



ARKANSAS RIVER BASIN WATER FORUM

2022 SPEAKER BIOS

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2022

Keynote Speaker Dan Gibbs

As Executive Director, Dan Gibbs leads the development and execution of the Department's initiatives for the balanced management of the state's natural resources. Dan works on an array of issues pertaining to all of Colorado's natural resources, including water, wildlife, state lands, oil and gas and mining. Dan is a respected collaborator and a strong proponent of building partnerships across agencies, nonprofits and private-sector organizations to improve the productivity and success of government operations and services. Prior to joining the Department of Natural Resources, Dan served as a Summit County Commissioner from 2010-2018. As county commissioner, Dan successfully pushed for wildfire preparedness, affordable workforce housing, lower health insurance costs and protection and improvements to transportation infrastructure.

Session 1 – Colorado River: Lifeline for the Arkansas River Basin

Moderator: Chris Woodka, is the Senior Policy and Issues Manager for the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, and an elected member of the Pueblo Board of Water Works. His day-to-day duties include managing storage accounts in Pueblo Reservoir, providing outreach for District initiatives, organizing tours of the James W. Broderick Hydropower Plant at Pueblo Dam, working as part of the team to build the Arkansas Valley Conduit, and consulting with other water managers on collaborative programs and projects. As a member of the Pueblo Water board, he is part of the policy-making team for a well-run water system that serves more than 110,000 people with more than 40,000 accounts. For 12 years, he was president of the Goodnight Avenue Ditch Company, a lateral on Bessemer Ditch, where he learned how headgates work. That prepared him well for tromping through fields on most every ditch in the Arkansas Valley during his career as a reporter. He is a 1977 graduate of Northern Arizona University, earning a BA, and was named Outstanding Senior Journalist. He completed a post-



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graduate fellowship at the Indianapolis Star. He was a newspaper journalist for 40 years, including 31 years with the Pueblo Chieftain, where he specialized in reporting on water issues and wrote a satirical column called Saturday Morning Special, later changing the name to Monday Morning Special (which made less sense satirically, but better reflected the date of publication). A proud grandfather of three young men (ages 25, 21 and 16), he often serenades the neighborhood from his front porch, playing guitar and harmonica while trying to sing.

Rebecca Mitchell (Becky) serves as the Director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) as well as the Colorado Commissioner to the Upper Colorado River Commission. She is an accomplished water leader with over 20 years of experience in the water sector and highly knowledgeable in Colorado water law. Mitchell played a significant role in developing the Colorado Water Plan, working with the state's nine basin roundtables, the Interbasin Compact Committee, and the public. She has worked in both the public and private sector as a consulting engineer; she received both her B.S. and M.S. from the Colorado School of Mines.

Lee E. Miller serves as the General Counsel of the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District (SECWCD), a position that he has held since 2011. Prior to taking the in-house position at SECWCD, Miller was in private water law practice. From 1996 to 1999, he was a First Assistant Attorney General, serving as the Colorado Attorney General's representative to the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), and acted as the chief advisor to state agencies, boards, and commissions on water matters. Before coming to Colorado from Washington, D.C., Miller served as a legislative advisor to U.S. Senator from Colorado, Hank Brown. In addition, he served as an attorney for the U.S. Department of the Interior where he provided legal advice to the Secretary and other departmental agencies on issues concerning various states' water rights laws, federal reclamation laws, environmental laws, and Indian law. Miller received his J.D. and B.A. from the University of Wyoming. Miller currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Colorado Water Congress State Affairs Committee, the Colorado representative on the Colorado River Water Users Association's Resolutions Committee, as an advisor to the Colorado Representative to the Upper Colorado River Commission and a member of the Commission's



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Legal Committee, and as a member of the Colorado Water Conservation Board's Demand Management Feasibility Law and Policy Workgroup.

Alan Ward is the Division Manager of Water Resources for Pueblo Water where he oversees all aspects of Pueblo's water rights and associated infrastructure. He has worked in the Water Resources Division at Pueblo Water since 1997. From 1994 to 1997 Alan worked for the Colorado Division of Water Resources, Division 2, administering tributary groundwater in the Arkansas Basin. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Bessemer Irrigating Ditch Company, the Twin Lakes Reservoir and Canal Company, the West Pueblo Ditch and Reservoir Company, and the Busk-Ivanhoe Water System Authority. He is also the Chairman of the Flow Management Committee charged with implementing the flow management program on the Arkansas River through Pueblo.

Daniel Tucker, P.E., is the engineer for the Arkansas Groundwater and Reservoir Association, a 501-c12 company which procures and manages water supplies in the Arkansas River Basin for the purposes of replacing stream depletions caused by out-of-priority well pumping. Dan has been responsible for numerous tasks during his tenure with AGRA, including operation and oversight of AGRA's annual Rule 14 replacement plan, writing and administering Substitute Water Supply Plans, maintaining water accounting, overseeing water transfer, releases, and exchanges, as well as the engineering, construction, and management of capital assets relevant to AGRA's operations.

