

Agricultural/Urban/Environmental

Water Sharing:

Innovative Strategies for the Colorado River Basin and the West

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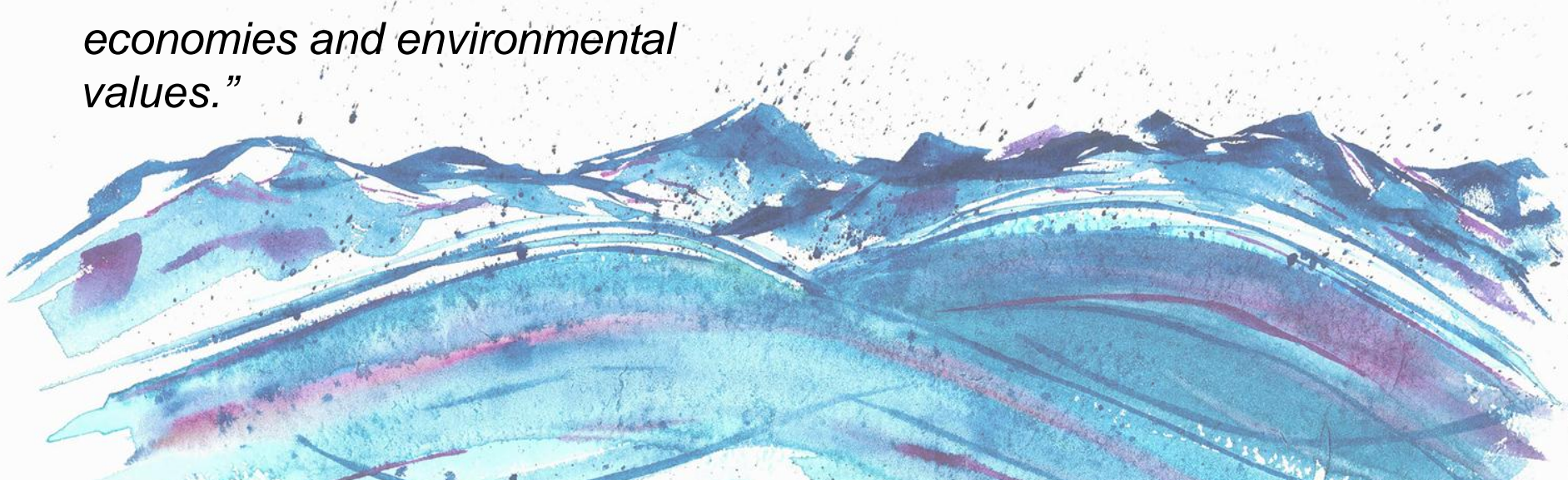
May 28-31, Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil



