



# SUMMARY REPORT

## *of Interim Committee Activities*

October 2024

### Water Resources and Agriculture Review Committee

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**Committee Members:** Representative Karen McCormick, Chair, Senator Dylan Roberts, Vice-chair  
Senators Jeff Bridges, Janice Marchman, Byron Pelton, Cleave Simpson  
Representatives Marc Catlin, Mike Lynch, Matthew Martinez, Barbara McLachlan

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### Committee Charge

The committee is authorized to review water and agriculture issues and propose legislation related to water conservation, quality, use, finance, and development, and the field of agriculture. In conducting its review, the committee is required to consult with experts.

### Calendar of Events

#### March 20, 2024

- Discussion on Wetlands, WOTUS, and Colorado's Role
- Discussion on Growth, Density, and Water Demand

#### June 3-5, 2024

- Field Trip to Upper Arkansas River Basin Tour

#### July 11, 2024

- Field trip to Colorado State University Spur Campus
- Presentation on Orphaned Mines and Acid Mine Drainage
- Presentation on CSU Spur Ag Innovation Center
- Update on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Colorado
- Discussion on Raw Milk Regulation
- Presentation on Regenerative Agriculture

#### August 7, 2024

- Presentation on Energy Building Codes on Agricultural Property
- Discussion on Foreign Ownership of Agricultural Land
- Presentation on Increasing Access to Veterinary Care
- Discussion of State Land Board Renewable Energy Projects
- Presentation on Revegetation in Colorado
- Presentation on Colorado Water Funding
- Presentation on Watershed Health and Wildfire Resistance

#### August 20-22, 2024

- Field Trip at Colorado Water Congress Conference

#### August 21, 2024

- Discussion on the State of Colorado's Climate
- Presentation on Tap Fees and the Cost of Water



- Update on Zebra Mussel Detections in Colorado
- Public Testimony
- Presentation on Healthy School Meals for All
- Presentation on Colorado State University AgrAbility Project
- Presentation on the Colorado Wildlife Council and Habitat Stamp Program
- Presentation on Platte River Partnership
- Public Testimony

September 18, 2024

- Update on the Farm Bill
- Discussion on the Status of Gray Wolves in Colorado

### Recommended Legislation

As a result of committee discussion and deliberation, the committee recommends the following bills for consideration in the 2025 legislative session.

#### **Bill A – Remove Gendered Language from Title 35**

The bill replaces existing gendered language with gender-neutral language in Title 35 (Agriculture) of the Colorado Revised Statutes. It also updates archaic language in the title.

#### **Bill B – Wildlife Damaged Protection of Personal Information**

The bill requires that the personal information of any individual requesting compensation from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) for damages caused by wildlife or for nonlethal prevention measures be kept confidential. This includes information about site assessments conducted by state officials and third parties to prevent future depredation. This information is not subject to the Colorado Open Records Act.

#### **Bill C – Mining Reclamation & Interstate Compact**

The bill creates a new permit type in the Department of Natural Resources for the removal of mining waste and refuse, updates forfeiture and warranty procedures related to mining operations, and ratifies Colorado as a full member of the Interstate Mining Compact.

#### **Bill D – Agriculture Building Exempt from Energy Use Requirements**

Under current law, the owners of certain buildings are required to submit annual reports on energy benchmarking data to the Colorado Energy Office under the Building Performance Program. Buildings used for agricultural purposes are exempt from the reporting requirements. The bill clarifies which agricultural buildings qualify for the exemption.

#### **Bill E – Ranch Property Tax Clarifications**

The bill changes the definition of a ranch for property tax purposes from a parcel of land used only for grazing livestock to a parcel of land that can also be used to raise livestock. The bill also removes a narrow definition of livestock from the definition of ranch.



### ***Bill F – Backflow Prevention Devices Requirements***

The bill specifies that inspection, testing, or repair of backflow prevention devices does not require plumbing occupational licensure from the Department of Regulatory Agencies.

### ***Bill G – Future of Severance Taxes & Water Funding Task Force***

The bill creates the Future of Severance Taxes and Water Funding Task Force in the Department of Natural Resources. The 9-member task force will hire a contractor to conduct a study and develop recommendations. The contractor must explore options to continue funding water needs for the state while severance tax revenue is expected to decrease. The contractor must submit a draft report to the task force by January 15, 2026, and a final report from the task force is due to the Water Resources and Agriculture Review committee by July 15, 2026.

### ***Bill H – Continue Wildlife Habitat Stamp Program***

The bill continues the Wildlife Habitat Stamp Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Stamp Committee, indefinitely. The program is managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife in the Department of Natural Resources. The program and committee are currently set to repeal on July 1, 2027, subject to sunset review by the Department of Regulatory Agencies. The bill also removes the sunset provision.