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30-Year Training Tradition Remains a Valuable Resource for Special Districts

The annual SDA Spring Regional Workshops are one of the key ways that SDA accomplishes its mission of “providing educational opportunities for special district elected officials, employees, and advisors to assist in the efficient and effective operation of special districts.” Whether you’re a new Board Member or Manager or a seasoned professional who has made working for special districts your career, the workshops provide new and valuable information for everyone. There is a focus on newly elected Board members, but even those who have been in their roles for years will benefit from attending these trainings!

The workshops have been offered to SDA members for over 30 years. Even though the technology has changed dramatically during that time, the heart and soul of the workshop has remained the same. In the beginning, information about the meetings used to be mailed out, and presentations were often put on a large flip chart that sat prominently on a tri-pod at the front of the room. Today we are able to post the meeting information on our website and send details and reminders by email. In addition, every year the Board Member Manual is updated and given to each workshop attendee along with a comprehensive outline of the material that is presented at the workshop. As a sign of the times, an electronic version of the Board Member Manual is also posted on the SDA website for downloading at any time.

Jim Collins of Collins Cockrel & Cole, and a founder of SDA, has been a driving force of the workshops since the beginning. “Over the years, the team has been able to bring more and more real-life situations and examples to the attendees that are both interesting and palatable,” he explains. Mr. Collins receives assistance from others in his firm in creating the curriculum for the workshops, and all their work is done pro-bono.

In the beginning, Mr. Collins remembers doing only three to four workshops. For comparison, due to the popularity of these sessions and the ever-increasing interest from members across the state, nine venues for workshops are scheduled for this year!

Evan Goulding, former Executive Director of SDA, was directly involved with the workshops for over 24 years. He explained that staff was always looking at ways of making the workshops relevant. Some years other professional groups, such as audit firms and CPAs, were added to the agenda as a second half of the day to complement the topics that had been discussed in the Board training. Mr. Goulding emphasized that the goal was to establish “consistency in the understanding of Board member responsibilities.”

Today, the same holds true. Mr. Collins and members of his firm, in collaboration with SDA staff, review the questions they’ve received throughout the year to assemble the topics for the workshops. This process ensures that the issues discussed are relevant and pertinent to the everyday

CJ Weaver from Durango Fire Protection District said it best. “You can never learn too much, and you can never know too much.”
Managing a district or serving on the Board of a district is a very complex and challenging job. Bill Farrell from the Board of Prospect Recreation and Park District said, “At the beginning of my 15 year career it was like drinking water out of a fire-hose.” He initially attended the SDA Annual Conference, but it wasn’t until later that he started attending the Regional Workshops. “The presenters really know their stuff, and I was very impressed by the content and how efficiently the workshops were run. In the beginning, I didn’t know what I didn’t know, and I found that I was able to even learn from the questions that were asked.”

According to Chief Don Lombardi from West Metro Fire, “The Regional Workshops have been exceptional in providing knowledge and training that help me with what I do every day. They are in a format that is easy to understand, and they apply lessons learned in a timely and beneficial way. The West Metro Fire Board is very well educated and professional, and they too have benefitted greatly from the workshops.”

The Regional Workshops are not just a Front Range training; they also draw large crowds from the Central, South, and West Slope regions of the state. “The content of information presented is very pertinent to us as a fire district. The workshops provide invaluable legal information to a district that is on a constrained budget,” says Schelly Olson from Grand Fire Protection District in Granby. She goes on to say that many of her Board members are unable to take three days to attend the SDA Annual Conference, so the Regional Workshops provide great training for them that they would otherwise not receive.

CJ Weaver from Durango Fire Protection District has also found the workshops very beneficial. She reports, “The topics of the workshops are always innovative and relevant to our day-to-day challenges. The attendance at the workshops is always good and draws people from the Four Corners region of the state as well as other professionals from the community.” Ms. Weaver emphasized that “the Board is the Fire Chief’s boss, and it is important for them to be educated about their fiduciary responsibilities.”

Another benefit of the workshops is the chance to meet and visit with other district members. “The opportunity to network is huge and is an opportunity we wouldn’t normally have. We have shared election expenses with other districts we met through the workshops which ended up saving both districts money,” stated Ms. Olson. She added that “putting a face to a name is invaluable.”

Mike Morgan from the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (who formerly served as Chief of Colorado River Fire Rescue) and Chief Lombardi both also value the networking opportunities that are provided by attending the workshops. SDA is always looking at ways to enhance our members’ roles as elected officials and employees, and we are proud of the role the Regional Workshops plays in that goal. Please make plans to join us this year and find out how valuable this training can be. We look forward to seeing you there!
Are you a newly elected Board Member or District Employee learning the ropes? Are you a seasoned Board Member or District Employee who’s seen it all but would like a refresher course? If you answered “yes” to either of these, then make plans now to join us at the 2016 SDA Regional Workshops!