Western States Water Council Report for Western Governors

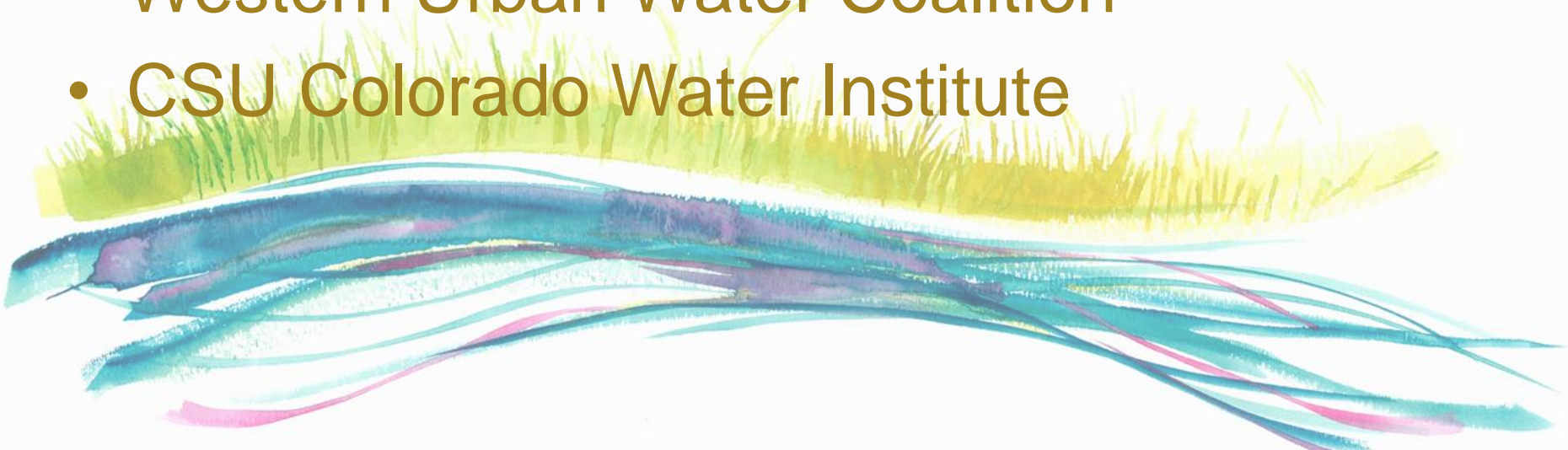
“States, working with interested stakeholders, should identify innovative ways to allow water transfers from agricultural to urban uses while avoiding or mitigating damages to agricultural economies and environmental values.”

