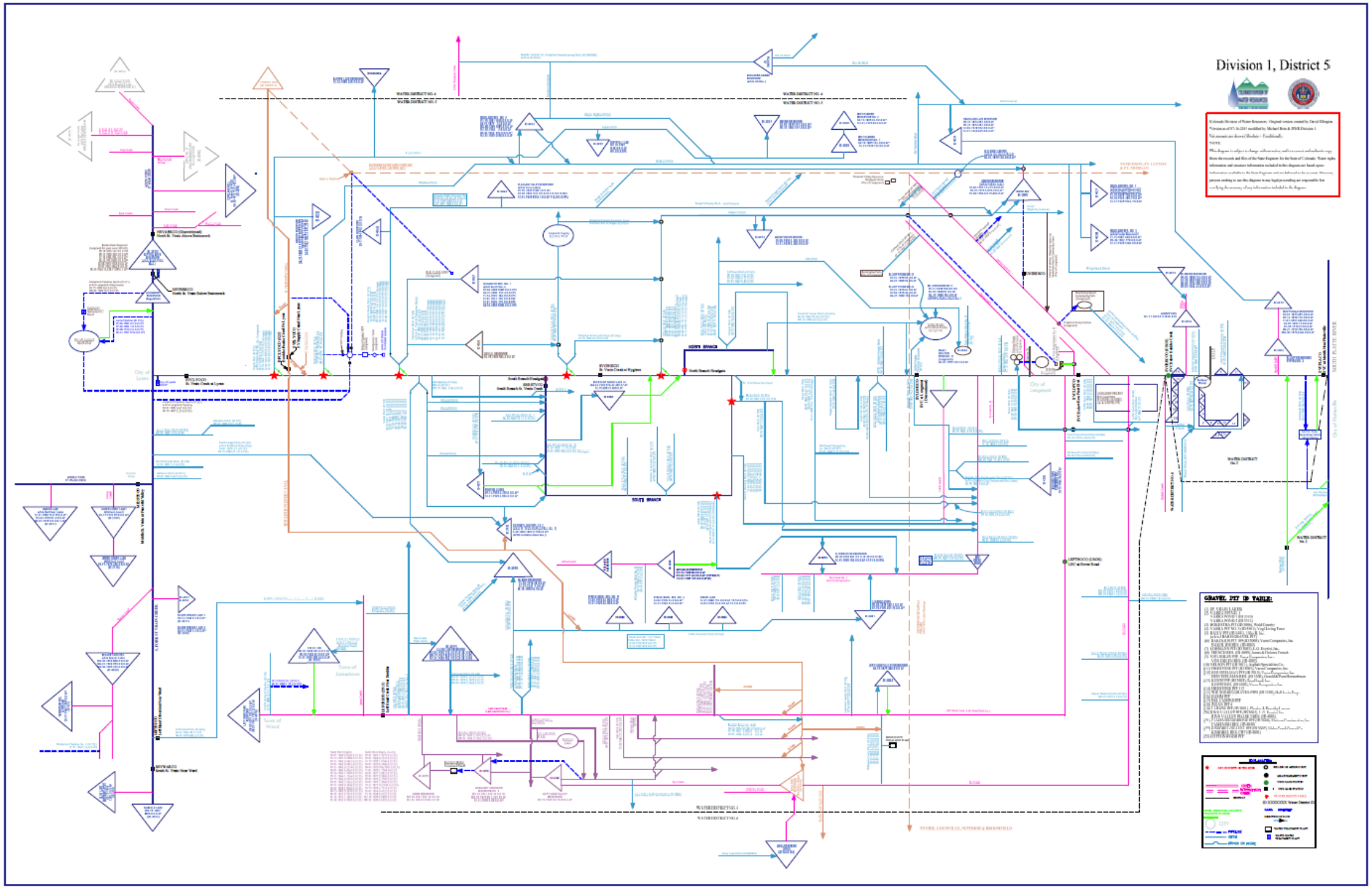
By Abigail Beckman · Oct. 3, 2023, 4:00 am



