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PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
CRAIG DOSSEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**TO: El Paso County Planning Commission
Jim Egbert, Chair**

**FROM: Craig Dossey, Executive Director
Mark Gebhart, Deputy Director**

**RE: MP-18-001 -- Adoption of a Water Master Plan as an element of the
County Master Plan**

Commissioner District: All

First Planning Commission Hearing Date:	12/04/2018
Second Planning Commission Hearing Date:	12/18/2018
Board of County Commissioners Hearing Date:	N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The El Paso County Planning and Community Development Department requests adoption of a Water Master Plan as an element of the El Paso County Master Plan. The Water Master Plan and associated maps are a long-range water plan for El Paso County. The planning area includes all land within El Paso County located outside the incorporated boundaries of the various municipalities.

This is the first of two Planning Commission hearings scheduled for this item. The second public hearing is scheduled for December 18, 2018. A copy of the draft Water Master Plan has been available since November 6, 2018, on the County's website: <https://epcdevplanreview.com/Public/ProjectDetails/110995>

A. REQUEST/AUTHORIZATION

Request: Adoption of the Water Master Plan (PCD file no: MP-18-001).

B. EFFECT OF APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN

Colorado Revised Statute § 30-28-106 et. seq. provides that it is the duty of the Planning Commission to make and adopt the County Master Plan. The Statute requires careful studies to be made prior to plan adoption.



If adopted by the Planning Commission, the Water Master Plan will amend the El Paso County Master Plan, for this specific topical element (water planning) of the County. The County Master Plan presently consists of the Policy Plan and a total of approximately 50 small area plans, topical elements, sketch plans, drainage basin plans, and other documents and maps.

The County Master Plan is legally considered to be advisory only. The review criteria for many of the land use applications processed by the Planning and Community Development Department include a requirement that the application be in general conformance with the El Paso County Master Plan.

C. APPLICABLE RESOLUTIONS

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D. GENERAL LOCATION

The planning area of the Water Master Plan encompasses all of the unincorporated areas of El Paso County.

E. BACKGROUND

El Paso County initiated this master plan process in 2017 in an effort to better understand the present and projected future conditions of water supply and demand. The intent is to create a comprehensive plan that would be considered during the development review process and, through that process, would have the effect of encouraging best management practices for water demand management, water efficiency, and water conservation. Ultimately, the objective in developing the Plan is to help ensure that all existing residents have a reliable water supply and that all new development in the County be appropriately considered within the context of water supply at an earlier stage of the overall development process. This is important in the review of development proposals considering that the County is not a water provider, but requires coordination with the applicable water provider(s). The Plan will also provide guidance in the review of 1041 and utility permit applications and may assist in the implementation of locally applicable aspects of Colorado's Water Plan (2015).

The Water Master Plan would be a topical element to the El Paso County Master Plan, similar to other topical elements (e.g., El Paso County Major Transportation Corridors Plan, etc.). Efforts to update the overall El Paso County Master Plan are presently underway.

The Water Master Plan includes seven (7) chapters devoted to understanding water supplies, identifying available supplies and needs, and closing the gap for the future based upon population projections. A steering committee of wide

interests was engaged throughout the process and provided excellent assistance in developing and presenting various components of the Plan.

Background information was developed through a survey regarding the 50+ water providers operating within the County, including cities, special districts, private water suppliers, and small developers. Through the public involvement process a web based online survey was developed (MetroQuest) to identify the public's interest and involvement in water supply matters. The survey was advertised in a number of locations including online postings at the County and various water districts, notices to customers, announcements at public meetings (Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, water districts, community groups, and development groups). 374 independent responses were provided and over 1000 viewers visited the website. In addition, staff provided updates to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners throughout the drafting process. After completion of a draft of the Plan, a public open house was held where input was provided by those in attendance. Approximately 60 members of the public engaged with staff and steering committee members in face-to-face dialogue at each of the open house-style stations. The review agencies and members of the public have been invited to review and comment on the draft Plan via the online development review process (EDARP) and at hearing(s). The El Paso County Public Information Office also posted a video on the County's main page in an effort to provide additional notice to the public of the County's development of the Plan and as an additional means of providing notification of the date, time, and location of the associated open house event.

Developing an understanding of what existing water supplies are available on a provider-by-provider basis required making contact with each of the various water providers, but also required identifying where additional population growth would occur and to quantify projected future water supply demands. The future water supply demand for the overall County are projected to be in excess of available water supplies. The difference between the available supplies and the projected demand is considered to be the "gap", which is discussed in greater detail in this Plan as well as Colorado's Water Plan. Identifying ways to close the "gap" is a desired outcome of this planning process.