Water Needs and Strategies
for a Sustainable Future—
June 2008



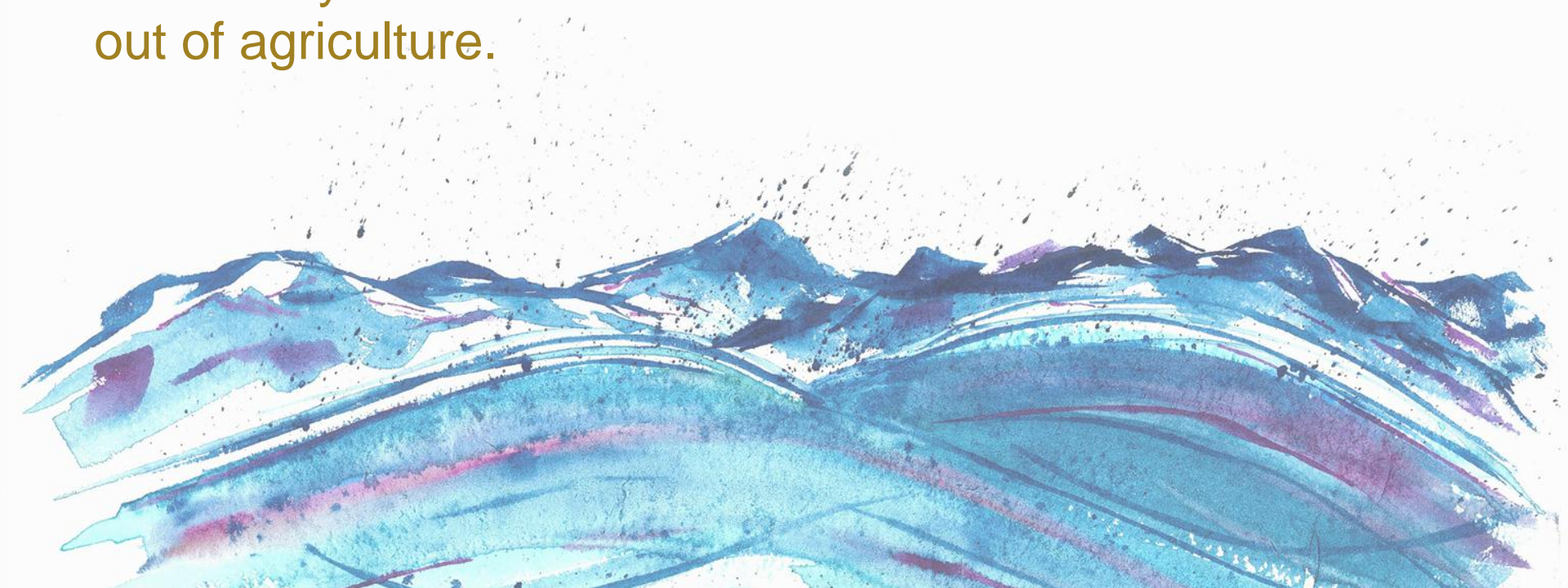
Initial Work Group

- Family Farm Alliance
- Western States Water Council
- The Nature Conservancy
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Western Urban Water Coalition
- CSU Colorado Water Institute



Can we find consensus on this issue?

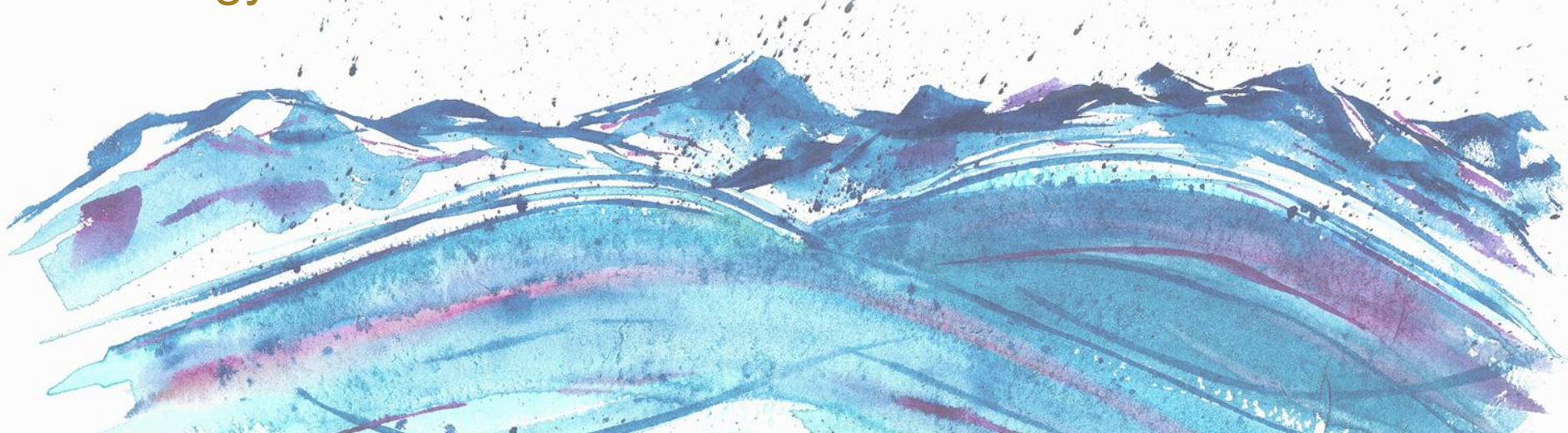
Yes, if we focus on ways to improve sharing of water between multiple sectors, instead of seeking ways to unilaterally transfer water out of agriculture.



Can we find consensus on this issue?

Regarding storage:

“There may be benefits to properly sized and located storage in certain circumstances, especially when such projects are part of a larger, multiple-benefit strategy.”