Throughout the month of June, SDA will be joining the law firm of Collins Cockrell & Cole in traveling the state to host these instructive and enlightening workshops. We will cover all the essential aspects of boardmanship, and there will be plenty of time to answer any questions you may have, big or small. There will be something for everyone, whether you have been with your district for five months or five years!

This information-packed program will cover important topics such as:

- District powers
- Board duties and roles
- Open meetings and public records
- Conflicts of interests
- Notice of meetings and agendas
- Contracts
- TABOR and budgets
- ADA
- And much more, including a legislative update!

This is just the beginning of the valuable material that will be reviewed! You definitely won’t want to miss this training so sign up today. Registration is quick and easy; just head to the SDA website at www.sdaco.org. Cost for each workshop is $30 for members and $55 for non-members. Plus, with your registration you will receive a coupon code to receive $30 off your SDA Annual Conference registration fee. And don’t forget, you will also receive the new edition of the SDA Board Member Manual!

All workshops will include a light breakfast at 8:00 am followed by the program which will begin at 8:30 am and run until 12:00 pm.

Register now, and we will see you there!

### Denver
- **Thursday, June 9**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- South Metro Fire Rescue
- 9195 East Mineral Avenue
- Centennial (80112)

### Fountain
- **Monday, June 13**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- City Hall Council Chambers
- 116 South Main Street
- Fountain (80817)

### Durango
- **Tuesday, June 14**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Elks Lodge Ballroom
- 901 East 2nd Avenue
- Durango (81301)

### Grand Junction
- **Wednesday, June 15**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Mesa County Central Library
- Community Room
- 443 North 6th Street
- Grand Junction (81501)

### Vail
- **Thursday, June 16**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Top of the Lionshead Parking Structure
- Grand View Room
- 395 East Lionshead Circle
- Vail (81657)

### Granby
- **Friday, June 17**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Grand Fire Protection District
- 60500 US Highway 40
- Granby (80446)

### Windsor
- **Monday, June 20**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Windsor Severance Fire Rescue
- 100 7th Street
- Windsor (80550)

### Lafayette
- **Tuesday, June 21**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Lafayette Public Library
- 775 West Baseline Road
- Lafayette (80026)

### Golden
- **Thursday, June 23**
- **8:30 am-12:00 pm**
- Mount Vernon Country Club
- Canyon Room
- 24933 Clubhouse Circle
- Golden (80401)
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The Election is Over...
Now What?

Editor’s Note: SDA would like to thank Jennifer Gruber Tanaka from White Bear Ankele Tanaka & Waldron for presenting this very educational webinar, much of which is reflected in the bullet points below.

Many things come to mind the day after the election. Some may view this as a time of relief, and some may see anxiety on the horizon as they navigate the next steps.

SDA held an informative webinar last month about the procedures after the election has been held. We encourage you to review this material by going to SDA’s website at www.sdaco.org and clicking on the “Events” tab at the top of the screen. From there please click on “Webinars”, and you will see a link to view the recorded presentation (the other past recordings will be listed as well).

Below are some helpful issues that were covered in the webinar and are important to remember as you wrap-up your election.

Counting of Ballots

» Counting may begin 15 days before the election and continue until complete (§1-13.5-1107, C.R.S.)
» The election official in charge is to take all precautions necessary to protect the secrecy of the procedures
» No information concerning the count is to be released by officials or Watchers prior to 7:00 pm on Election Day
» Only Election Judges and Watchers may be in the room (§1-13.5-609(3), C.R.S.)

◊ DEO and others not permitted in room

Election Judges’ Abstract of Votes

Election Judges are required to make an abstract of the count of votes containing:

» Names of the offices
» Names of the candidates
» Any ballot issues or ballot questions voted upon
» Number of votes counted for and against each candidate or ballot measure

The form will be provided to the Election Judges by the DEO. Immediately upon completion of the count, the abstract must be posted in a conspicuous place that can be seen from the outside of the polling place. It may be removed at any time 48 hours after the polls close.

The abstract also contains the results of the election (§1-13.5-615, C.R.S.).