Prior to his time with AGRA, Dan was employed for several years in consulting engineering practice, where he gained experience with floodplain hydraulics and modeling, stream channel restoration design, stormwater engineering, water quality design, land development, and transportation engineering. Dan has bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering from Colorado State University-Pueblo and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and is a licensed professional engineer in Colorado and Wyoming. Dan resides in Monument with his family.



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Session 2 – Water Conservation and Storage: The Underappreciated Connection

Moderator: Julia Gallucci, Colorado Springs Utilities

Julia started with Colorado Springs in 2009 and currently serves as the Water Conservation Supervisor. In this capacity she's responsible for supporting implementation of the 2022 Water Efficiency Plan in order to reach our long-term goal of gaining 11,000 - 13,000 acre-feet of savings through conservation measures by 2070. She also is responsible for improving water efficiency and landscape sustainability through statewide collaboration and partnerships. Julia holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan.

Patrick Wells serves as the General Manager for Colorado Springs Utilities' Water Resources and Demand Management Department. He oversees a multi-disciplinary team of engineers, scientists, project managers, and conservationists who are responsible for long range water supply planning, water rights protection, development, and administration, interagency and regional collaboration, water conservation, and watershed planning for the second largest municipal water provider in Colorado. Pat and his team help plan for, manage, and develop a complex water system that spans three river basins and 13 counties in central and southeastern Colorado that includes 25 reservoirs and four major conveyance systems. He represents Colorado Springs Utilities on numerous boards, committees, and workgroups including the Homestake Steering Committee, Front Range Water Council, and the Western Urban Water Coalition. He also serves as a Governor's Appointee to the Interbasin Compact Committee and is El Paso County's representative to the South Platte Roundtable. Pat holds a B.S. in Geological Engineering from the Colorado School of Mines and is a registered Professional Engineer in Colorado.

Richard (Rich) Vidmar is the Integrated Basin and Ecosystems Services Manager for the City of Aurora's Water Resources Division. He has a BS in Civil Engineering from Colorado State University and has been with the City of Aurora for 17 years. Prior to his tenure with Aurora Water, Rich worked in the Water Operations and Maintenance section at the Mt. Elbert Power Plant at Twin Lakes. Rich and his Aurora team provide technical assistance to the South Platte,



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Colorado and Arkansas basin programs within Aurora Water. In addition, Rich's team coordinates Aurora's watershed health programs.

Greg Fisher is the manager of demand planning and efficiency for Denver Water where he has served for over 17 years.

Luncheon Presentation

Russ Schumacher - Along with his faculty position in the Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado State University, Russ serves as the Colorado State Climatologist and Director of the Colorado Climate Center. Russ Schumacher received his B.S. with majors in meteorology and humanities from Valparaiso University in Indiana in 2001. He received his M.S. in 2003 and Ph.D. in 2008 from the Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado State University. His research and teaching interests include extreme precipitation, weather systems, the climatology of precipitation, and Colorado's weather and climate. In 2021, he received the Clarence Leroy Meisinger early-career research award from the American Meteorological Society.

Nolan Doesken currently works part time for the Colorado Water Center and the Colorado Climate Center. He retired as State Climatologist for Colorado at Colorado State University in 2017. After obtaining degrees from the Univ. of Michigan and Univ. of Illinois in the 1970s, Nolan began his work as a climatologist at CSU in 1977 and was appointed State Climatologist in 2006. He has long been fascinated with climate monitoring and long-term climate trends but pays particularly close attention to precipitation including floods and drought. After the Fort Collins flash flood of 1997, Nolan established a volunteer rain gauge network to track and map the local variations in northern Colorado precipitation. This project -- the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network (CoCoRaHS) -- has since grown internationally and involves thousands of volunteers across many parts of North America. Nolan is a past president of the American Association of State Climatologists and was a founding board member of the Citizen Science Association.



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Friday, April 29, 2022

Keynote Speaker Chris Sturm

Chris obtained his bachelors and masters degrees from the University of Georgia. He worked for several years in education around natural resources, until he arrived in Colorado in 2000 (Y2K). Chris has worked on Colorado water related topics for 22 years. He has worked with agricultural, municipal, environmental, and recreational uses of water and appreciates bigger picture discussions on how best to protect water for all uses. Chris has been with the CWCB since 2007 and currently works as the Watershed Program Director. In this capacity, he leads the CWCB's activities related to watershed protection and restoration.

Session 3 – Wildfire: Mitigation & Restoration in the Arkansas River Basin

Moderator: Jonathan Paklaian currently serves as the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative Executive Director. For over ten years, Jonathan has conducted fieldwork and managed environmental resource projects across the western U.S. This interdisciplinary experience includes working for multiple consulting firms and NGOs, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Geological Survey. Jonathan is excited to continue his collaborative work in the Arkansas Basin, where he hopes to facilitate meaningful, watershed-wide projects for the communities and ecosystems of the region.