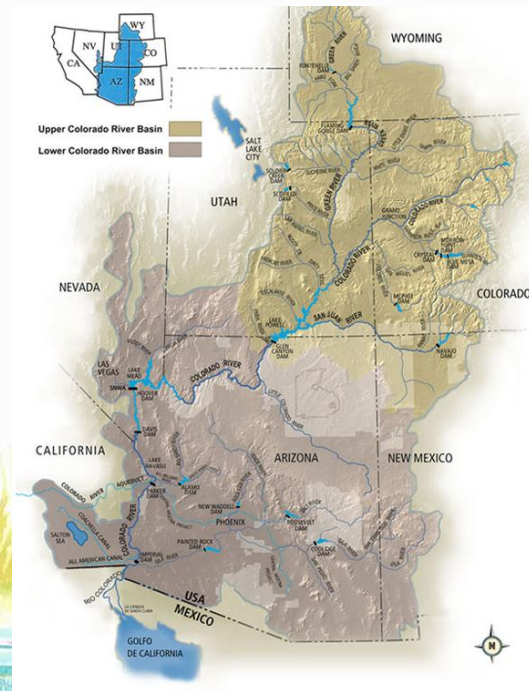


Initiative

Funded by Walton Family Foundation

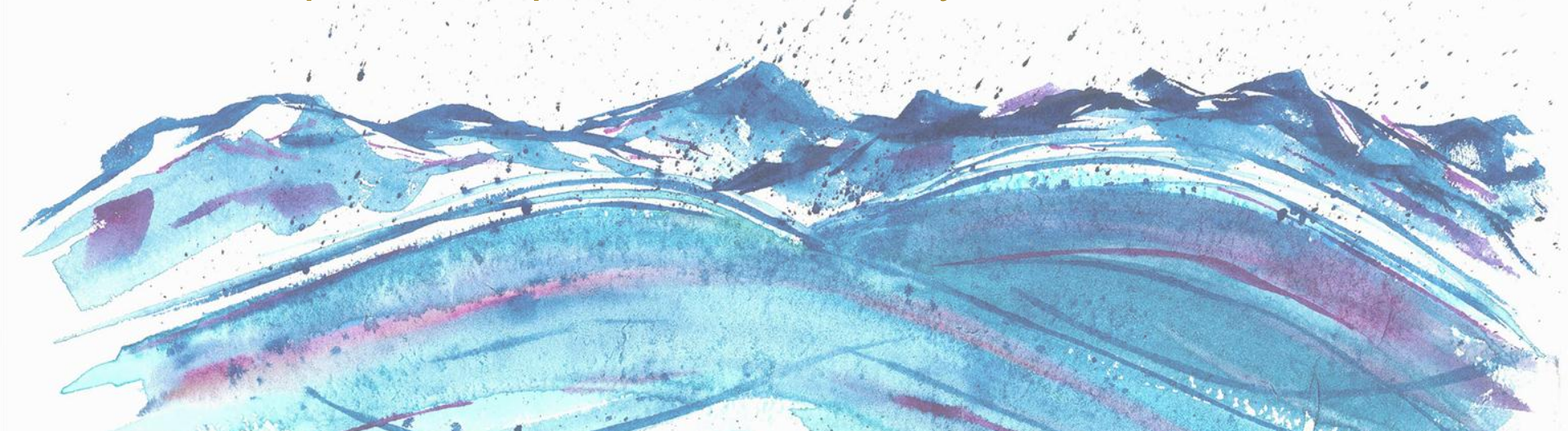
Creative Water Sharing Strategies throughout the West for the Colorado River Basin

- Find those who have done it
- Find those who are experimenting
- Identify obstacles
- Recommend ways to overcome obstacles



Interviews

- 50 interviews
- Those involved with innovative water sharing strategies
- Environmental and natural resources policy experts, irrigation and environmental engineers, irrigation district managers, economics and law professors, farmers and ranchers, state and federal government officials, municipal water providers, attorneys



Interviews—What Surfaced?

- List of “movers and shakers” involved in water sharing across the west to invite to summer workshop
- More than a dozen innovative programs/projects subsequently highlighted in report
- View of the range of obstacles faced by those implementing those innovative programs/projects



