

46th Annual Colorado Law
Conference on Natural Resources

THE COLORADO RIVER: SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

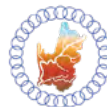
June 4-5, 2026

University of Colorado Law School

Presented by Getches-Wilkinson Center and Water & Tribes Initiative



Getches-Wilkinson Center
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO LAW SCHOOL



Water & Tribes Initiative
Colorado River Basin

46th Annual Colorado Law Conference on Natural Resources

The Natural Resources Law Center (NRLC) was founded in 1982 and in 2013 underwent a reorganization and name change to the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy and the Environment. The Getches-Wilkinson Center has expanded upon the legacy of the NRLC with a broader agenda, expanded convening of stakeholders, and aspirations for deeper influence in law, policy and practice.

This year marks the 46th Annual Conference on Natural Resources at Colorado Law. Over its rich history, the conference has addressed many different natural resource issues. In more recent years, the Center's summer conference has largely focused on water law and policy. The Center is proud to convene thought leaders, practitioners, and diverse stakeholders to address the most pressing issues of the day—and we want to thank our conference co-sponsors whose generous support allows us to ensure our events are accessible to all.

Conference Introduction

The Colorado River is facing unprecedented change and uncertainty. Average annual flows continue to decline, and negotiations to craft post-2026 guidelines to manage the river have repeatedly bogged down over disagreements about delivery obligations, sharing shortages and mandatory conservation. While some clarity may emerge in the coming months, the ability to sustain many existing municipal and agricultural water users is already compromised. Meanwhile, there is growing recognition that a durable resolution must also address the water rights of sovereign Tribal nations and better integrate environmental values into river management. All sovereigns, stakeholders, and sectors must work together now more than ever to find solutions for short-term needs and long-term goals.

GWC and WTI

For the fourth year, the Getches-Wilkinson Center (GWC) has partnered with the Water & Tribes Initiative | Colorado River Basin (WTI) to organize and convene the annual conference. WTI is a collaborative partnership designed to enhance the capacity of Tribes and to support Tribal engagement in policy and governance. Read more about WTI, and find a link to its website, on page 10.

Photos in this program are provided by John Weisheit.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 4

7:30–8:00 **Registration Opens and Light Breakfast**

8:00–8:20 **Welcome, Introductory Remark and Opening Invocation**

Dean Lolita Buckner Inniss, Colorado Law School

Chris Winter, Getches-Wilkinson Center

Daryl Vigil, Water & Tribes Initiative

Opening Invocation, Roger Fragua, Flower Hill Institute

Session 1: Climate & Hydrology: Expectations for an Ever-Shrinking Pie

Growing water shortages on the Colorado River system derive from a mismatch between supplies and human demands. While water managers can proactively manage demands, natural inflows to the basin are not easily manipulated, placing a premium on understanding trends and forecasts. (Moderator: Doug Kenney, Getches-Wilkinson Center)

8:20–8:50 **Long-Term Trends and Near-Term Impacts: Learning from the 2026 Water Year**

Brad Udall, Colorado State University

8:50–9:15 **Infrastructure Limits and Considerations**

Katrina Grantz, Bureau of Reclamation

9:15–9:45 **Audience Participation**

9:45–10:15 **Morning Break**

Session 2: Sustaining a Living River

Respecting and protecting the ecological lifeline of the Southwest is a formidable challenge given that existing laws and policies are largely designed to divert water out of the river and consumptively use it off-stream. This panel will highlight some emerging efforts to recover and sustain the Colorado as a living river. (Moderator: Daniel Anderson, Getches-Wilkinson Center)

10:15–10:40 **Enhancing Instream Flows: The Shoshone Powerplant Case**
Amy Moyer, Colorado River Water Conservation District

10:40–11:05 **Acknowledging the Rights of the River: The CRIT Approach**
John Bezdek, Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Attorney

11:05–11:30 **Rebirth of Glen Canyon**
Zak Podmore, Author

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

11:30–12:00 **Audience Participation**

12:00–1:00 **Lunch**

Session 3: Living with Less on Farms and Ranches

Irrigated agriculture is the largest water use in the basin, and is where most of the current and projected curtailments are aimed. Although there have been some notable innovations already, more will be required to balance the basin's water budget. This panel will highlight lessons learned from farms and ranches where adapting to less water is already underway. (Moderator: Roger Fragua, Flower Hill Institute)

1:00–1:20 **Innovations in Irrigated Agriculture**
Tina Shields, Imperial Irrigation District

1:20–1:40 **A Legacy of Adaptation**
David DeJong, Gila River Indian Community

1:40–2:00 **Upstream of the Big Reservoirs: Adapting to a Changing
(and mostly Declining) Hydrograph**
Scott Campbell, The Freshwater Trust

2:00–2:25 **Audience Participation**

2:25–2:50 **Afternoon Break**

Session 4. Designing Water Conservation Programs for the Future

Large-scale water conservation is essential to future management of the Colorado River. However, these efforts raise a host of legal, political and administrative challenges. This panel will reflect on lessons learned in prior conservation efforts, and identify suggestions for the design of more comprehensive and effective future programs. (Moderator: Mark Squillace, Colorado Law School)

2:50–3:10 **Improving the Design and Role of Assigned Water**
Kathryn Sorensen, Kyl Center for Water Policy, Arizona State University

3:10–3:30 **Crafting an Upper Basin Conservation Program**
Anne Castle, Getches-Wilkson Center

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

3:30–3:50 **Opportunities for Including Tribal Water in New Programs**
Celene Hawkins, The Nature Conservancy

