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Groups Applaud Passage of Bill to Help Colorado Communities Improve Water Efficiency, Pursue Smart Development Strategies

Denver, Colo. (March 11, 2020) – Western Resource Advocates, American Planning Association Colorado Chapter, and Conservation Colorado today welcomed the passage of a bill to help Colorado communities include water efficiency in their long-range comprehensive planning and identify conservation strategies for new developments and growth.

HB20-1095 authorizes and provides support for Colorado communities to voluntarily include a water element in their master plan, enabling cities and towns to pursue water efficiency and conservation strategies to meet their needs. Linking land use planning with water planning will better facilitate and enable communities to meet their goals of developing projects sustainably, resulting in connected state and local efforts for water planning and conservation, and ultimately continued implementation of the Colorado Water Plan. The legislation now heads to Governor Jared Polis to be signed into law.

“In recognition of the importance of water to agriculture, recreation, the economy, and our overall quality of life, APA Colorado has long championed stewardship of water, a scarce resource in the arid West. Stewardship includes utilizing the tool that comprehensive master plans provide to link community land use planning with water planning,” said Susan Wood, AICP, APA Colorado legislative affairs representative. “Passage of this bill is the culmination of a multi-year effort by the APA Colorado Chapter and its members and we are pleased that it provides planning assistance to local governments through the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and connects to policies provided in the Colorado Water Plan. Our mission is Making Great Communities Happen and planning for our water future is essential to fulfilling this goal.”
“As Colorado becomes hotter and drier due to climate change, this bill will support Colorado’s growing communities that are interested in using water more efficiently,” said John Berggren, Western Resource Advocates water policy analyst. “By including water in master plans, our communities can grow without stressing our water supplies, increasing their resiliency and reducing their vulnerability to drought and shortages. We applaud Colorado lawmakers for valuing water efficiency as our communities grow, and we look forward to continuing to work with communities across our state to support locally driven water efficiency efforts.”

"Due to population growth and climate change, Colorado faces an impending water supply gap where our communities will need more water than they currently have," said Josh Kuhn, water advocate at Conservation Colorado. "The passage of this bill provides greater direction and resources for communities across our state ensuring planning is smart from the start."

APA Colorado, WRA, and their partners have been working for several years to help Colorado communities integrate their water and land use planning processes to improve water conservation and build more water smart communities. They have offered workshops, conducted trainings, and created resources for planners, including a first-of-its-kind guidebook that details how communities can integrate water efficiency into their land use planning and development processes.

While Colorado’s population is expected to grow from its current 5.8 million to over 8 million by 2050, climate change is causing our state’s water resources to become increasingly scarce, putting greater stress on our rivers, cities, farms, ranches, and recreation opportunities. Rising temperatures in Colorado and prolonged drought are expected to further reduce annual flows in our state’s rivers, making additional local and state water conservation efforts essential.

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About Western Resource Advocates
Western Resource Advocates works to protect the West’s land, air, and water so that our communities exist in balance with nature. WRA’s team of scientists, lawyers, and economists craft and implement innovative solutions to the most complex natural resource challenges in the region. For more information, visit: www.westernresourceadvocates.org and follow us on Twitter @wradv and #ProtectTheWest.

About APA Colorado
APA Colorado, an organization of approximately 1,500 members statewide, represents the planning profession in Colorado. It is the Colorado Chapter of the 40,000 member national American Planning Association. Our mission is to provide leadership and advocate for excellence in planning and public policy, promoting professional development, and providing
education and citizen empowerment for those who are working to protect and enhance the natural and built environment. The APA Colorado membership has consistently identified water planning as an important planning topic, and among the top three planning topics over the last five years. For more information, visit: www.apacolorado.org.

About Conservation Colorado
Conservation Colorado is the state’s largest environmental advocacy organization.