Workshop

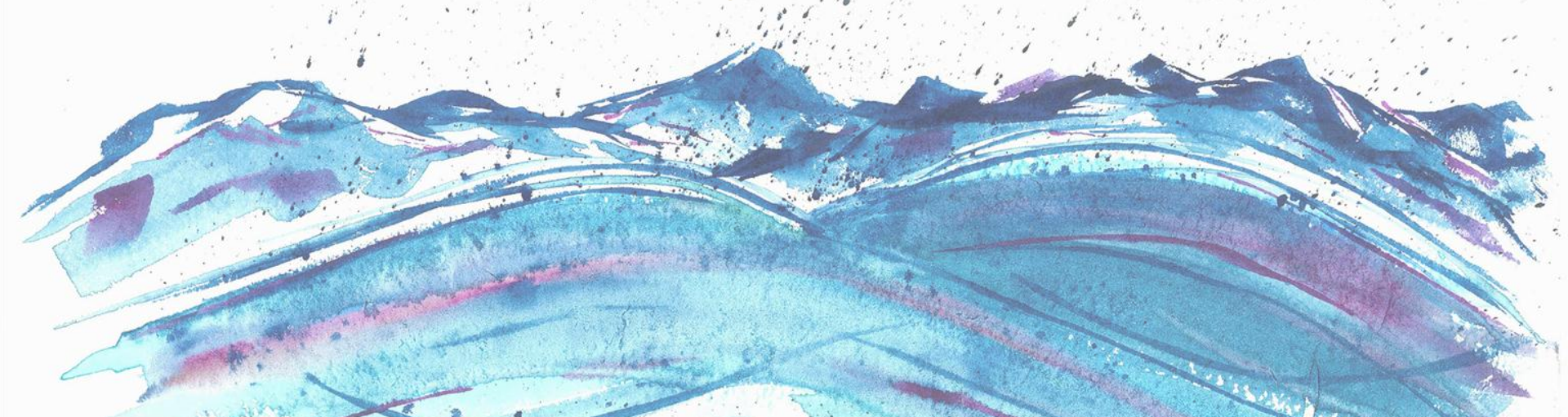
- Cherokee Ranch and Castle, Castle Rock, CO
- August, 2010
- 35 Workshop Participants from 9 states & Washington, DC



Recommendations

Theme 1: **Design Robust Stakeholder Processes for Multi-Benefit Water Sharing Solutions**

- Early, broad stakeholder involvement
- Set up the process in the beginning, not after project/program proponents decide/announce/defend.
- Allows for consideration of all interests upfront to increase chance of dialogue instead of polarization



Recommendations

Theme 2: **Foster a Flexible, Watershed Based Approach**

- Watershed basis planning and management tools to simulate “what ifs” and facilitate real-time, on the ground decision making that helps stakeholders “connect the dots” to manage water supplies for optimal cooperation.
- Can lead to shared infrastructure, cooperatively timed deliveries and reuse schemes.
- State and federal agencies working with stakeholders to identify and implement water sharing mechanisms that work across jurisdictions.



Recommendations

Theme 3: **Clear Obstacles to Implementation of Water Sharing Strategies**

- Water Resource Sharing Zones to trade water, financial, cultural and other resources to mutual benefit exchange
- Governor's cabinet level water advocate to facilitate cross jurisdictional processes and regional approaches for voluntary, incentive-based cooperation
- Best management practices criteria and thresholds to facilitate streamlining of regulatory approvals for water sharing agreements.