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

District Background

Straight line diagram of ditches and reservoirs in District



ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Priorities



THEME 1:

Flow Management

- Fill data gaps and develop the framework for enhancing stream flows
- Establish reservoir operation agreements



THEME 2:

Habitat Restoration & Protect

- Restore habitat and floodplain connectivity
- Protect wetland and riparian buffers



THEME 3:

Water Quality Improvements

- Increase project implementation
- Enhance water quality monitoring



THEME 4:

Flow Water Use & Management (Infrastructure)

- Manage diversion structure, ditch improvements, and irrigation practices
- On-channel measuring devices
- Fish passage
- Impediment removals and coordinated management



→ Ditch Inventory Program

Ditch Inventory

Phase 1: Inventory

- Physical and electronic map
- Conditions assessment
- Vegetation
- Leaks
- Encroachment

~$10k

NO MATCH

Phase 2: Prefeasibility

- 3 priority improvements
- Decided collaboratively
- Cost estimate
- Meet CWCB and District requirements for funding

~$10k

NO MATCH

Phase 3: Grant Management

NO MATCH

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Example Ditch Phase I - Inventory



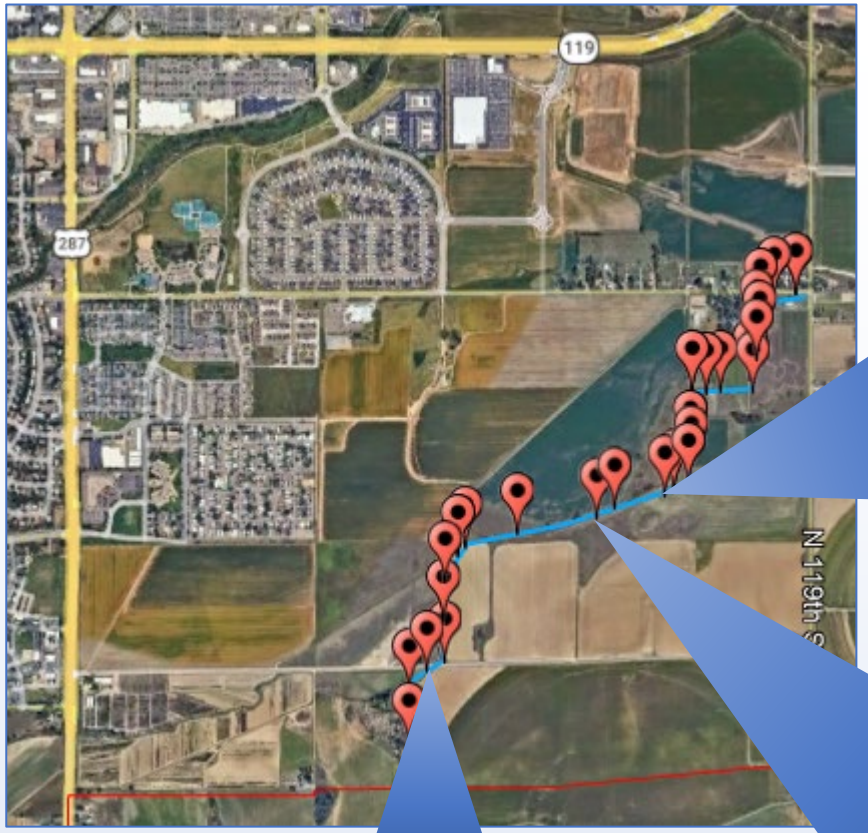


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schema0:Photo Location	40.123903, 105.183381;40.123889, 105.183386
schema0:Photo Altitude	5137.69 ft;5138.19 ft
schema0:Photo Orientation	58
schema0:Device Type	None;None

Directions: To here - From here

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Example Ditch Phase II - Prefeasibility