3:50–4:15 **Audience Participation**

Session 5: Status of the Post-2026 Guidelines

The process of developing the post-2026 operating guidelines remains an ongoing challenge. The basin's four sets of sovereigns—including federal and state governments, Tribal nations, and Mexico—along with multiple stakeholders have discussed a range of options to share water shortages, conserve water, and coordinate operations of Lake Powell/Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead/Hoover Dam. This series of panels will provide an update on the process of developing post-2026 guidelines, review the options under consideration, and reflect on the potential alternatives to a negotiated solution. (Moderator: Chris Winter, Getches-Wilkinson Center)

4:15–4:35 **The Evolving Federal Role**
Scott J Cameron, Acting Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation

4:35–5:00 **Audience Participation**

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

7:30–8:00 **Registration Opens and Light Breakfast**

8:00–8:10 **Morning Announcements**

Session 5: Status of the Post-2026 Guidelines, continued
(Moderator: Chris Winter, Getches-Wilkinson Center)

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

- 8:10–8:40** **A Conversation with State Principals**
Carlos A. de la Parra, Centro Luken
- 8:40–9:30** **Update from (and a Conversation with) the State Principals**
Becky Mitchell (Colorado) and John Entsminger (Nevada)
- 9:30–10:00** **Audience Participation**
- 10:00–10:30** **Morning Break**
- 10:30–11:30** **Tribal Perspectives**
(Moderator: Jay Weiner, Quechan Indian Tribe Attorney)
Chairwoman Amelia Flores, Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT)
Governor Stephen Roe Lewis, Gila River Indian Community (GRIC)
Chairman Selwyn Whiteskunk, Ute Mountain Ute
- 11:30–12:00** **Audience Participation**
- 12:00–1:00** **Lunch**

Session 6: Learning from the Process: How do we Do Better in the Future?

As substantive negotiations over reservoir operations and conservation programs have languished, it's worthwhile to think about what this says about the processes and traditions being relied upon to identify the needed solutions. This panel will examine recent efforts to improve inclusivity, and proposals for making problem-solving more proactive, transparent, and holistic. (Moderator: Jason Robison, University of Wyoming)

- 1:00–2:30** **Panelist Q&A (led by the moderator)**
John Berggren, Western Resource Advocates
Daryl Vigil, Water & Tribes Initiative
Samantha Barncastle, Family Farm Alliance
James Eklund, Taft Law
- 2:30–3:00** **Audience Participation**
- 3:00** **Closing Comments and Adjourn**

Participate in the Dialogue

UCB Guest Wireless

To register for CU Guest Wi-Fi credentials:

1. Open your device's Wi-Fi networks and select **CU Guest**.
2. On the CU Guest login page, click **Register for CU Guest**.
3. On the registration page, enter your contact information, accept the terms of service, and click **Register**.
4. A confirmation page will indicate that your guest Wi-Fi credentials were sent to the email account you provided.
5. Check your email for a new message from CU Boulder Campus Wi-Fi (wifi_noreply@colorado.edu) with your temporary guest Wi-Fi credentials.

Slido

We will be utilizing Slido to manage questions during our facilitated discussions. This online platform will be used for both remote and in person attendees. To submit questions during the conference, follow these steps:

1. Go to *Slido.com* on a phone or computer.
2. Type in Event Code: 2184424
OR scan this QR Code.
3. Go to Q&A.
4. Write questions/share comments.
5. Up vote the questions/comments you like.



See the Speakers' Photos & Bios



About the Event Organizers



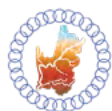
Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment

GWC advances the truly sustainable management and conservation of natural resources, with a focus on the American West, by:

- Influencing natural resources law and policy, including issues of water, land, climate change, and the rights of Tribes and Indigenous Peoples; and
- Educating, inspiring and mentoring the next generation of committed lawyers and advocates devoted to justice and equity.

The name comes from the contributions of two iconic figures in the law school's environmental law history, David Getches and Charles Wilkinson.

www.colorado.edu/center/gwc/



Water & Tribes Initiative
Colorado River Basin

Water & Tribes Initiative

The Water & Tribes Initiative | Colorado River Basin (WTI) is a collaborative partnership designed to enhance tribal capacity and Tribal engagement in policy and governance. Over the past ten years, it has emerged as a trusted facilitator and connector, bringing together Tribal and other leaders in the Colorado River Basin to build relationships, exchange information, and support collaborative action. WTI is guided by a broad-based Leadership Team that includes representatives from Tribes, states, irrigated agriculture, conservation groups, university experts, and others. WTI convenes two basinwide gatherings every year, including this conference. The basinwide gatherings are supported by nearly 40 partners (see their logos on the back of this program).

www.waterandtribes.org

About the Event Organizers



Colorado **Law**
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

University of Colorado Law School

Established in 1892, the University of Colorado Law School is one of the top public law schools in the United States. Colorado Law School's diverse student body is selected from among the statistically best applicants from every corner of the nation representing over 100 undergraduate institutions, and its highly published faculty is dedicated to interacting with students both inside and outside the classroom. The school's state-of-the-art green building is located at the base of the Rocky Mountains in beautiful Boulder, Colorado. With about 500 students and a low student to faculty ratio, Colorado Law School is a thriving academic community where the study of law is embraced to create leaders who recognize the civic responsibilities essential to the legal profession.

<https://www.colorado.edu/law/>



Conference Partners



Water & Tribes Initiative Partners