Recommendations

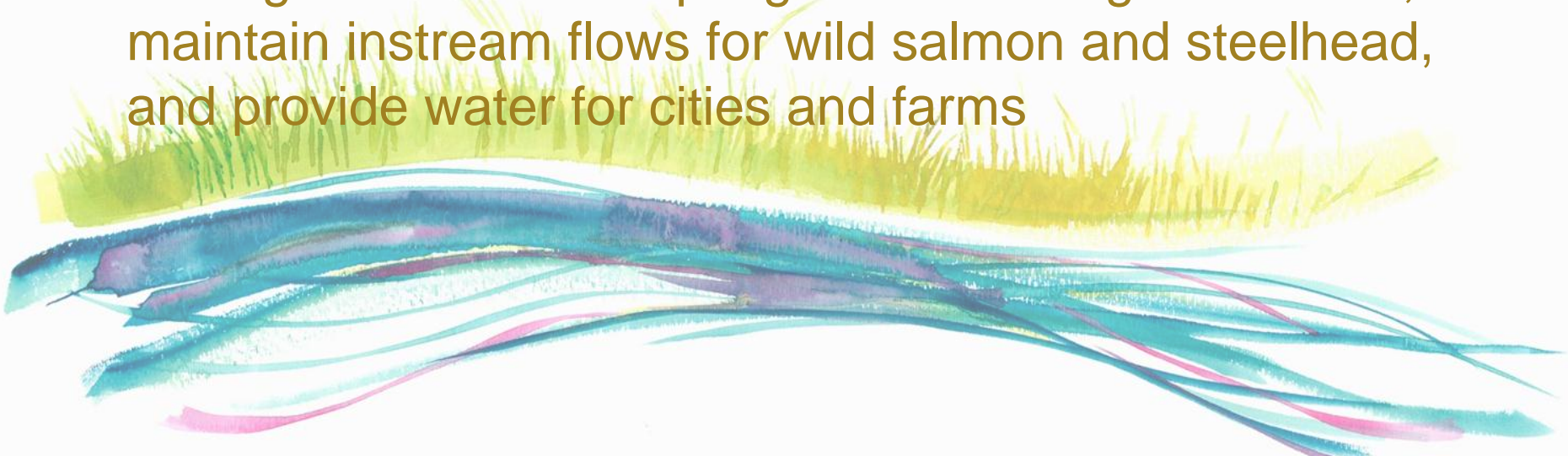
Theme 4: Expedite Water Sharing Program/Project Review Process

- Governor-championed federal/state pilot expedited review process for projects/programs that have broad support of ag/urban/environmental sectors.
- A state liaison and a federal designate to co-facilitate concurrent review and permitting, and sharing of state and federal approval resources.
- Such a “one-stop-permitting” approach could reduce costs, and ensure more timely approvals by reducing repetitive agency information exchanges.



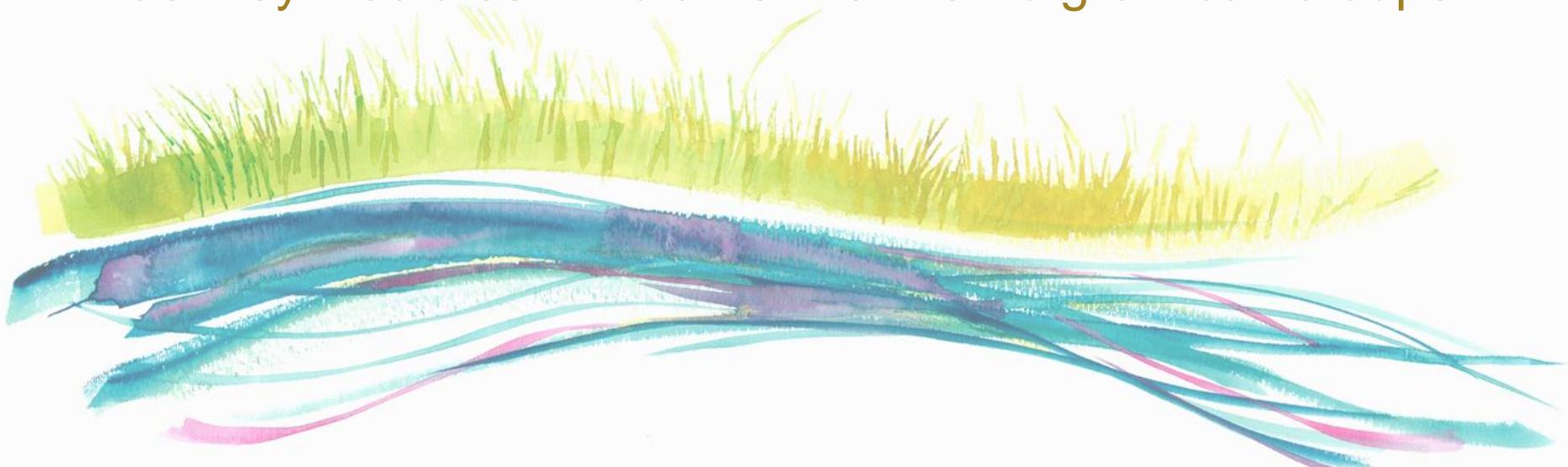
Examples: Workshop Participants' Water Sharing Strategies