Priority 3



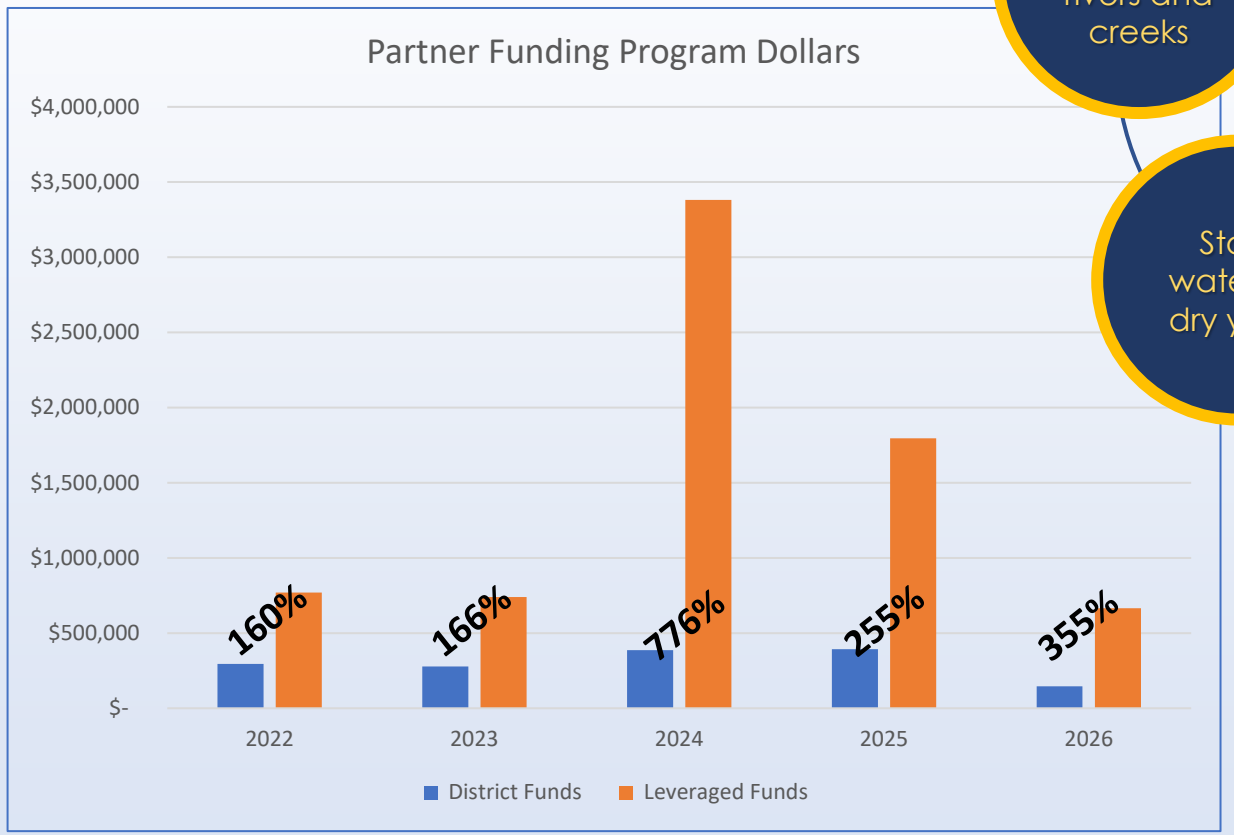
Priority 1



Priority 2

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

District's Partner Funding Program

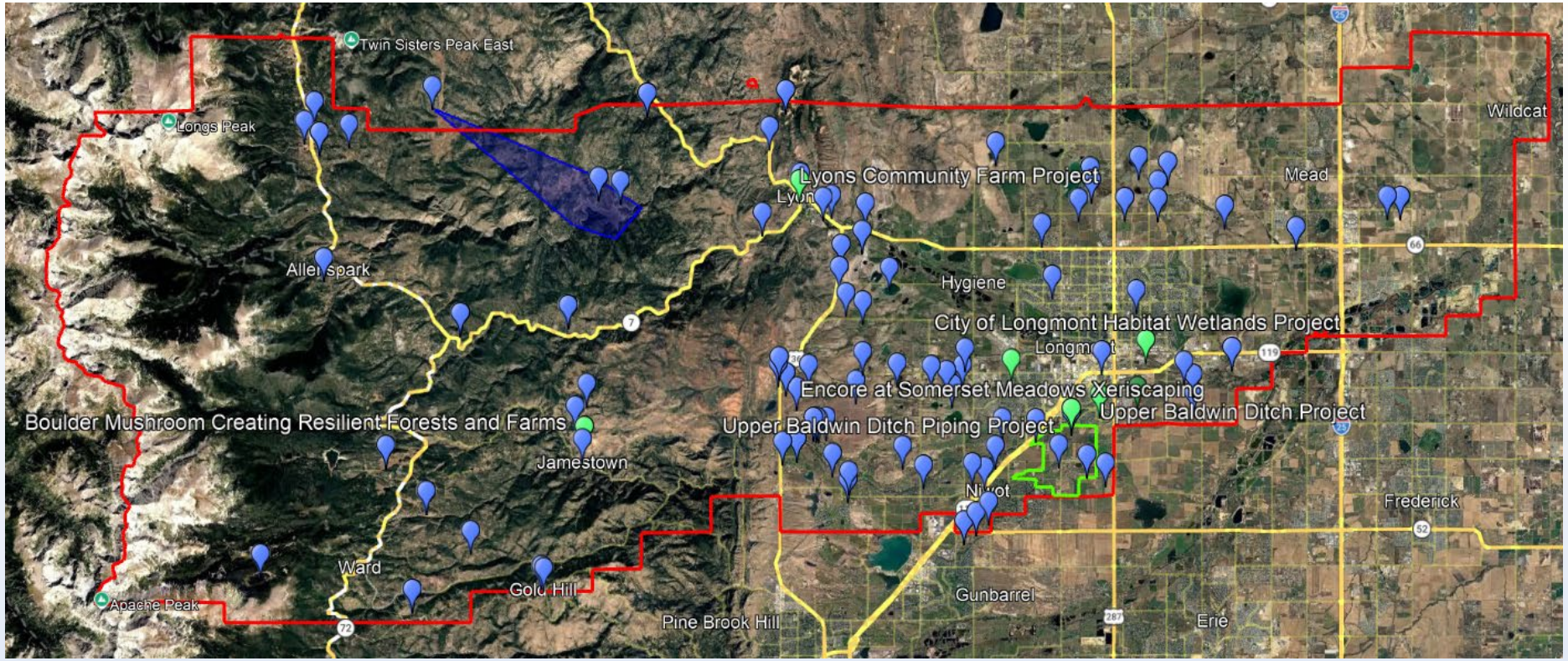




$1.5 >>> $7.4 = 391% increase

