

Many opinions regarding drought and drought preparedness have been informally identified through the media and various state agencies – including state agencies that have worked on response and mitigation planning for drought. However, a thorough understanding of Colorado water users’ opinions on drought preparedness, previous to this project, had yet to be compiled. To best establish statewide policy on drought-related water issues, the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) undertook the Drought & Water Supply Assessment as an exhaustive analysis of water users’ opinions throughout the State with respect to drought, and limitations on current and future water supply.

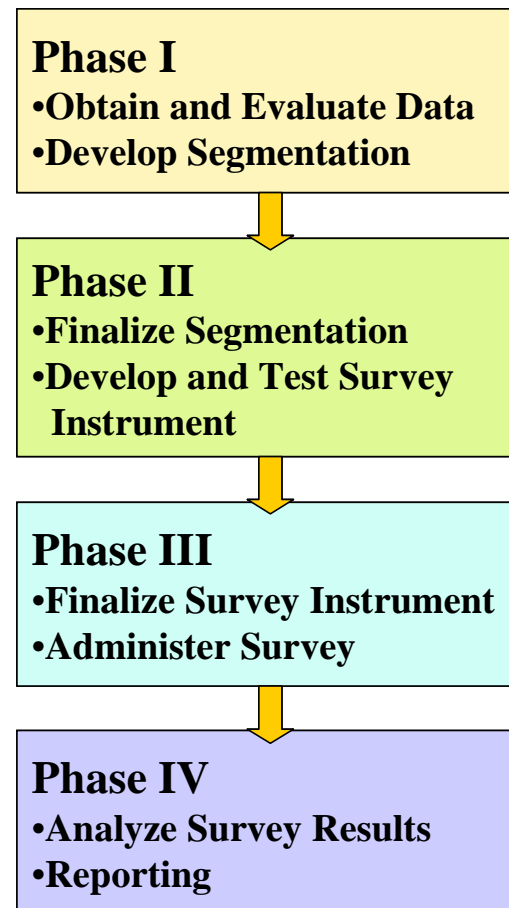
The collection and evaluation of water use opinion data required the planning and implementation of a multi-phased approach to allow for the proper collection of available information, development and testing of an opinion instrument (i.e., survey), administration of the survey, and final analysis and interpretation of the survey results. The phases and their relations to one another are depicted in the figure at right.

The chapters that follow present a summary of the activities that were performed in each phase of the project and a detailed discussion of the opinion data results and implications with respect to future State water policy.

As previously indicated, the opinion data collection focused on determining how prepared Colorado is for drought and identifying drought mitigation measures that may help the State and its citizenry and businesses to be better prepared for future droughts. The specific opinion data collected addressed characterizing those key issues that water managers and planners throughout the State are facing with respect to the short- and long-term management of their water resources:

- Limitations to current water supply.
- Current status of water supply, drought and water conservation planning and implementation within each water user organization.
- Impacts observed from the most recent drought by the different water user uses.
- Limitations to planning for future water supply.
- Water user needs for structural and non-structural projects to mitigate drought.
- Use of cooperative agreements to manage drought now and into the future.
- State role in future drought planning and mitigation efforts

The final chapter in this section summarizes the water user opinion data with respect to current and future State water policy, and presents findings, recommendations, and initial implementation steps for state activities.



Two issues must be noted with respect to the assessment. First, the results of individual water user surveys are held as confidential between the surveyors and the survey participants. The intent of the assessment was to identify overall water user sentiment statewide, as well as by major river basin and water use type. Individual water use (defined by the amount diverted or stored) and storage data was collected from 55 to 67% survey participants (the percentage varies dependant on the water year as some entities did not have data available for all years); however, this information was used to determine the statistical significance of overall and regional responses, and to characterize the diversity of municipal and agricultural respondents. Individual water user responses will not be made available as a result of the Assessment.

Second, the opinion data represent Colorado's water users and as such does not necessarily represent voter sentiment or the opinions of the public at large. Nonetheless, the opinions reflected in the assessment results are indicative of how water users and providers throughout the State of Colorado perceive and understand key water resources issues at this time.