



INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE ■

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

AT BOULDER ■

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY RESEARCH PROGRAM

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“The Increasing Cost of Protecting Property Rights in Water”

**October 23, 2006
11:30-12:30**

IBS 3 Conference Room

Laws change, hopefully slowly, in response to changing social and economic values. In the eastern United States, the need to change from the English Common Law riparian doctrine becomes more obvious as the supply/demand relationship tightens and as climate forecasts become more daunting. Examples of the need for change will be illustrated from situations in the Upper Midwest. In the western states, water law has slowly and grudgingly changed to recognize environmental values (including water quality impacts of transfers). However, priority doctrine is increasingly in conflict with the economic use of water resources. This is sharply illustrated by the surface water-groundwater conflicts in the South Platte Basin of Colorado where irrigation pumping (and the related use of the aquifer) has been sharply curtailed to protect a limited set of surface rights. The economist's glib "let the market work" isn't going to solve this problem. Additional legal recognition of economic impacts and values is required.

**IBS 3 is the second building north of Starbucks Coffee on Broadway.
Feel free to bring a brownbag lunch.**