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Geographic Distribution



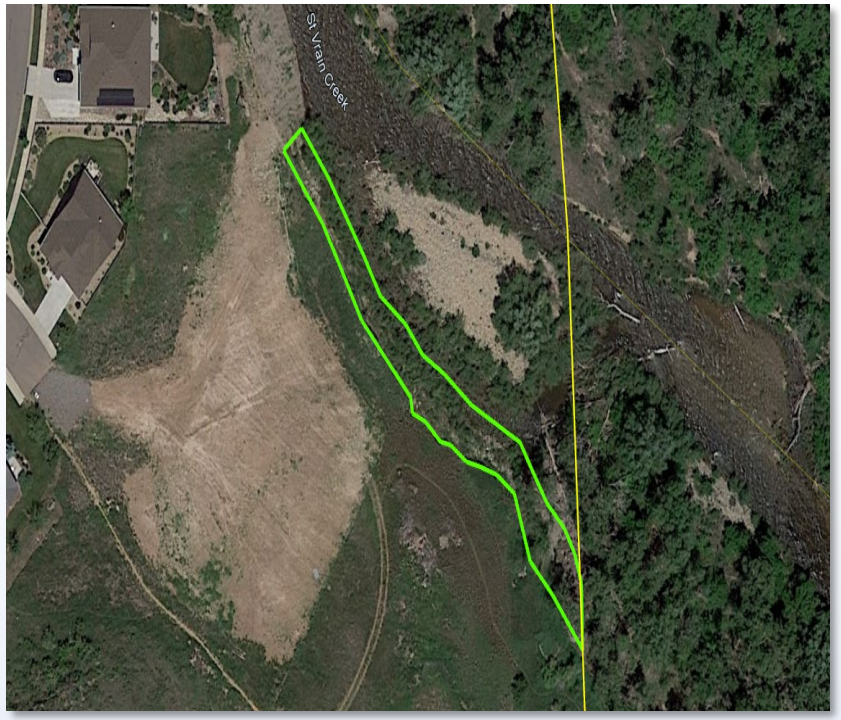
*Project locations may include but not be limited to those pictured above and does not capture projects which cover the entire watershed, such as those proposed by BVLCD, TWC, and WRV.