The Plan identifies practices for improving water efficiency and provides specific implementation measures such as modifications to landscaping standards and implementation of water reuse. Regional water supply plans that have been developed by various providers have been recognized within the Plan, including many of the recommendations of those plans for achieving renewable water supplies through creating incentives and via potential regulatory modifications. If this Water Master Plan is adopted by the Planning Commission as an element of the County Master Plan, then all future land use and 1041 Permit applications that are reviewed for consistency or general conformance with the County Master

Plan will also be reviewed for consistency or general conformance, as appropriate, with the Water Master Plan.

The Water Master Plan will be incorporated into the update to the overall Master Plan as that effort proceeds forward.

F. STATUS OF MAJOR ISSUES

There are no major issues that should reasonably keep this amendment to the El Paso County Master Plan from being adopted at this time.

G. APPROVAL CRITERIA

1. EL PASO COUNTY MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY AND POLICY PLAN COMPLIANCE

Colorado Revised Statutes 30-28-106 et. seq. provide that the Planning Commission may adopt the Water Master Plan as an element of the Master Plan as a topical element.

The Water Master Plan enhances the El Paso County Policy Plan (1998) by providing a more thorough analysis of water issues and as a reinforcement of policies in the Policy Plan.

2. SMALL AREA MASTER PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Water Master Plan is generally consistent with goals and polices of the various small area plans and in some ways utilizes and enhances the goals and policies of those plans. Aspects of this Plan will replace portions of the small area plans where there may be inconsistencies in the small area plans with the Water Master Plan. The population numbers utilized in developing the Water Master Plan are consistent with those that were used in developing the Major Transportation Corridors Plan (MTCP) which are also generally consistent with the population growth control totals developed by the State Demographer and Pike's Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), which is the local Metropolitan Planning Organization.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH COUNTY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The procedures performed in completion of the Water Master Plan are consistent with documented County policies and guidelines. Notice to neighboring jurisdictions has been provided in accordance with statute, and notice to military bases was provided in conformance with C.R.S. § 29-20-105.6. Additionally, several planners from the military bases located within the County participated in the process of developing the Plan either as a member of the steering committee or through other interactions with County staff.

4. OTHER FACTORS

The Colorado Revised Statutes 30-28-106 et. seq. govern adoption of a County Master Plan. The statutes allow the Planning Commission to adopt new or amended County Master Plans “in whole or in parts. El Paso County has traditionally broken its Master Plan adoption process into sub-area and topical elements. As mentioned above, the Water Master Plan is proposed to be adopted as a topical element of the overall County Master Plan.

H. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NOTICE

The public was invited to engage at each phase in development of the Water Master Plan. The initial phase utilized online and post card surveys, a media release, poster and flyer distribution and emails to interested individuals. In addition, presentations regarding the status of the Water Master Plan have occurred at public meetings and stakeholder meetings, including the Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, neighborhood groups, and the Colorado Springs Housing and Building Association (HBA), since August of 2017. Information regarding the Water Master Plan has been provided on the departments’ web page continuously. A public Open House occurred on the evening of October 25th, 2018.

In addition to these public meeting, the ability to review the Plan through the El Paso County Planning and Community Development website (EDARP) was available to the public beginning on November 6th, 2018. Community, stakeholder and review agency comments and concerns have been included in the development of the Water Master Plan. Those individuals and agencies involved in the development of the Plan have been notified of the dates and times of the two Planning Commission hearings.

Legal Notice for the Planning Commission hearings was published in the *El Paso County Advertiser and News* on November 21, 2018, for both Planning Commission hearings.

The draft Plan is still available for public review online at:
<https://epcdevplanreview.com/Public/ProjectDetails/110995>

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends adoption of the El Paso County Water Master Plan with the following conditions and notations:

CONDITIONS

1. C.R.S. 30-28-109 requires the Planning Commission to certify a copy of the Master Plan, or any adopted part or amendment thereof or addition thereto, to the Board of County Commissioners and to the Planning Commission of all municipalities in the County. The Planning Commission’s action to amend the Master Plan shall not be considered final until a minimum of ten (10) complete

sets of the final documents are provided and such documents are certified by the Chairman of the County Planning Commission and distributed as required by law.

2. Upon adoption by the El Paso County Planning Commission, the effect of this document is to supersede any conflicting recommendations of the Policy Plan or Small Area Plans.

NOTATIONS

1. Certification of the documents to the municipalities within the County pursuant to Condition No. 1 above is determined to be satisfied upon transmittal of summary information and maps along with a clear description of the locations where the complete documents are available for inspection, along with an offer to provide a given municipality a complete copy of the documents if requested. The transmittal may be in the form of a digital copy.
2. In approval of this document, it is understood that minor editorial and formatting changes will be made in conjunction with the final publication process. These modifications may include pagination, correction of typographical errors, clarifications, insertion of photographs, insertion of references and/or corrections to factual information, or inclusion of comments and modifications associated with the Planning Commission hearings. In no case will substantive changes be made to the text without reconsideration by the Planning Commission.