Andy Lerch is the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative Lead Forester. Andy uses forestry techniques for forest and ecosystem restoration to help create forests that are resilient to wildfire, climate change, and outbreaks of insects and disease. He comes to ARWC as Lead Forester from Oregon, where he worked on collaborative forest restoration projects that engaged federal, local, and nonprofit partners to develop and implement landscape-scale projects to reduce the threat of severe wildfire and provide protection for communities and watersheds. Andy is excited to work with ARWC on forest treatments that promote watershed function throughout the Arkansas River Basin. Andy earned a Bachelor Degree in Forestry from the University of Missouri and Master Degrees in Forestry and Entomology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



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Luke Javernick is the Executive Director of River Science. Luke is an award-winning (Marie Sklodowska-Curie Action) river scientist who spent the early part of his career studying and improving rivers in New Zealand, Colorado, and Oregon and later studying ways to improve river management through cost-effective techniques in Italy. Luke is passionate about leveraging open-source software, low-cost hardware, and advanced computing to collect affordable data at a meaningful scale to provide valuable information to our clients and projects. Luke’s vision, ambition, and creative approaches have helped launch River Science into a successful nonprofit with strong partnerships across Colorado.

Michael Blazewicz is the lead/founder of Salida-based Round River Design. Restoring landscape connections lies at the root of Michael’s work where for the past 20 years he has focused on rehabilitating degraded river-systems in the Northeast, Northwest, and Colorado. Michael is co-author and co-lead of the Colorado Water Conservation Board’s Fluvial Hazard Program (www.ColoradoFHZ.com) recipient of the “2021 Tom Lee Award for Excellence in Floodplain Management from the Association of State Floodplain Managers.” Michael was a core member of Colorado’s Technical Team seeking to innovate the State’s 2013 flood recovery efforts through a multi-functional design perspective. These efforts were awarded “Outstanding Project: American Public Works Association Colorado Chapter, Public Works Program Award” (2019); “Engineering Excellence: Colorado Association of Stormwater and Floodplain Managers” (2018); and “National Presidential Award for Innovation: Council of State Community Development Agencies” (2017). In 2020 he co-authored the book “Colorado Disaster Recovery: Lessons Learned” (<https://www.coloradoewp.com/lessons-learned>) based on this flood recovery work.

Katie Jagt is the founder of Watershed Science and Design and a senior engineer and fluvial geomorphologist with 16 years of experience working in the river restoration and flood management industries. She holds a master’s degree in Civil Engineering from the University of California at Berkeley and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to do post-graduate research at TU Delft in The Netherlands on the intersection of flood management and river restoration.



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Katie's specialties include risk-based flood planning and river restoration projects, fluvial hazard zone mapping and mitigation, hydraulics and hydrology, sediment transport, floodplain reconnections and riparian function studies. She's spent years in the design, analysis, and implementation of "multi-benefit" projects that provide water quality, safety, and environmental value to river systems and their communities. Katie also developed and published risk-based analysis methods for quantifying the ecologic or agricultural benefits/impacts of large-scale river and reservoir re-operations projects. She was the deputy program manager for the State of Colorado's 2013 Emergency Watershed Protection flood recovery efforts and is a lead author of the State of Colorado's Fluvial Hazard Zone Delineation Protocol. She is also a board member of River Restoration Northwest.

Session 4 - "Leave it to Beaver" – How Beaver Complexes Improve Resilience to Wildfire and Drought

Moderator: Jackie Corday is a land and water conservation attorney who was previously the head of Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Water Resources Section in Denver. She began her consulting company upon her move to Montrose in late 2019. American Rivers hired her on contract to coordinate the efforts of the Colorado Healthy Headwaters Working Group, a statewide collective of stream restoration experts, scientists, agency, academic, and nonprofit staff who are working together to amplify headwater restoration in Colorado.

Fay Hartman connects communities in the Colorado River Basin to their local rivers. She strives to raise the profile of rivers and demonstrate the values and benefits they have for our communities and the environment. Fay works on innovative policy, program, and project solutions to conserve water in the urban, agricultural, and energy sectors to ensure that the rivers and streams in the region are healthy for local and regional economies, sustainable agriculture, and world-class recreation.

Dr. Emily Fairfax is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Science and Resource Management at CA State University, Channel Islands. She double-majored in Chemistry and Physics at Carleton College, then earned her Ph.D. in Geological Sciences at the University of Colorado



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Boulder. Her research falls into three categories: ecohydrology, data science/technology, and climate resilience. Her recent research focuses on how beaver complexes can mitigate the impacts of drought within the riparian zone and provide stable refugia during wildfires. This work directly supports our understanding of nature-based solutions to increase ecosystem and hydrologic resilience to drought, wildfires, and water quality degradation from post-fire debris flows.

Sarah Marshall has more than 15 years of experience working with wetland and riparian ecosystems in the western U.S. She has a Ph.D. in Water Resources Engineering, with expertise in ecological restoration and the effects of land use and management on wetland hydrology, soils, and ecology. Her current work focuses on watershed planning, including prioritizing headwater wetland conservation and restoration efforts to meet water quality, water supply, and habitat needs in a changing climate. Her watershed and statewide wetland planning efforts are supported by extensive field and GIS-based wetland assessment experience.