Partner Funding

- Proposed 2027 Project Locations
- Past Project Locations

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WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Streambank Restoration





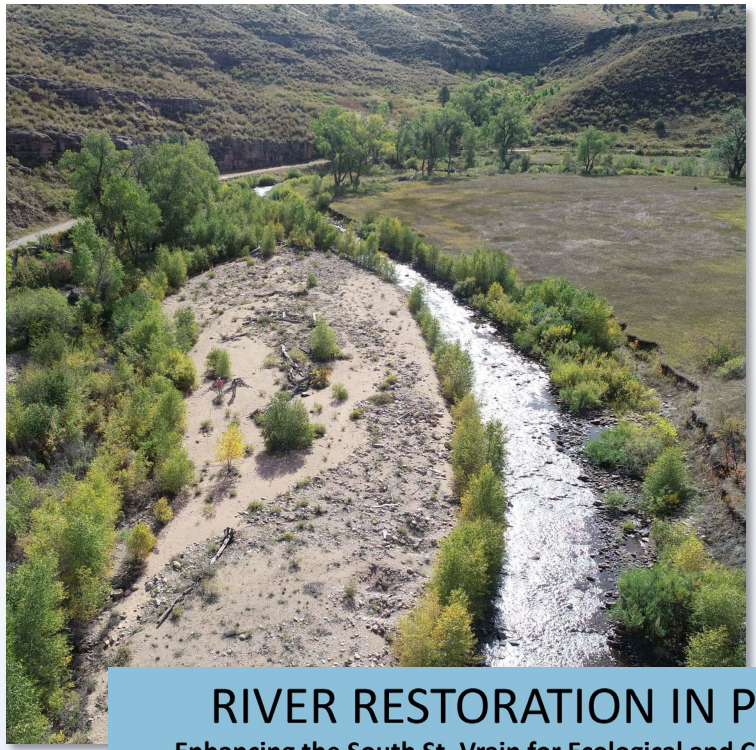
LYONS
PARKS & RECREATION

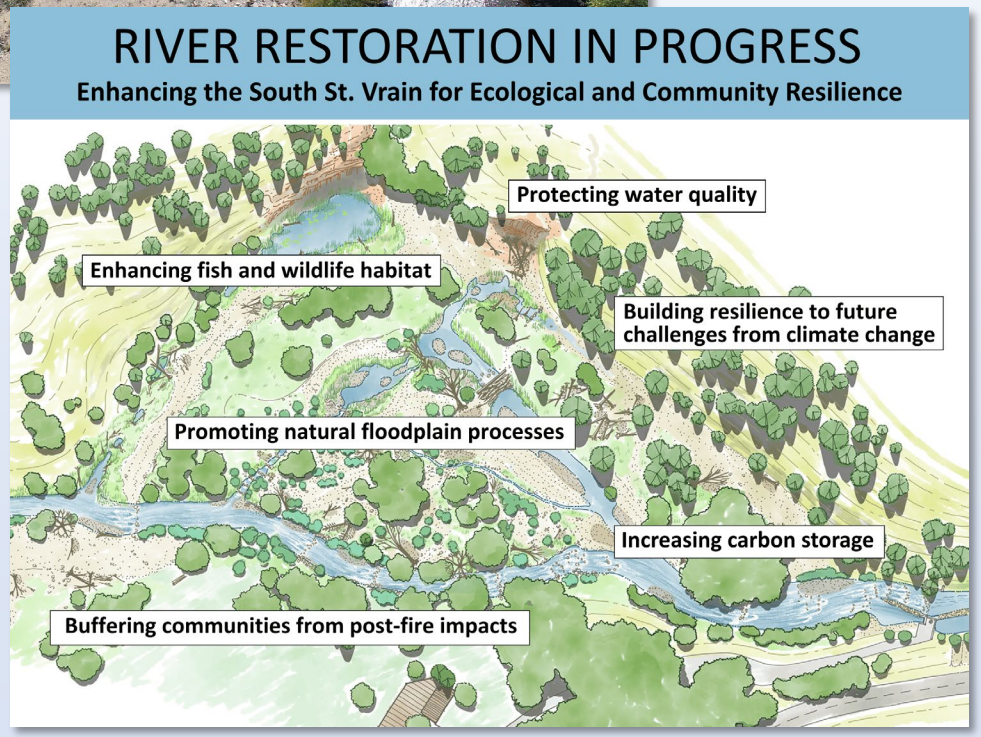




ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

River Restoration on Old St. Vrain Rd.







the watershed center

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Water-wise Landscaping









55% OF RESIDENTIAL WATER USE ON THE FRONT RANGE IS USED OUTDOORS, MOSTLY ON LAWNS!

CITY OF LONGMONT COLORADO

LYONS COLORADO

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Dave Miller Ditch Piping Project

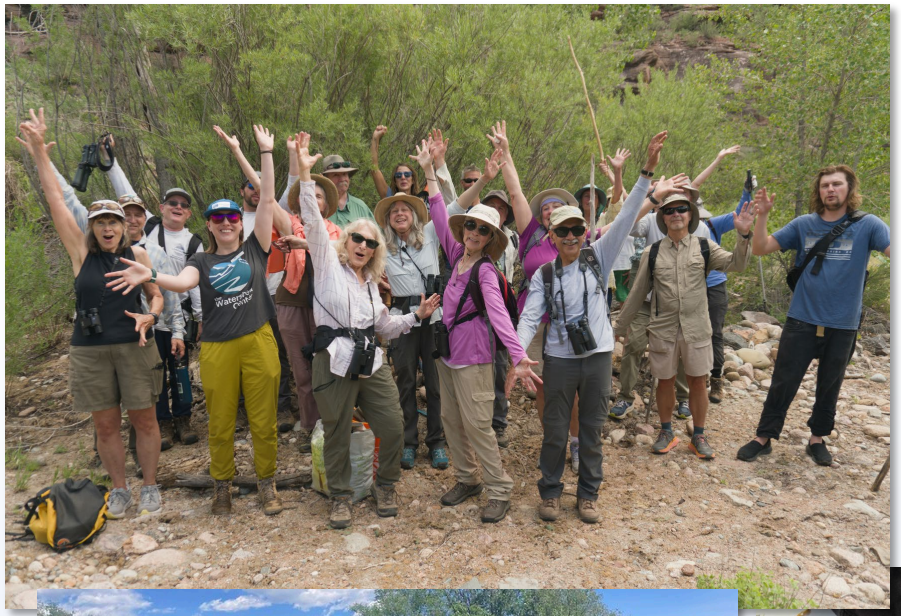






ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Education















ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Partner Funding Projects



















Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Challenges
3. District Role
4. Projects
5. Get Involved
6. Questions/Discussion

Bridge at Bohn Park Photo by Thaddeus Roan

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Key Takeaways

Key takeaways:

- District has $ for YOUR PROJECTS!
- Reduce barriers
- Leverage $
- Make projects happen!







ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Get Involved

- Email: Jenny.mccarty@svlh.gov
- Learn more: www.svlh.gov
- Follow on FB, IG, and LinkedIn
- Sign up for bi-weekly newsletter:

District Water Symposium

- March 24, 2027
- Hotel Longmont, Longmont



Save the Date!

ST. VRAIN & LEFT HAND
WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT



Thank you

Questions/Discussion?