» When originally issued after the counting of the ballots on Election Day, the abstract may not contain additional votes to be counted for UOCAVA voters (Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act)

» UOCAVA ballots are considered valid and are to be counted if they are received by the close of business on the 8th day after the election (§1-8.3-113(2), C.R.S.)
» If UOCAVA ballots are sent to voters but are not returned by the time ballots are counted on Election Day and then later the UOCAVA ballots are returned by the deadline, Election Judges will need to update the abstract to add the additional results and finalize the abstract
» If fewer than ten UOCAVA ballots are sent and not returned by Election Day, Election Judges are to hold ten previously received ballots to be counted with UOCAVA ballots when received to maintain secrecy

Canvassing of Returns

» A Canvass Board is appointed by the DEO at least 15 days before the election

◊ Requirements for members of the Canvass Board are set forth in §1-13.5-1301, C.R.S.
> At least one member of the District’s Board of Directors and one eligible elector not on the Board of Directors must serve on the Canvass Board
◊ Canvass Board includes DEO and appointed members
◊ There is no maximum number of members for the Canvass Board

» Canvass Board members must take oath before they commence their duties (§1-10-201(5), C.R.S.)

No later than the 14th day after the election (17th day if a coordinated election), the Canvass Board makes statements from the Election Judges’ Official Abstract of Votes and issues Statement and Certificates of Election Results (§1-13.5-1305(1), C.R.S.)

◊ UOCAVA ballots are to be counted if they are received by close of business on the 8th day after the election (§1-8.3-113(2), C.R.S.)
◊ If UOCAVA ballots have been issued, it is recommended that you schedule the Canvass Board to meet after the 8th day following the election

Statement and Certificate of Election Results (§1-13.5-1305(1), C.R.S.)

» Issued by the Canvass Board
» Statement contains the following:
◊ Names of the candidates
◊ Any ballot issue or ballot question
◊ The number of votes given to each

Continued on page 9
Spencer Fane is the law firm where your leaders work with our leaders. With over 50 years of special district experience in Colorado, we can handle all of your district’s legal needs. Advancing the interests of your district is our priority.
Canvass Board members certify the statement to be correct and subscribe their names thereto. The Canvass Board then determines which persons have been duly elected by the highest number of votes and shall endorse and subscribe on such statement a certificate of their determination.

And don’t forget the Certificate of Persons Elected needs to be sent to:

- Each candidate declared elected
- Division of Local Government (DLG) pursuant to (§ 1-13.5-1305(2), C.R.S.).

**Finally...Oath(s) of Office and Bond**

- Oath must be taken within 30 days after the election date (not the date of the cancellation) (§32-1-901(1), C.R.S.)
- If not taken within 30 days, the position is vacated (§32-1-901(3), C.R.S.)
- Oath may be administered by either:
  - County Clerk and Recorder
  - Chairman of the Board
  - Clerk of the Court; or
  - Notary public
- Individual, schedule, or blanket surety bond in amount not less than $1,000 must be filed with the oath
- The oath and bond are filed with the Clerk of the Court and DLG
- The formal Certificate of Election is provided to candidates by the DEO
  - Provided after oath and bond are filed (§1-11-103, C.R.S.)
  - This is also known as a “wall certificate”

**Debt/TABOR Post-Election Requirements**

- After Abstract of Votes
  - DEO posts certificate of votes cast for and against each ballot issue and question for no less than ten days following completion of abstract for public inspection
- 30 Day Filings
  - Certificate of Election Results to DLG (§1-11-103(3), §32-1-104(3), C.R.S.)
  - Certificate of Election Results to Board of Directors of District and Petition Representatives of a ballot issue or question (§1-11-103(2), C.R.S.)

- DLG-32 to be recorded with County Clerk and Recorder (§32-1-1604, C.R.S.)
- Copy to DLG
- Fair Campaign Practices Act Disclosure, if applicable (§1-45-108, C.R.S.)

**Election Records Retention and Destruction**

- Unless an election is contested or there is litigation, ballots are required to be maintained in a sealed box in the DEO’s custody until 25 months after the election at which the ballots were cast (§1-13.5-616(1), C.R.S.)
- DEO may then open the box and destroy the ballots by fire, shredding, burial, or other approved method
- All other official election records and forms are required to be preserved for at least six months after the date the polls close (§1-13.5-616(2), C.R.S.)
- Certain election records are required to be permanently maintained pursuant to Colorado Special District Records Retention Schedule (e.g. Resolution Calling Election, Notice of Cancellation, and Certified Statement of Election Results)

**Resources**

There are many resources for information on these and other election topics, including:

- Special District Association (www.sdaco.org)
- Division of Local Government
  - Election Resources (www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/special-district-elections)
  - Forms (www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/special-district-election-forms)
- Colorado Secretary of State (www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/main.html)
  - Election Rules (www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/rule_making/CurrentRules/8CCR1505-1Elections.html)
  - Help Center (www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/info_center/contact.html)

As always, please also feel free to call your legal counsel or the SDA office at 303-863-1733 with any questions you may have.
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You’ve Won
Your Election and Now You’re a Special District Board Member—
What Are Your Next Steps?