- Farmers and cities in Arizona trading off use of surface water and groundwater to the advantage of both
- Ranchers in Oregon being paid by environmentalists to foregoing a third cutting of hay to leave water in the stream for late summer flows
- A California flood control and water supply project managed to meet multiple goals: restore groundwater, maintain instream flows for wild salmon and steelhead, and provide water for cities and farms



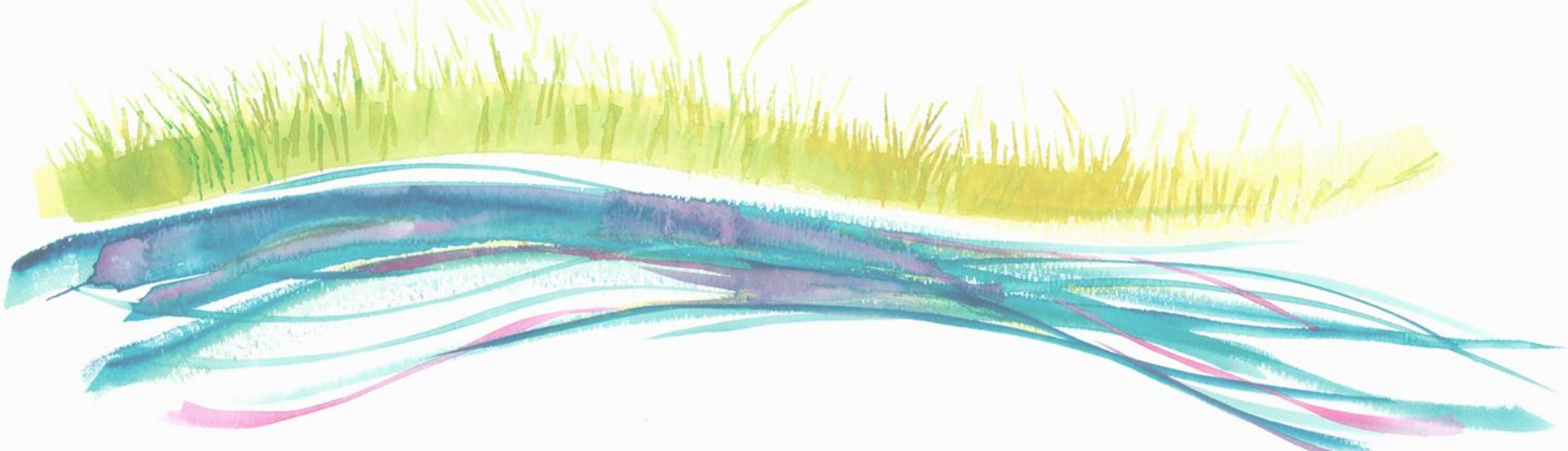
Examples: Workshop Participants' Water Sharing Strategies

- Seven ditch companies cooperating in Colorado in a “Super Ditch” scheme to pool part of their water through rotational fallowing, for lease to cities, while maintaining agricultural ownership of the water rights.
- An irrigation district in New Mexico willing to sell shares of water to the Audubon Society for bird habitat the same as they would sell it to a new farmer to grow cantaloupe.



What's Next?

- Recommendations to Western Governors through Western States Water Council resulted in drill down into strategies to encourage adoption throughout West
- Agricultural/Environmental Field Trips to build relationships/see strategies in action
- Scoping out potential for more pilot projects showcasing how obstacles can be overcome



Download the Report

www.cwi.colostate.edu/watersharing