J. ATTACHMENTS

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Comments provided by review agencies and the public (to be provided at the hearing)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Water Master Plan (WMP) was developed for the Board of County Commissioners, El Paso County officials and staff, developers, citizens, and water providers within the County for the purpose of identifying and addressing water supply issues earlier in the land use entitlement process. This WMP contains information to: better understand the present conditions of water supply and demand; identify efficiencies that can be achieved; and encourage best practices for water demand management through the comprehensive planning and development review processes. This WMP is an element of the overall County Master Plan.

Implementing this WMP will help ensure that land use decisions are based on balancing efficient use of limited water supplies with the water needs of current and future residents. The WMP should also be used to promote cooperation among water supply entities in the County with respect to water planning efforts.

The State of Colorado adopted *Colorado's Water Plan* in December 2015, which identifies goals, objectives, and critical actions needed to ensure that Colorado can maintain our state's values related to water into the future.

El Paso County includes approximately 70 water providers and over 21,300 permitted groundwater wells. Much of the County has a semi-arid climate, with high elevations to the west, and the Palmer Divide running along the northern part of the County. Sloping hills direct the majority of the rainfall and snowmelt runoff in a south and southeast direction. The County only has two major streams: Monument Creek with headwaters within the Palmer Divide range; and Fountain Creek with headwaters in Teller County. These creeks join in Colorado Springs and flow on to Pueblo County where Fountain Creek joins the Arkansas River.

Rural subdivisions in El Paso County generally rely on individual domestic or household wells for their water, while suburban and urban developments are typically served by centralized water and sewer services provided by a Colorado Revised Statutes Title 32 special district or a municipality.



El Paso County with a view of Pikes Peak

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In developing this WMP, the Forsgren team reached out to the public through multiple methods, including a web-based program, MetroQuest. Through MetroQuest, the public shared their ideas and concerns regarding water supply strategies and other water-related concerns. The website had over 1,000 visits with a total of 378 responses, providing important feedback from the public regarding water issues in the County. A public open house was held on October 25, 2018 to further engage the public and to answer questions.

WATER SERVICE PROVIDERS

Water service providers were contacted regarding their water supplies and demand commitments to serve their customers. The data collected from the water providers was categorized based on supply and demand locations. For the purposes of this WMP, the County was divided into eight sub-regional areas to analyze current supplies versus current demands, and future demands for the years 2040 and 2060. Results of those analyses are shown in Section 5 of this plan. As water demands increase each year, additional supply sources will need to be acquired to meet those demands. This WMP recognizes that many water providers will need to start incorporating renewable water sources into their portfolios. Some water providers have already begun this process of bringing in renewable water from outside their service areas for their customers.



Arkansas River Diversion Structure near Salida, CO

WATER SUPPLIES

Several different types of water supplies are being used by water providers in the County. Those types are classified as: native renewable water, imported renewable water, designated basin groundwater, and Denver Basin groundwater. The majority of water providers in unincorporated areas rely on Denver Basin aquifers for their supply, which are generally nonrenewable sources. With the exception of Colorado Springs Utilities and their project partners, water providers in the County are relying on 85% supply from Denver Basin and designated basin groundwater.

Although most water providers have sufficient “paper” water rights, economic pumping rates dictate the amount of groundwater that can be withdrawn. A water provider may not be able to economically pump to the limits that their paper water rights indicate. In some cases, there may not be enough reliable “wet water” to serve the buildout of development in specific service areas over the long-term.

PROJECTED WATER SUPPLY NEEDS

Comparing the current water supplies to future projected demands quantifies the water supplies that will need to be added to water supply systems throughout the County. Section 5 identifies the projected needs for the 2040 and 2060 horizons. Water providers will acquire and connect additional supplies incrementally as demands continue to grow. Water providers across the County are implementing water efficiency measures to “do more with less,” including use of tiered rate schedules for their customers, and promotion of water-conscious landscaping. Water reclamation or reuse can also help extend supplies for many water providers. But ultimately, a number of water providers will need to diversify their supply portfolios with additional renewable water sources. They can then rely heavily on those limited supplies during wet and average precipitation years, and supplement with drought-proof Denver Basin supplies in drier years.

REGULATORY AMENDMENTS

With the purpose of encouraging water efficiency, conservation and the introduction of additional renewable water supplies to meet projected demands in the County, regulatory amendments are recommended. El Paso County implemented a 300-year water supply subdivision regulation for Denver Basin groundwater in 1986, with the intent, at least in part, of encouraging land developers to bring in additional renewable water sources. But land development continues to occur primarily where Denver Basin water rights can support the water demands of the development.

The WMP project team recommends that the County complete a more detailed analysis of the 300-year rule and available groundwater supplies, possibly leading to revision of this regulatory requirement. Regulatory amendment to the landscaping standards is also recommended to afford more flexibility with landscaping plans, created by a professional landscape architect, as a means of encouraging water conservation.



Drought-resistant landscaping

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