So, you’ve been elected or appointed to the Board of Directors of a Colorado special district. Congratulations! While your district is busy attending to post-election requirements (see page 7 for more information), you may be asking yourself what you need to do next.

There are many resources available to help get you up to speed, beginning with the SDA website at www.sdaco.org. In order to have full access to all the information that is available for members, you will need to create an SDA user account. This can be done quickly and easily with the following steps:

1. Go to www.sdaco.org
2. On the tabs that run along the top of the home page, click on “Login” which is the furthest on the right
3. Next, click on “Create new account”
4. Create a username and password for yourself (not for the district as this is your personal account) and fill in the required fields. Write down your username and password for future reference
5. Click “Create new account” at the bottom of the screen
6. And finally, to connect your new account to your district, which will allow you full access to the website, call SDA at 303-863-1733.

Once you are logged in, you will have access to a wide variety of material and resources, including the Board Member Manual. This manual is a very valuable tool for learning the statutory responsibilities of Board members, and it can easily be downloaded for reference at any time.

The SDA website also includes a Frequently Asked Questions section that covers topics that range from executive sessions and attendance at Board meetings to audits and transparency notices. The Board Member Manual and FAQs can both be accessed under the “Resources” tab at the top of the home page of the SDA website.

On the SDA website you can also view previously recorded webinars that cover topics such as CORA policies for special districts, basics of public fund investments in Colorado, and the top ten policies a special district should adopt, just to name a few. These webinars can be accessed by clicking on the “Events” tab and then the “Webinars” tab.

The Division of Local Government, which is within the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, also provides a multitude of helpful information for local governments. Their website at www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/division-local-government contains links to resources for issues such as special district administration, local government budgeting and finance, and special district elections, among many others.

SDA also offers a variety of training for new and seasoned Board members alike. Don’t miss the Regional Workshops in June which will cover all the essential aspects of boardmanship (see page 5 for more information). Throughout the year SDA also holds webinars and Lunch and Learns on many topics that you may encounter in your role as a Board member. The webinars are complimentary, and allow you the opportunity to listen from the comfort of your home or office. The Lunch and Learns are held in person, and they provide a small group setting to hear from experts in person. Information on all upcoming trainings can be found on the SDA website.

You will also want to be sure to attend the SDA Annual Conference, September 21-23 in Keystone, for three days of valuable breakout sessions, keynote speakers, and networking opportunities with other special district Board members, managers, and professionals (close to 1,000 attendees!).

In addition, there are some basic duties you should be familiar with to help you fulfill your important responsibilities and serve as an effective Board member.

Duty #1 – Know the Documents and Law
Know the documents that govern your special district. They include the service plan for the district, any bylaws adopted by the Board, and any rules and regulations.

Special districts are governed by state statute. Most member districts of SDA are special districts formed pursuant to the provisions of Title 32, Article 1 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. Those statutes can be accessed online at www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/colorado/

While no one expects you to become an expert in the state statutes in order to serve on the Board, it is important to bear in mind that because special districts are a form of local government, certain restrictions apply to the district and to you as a Board member.
Don’t Miss the 2016 Legislative Update Webinar!

Want to learn more about what happened during the 2016 Legislative Session that will affect your district? Join us on Wednesday, May 18 at 2:00 pm for this informative legislative update webinar (we’ll summarize 120 days in 60 minutes or less!). SDA’s Lobbying Team of Michael Valdez, Evan Goulding, and Mary Kay Hogan, along with SDA Executive Director Ann Terry, will provide an overview of the 2016 Legislative Session, including the new laws that have been established that are the most pertinent to special districts. District Managers and Board Members alike will benefit from this valuable information which will highlight ways in which special districts will be affected by the new legislation. You can also get the inside scoop on what is on the horizon for the 2017 Legislative Session.

Visit www.sdaco.org to register today for this complimentary webinar!

Board member, including TABOR, open meetings, public records, local government budgeting and auditing laws, and governmental immunity. Consult qualified legal counsel when necessary to ensure compliance. In addition, the SDA Board Member Manual is a wonderful resource which explains many of the laws that special districts must live by.

The documents and laws pertinent to your district are often a key resource to Board discussion and analysis of issues.

Duty #2 – Attend Board Meetings
Plan to attend all Board meetings. This simple element is very important in discharging your duties to the district. Attendance by teleconference is permissible under state law, but don’t underestimate the intangible benefits of in-person attendance. Special meetings are also sometimes called; public notice of all meetings must be given at least 72-hours in advance. Three consecutive unexcused absences from regular meetings will result in your automatic removal from the Board.

If you are not able to attend a particular meeting, please notify the Board Chairman or district office. Proxies cannot be used, so at least three of the five directors need to be present (in-person or by telephone) in order to achieve a quorum and conduct the meeting.

Duty #3 – Be Informed
Get informed on the matters on the agenda. Participate in discussions at Board meetings, and don’t be afraid to share your experience and opinion on any issue. You must always exercise your independent judgment in the utmost good faith.

Duty #4 – Public Trust
Colorado law provides that holding public office is a public trust and you have a fiduciary duty to the district and its citizens. Always act in good faith and make sure the decisions you make are in the best interest of the district. You were elected by the citizens of the district, and you must carry out your duties for their benefit.

If you have a conflict of interest (when your private interests conflict with your public duties and actions), make sure it is disclosed in advance. The most common conflicts are financial. Special district directors are subject to the state code of ethics, so learn about how your participation on the Board may be limited if you have a conflict.

Duty #5 – Confidentiality
Most meetings of the Board are open to the public, except for executive sessions. You have a duty to keep confidential what is discussed in executive sessions. You may discuss with family members, friends, or the media only what is a matter of public record. This protects both the district and the Board.

Duty #6 – Rules of Order
Be acquainted with the rules of procedure for your Board’s meetings. A strict following of Robert’s Rules of Order is not appropriate for special district Boards because of important differences between the public arena and the Boards of private corporations. However, observing some version of parliamentary rules can make for a smoother-run meeting.

Duty #7 – Legal Reporting Requirements
The Board may delegate the responsibility for complying with the various statutory filing and reporting requirements and deadlines to the District Manager, but you should be familiar with them as well. Failure to follow certain requirements can result in the County Treasurer withholding the district’s tax revenues, or even the administrative dissolution of your district by the state.

A calendar of the various statutory reporting and filing requirements for 2016 is available in the December 2015 issue of the SDA Newsletter (available on our website) and in the SDA Board Member Manual.

SDA also recommends that you be sure to read the SDA Newsletter every month for important and interesting information that will help you guide your district.

Duty #8 – Compensation and Reimbursements
By law, special district directors may be compensated for their service as a director up to $1,600 per year, not to exceed $100 per meeting attended. Reimbursement of actual expenses for directors is not considered as compensation. Please keep good records of any out-of-pocket expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of your duties, and spend public monies wisely.

Duty #9 – Manage, Don’t Micromanage
Your job as a Board member is to set policy, approve the budget, and guide the overall direction of the district. Don’t get involved in the day-to-day operations of the district. Hire a skilled and competent District Manager and hold him/her responsible for getting it done. The best Board-staff relationships are found when the Board is clear (from the start) about its expectations and gives the manager regular and productive feedback. Good communication is key.

Duty #10 – Enjoy your time
We know that serving on a Board can sometimes feel like a thankless job, but please remember that the citizens have confidence in you as shown by their vote. Enjoy your time on the Board and be assured of the gratitude of your district and SDA for your willingness to serve.
It was 1966 when the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) was created, at the recommendation of Governor John Love’s Local Affairs Study Commission. The call for a commission came at a time of population growth, mostly along the Front Range, and people living in rural areas were starting to feel that they had little power or voice in the state government.

About 75 civic leaders came together in the Commission to explore concerns and trends for local governments, including special districts. At the time, no one was even sure how many special districts there were in Colorado. Estimates ranged from 575 to 625; today there are more than 2,670 special districts across the state.

The Creation of DOLA
A number of legislative recommendations were proposed by the Commission, dealing with such issues as community development, best practices, consolidation of services, and the balance between cities and suburbs.

The Commission also recommended that DOLA be created to:

» Provide technical assistance and information to local governments on available federal and state programs and act as a liaison with other state agencies concerned with local governments
» Be a source of information to the governor and legislature on local government needs and problems
» Perform research on local government issues

Eight Regional Managers
Today, DOLA remains focused on the core recommendations dating from 1966. Many of the issues it helps communities with are the same, although more complex.

The department has eight regional managers who directly support communities with a wide range of services and assistance to help strengthen the capacity of special districts, cities, and counties across the state.

In addition, DOLA provides workshops, classes, and assistance with elections and filings for special districts, which as political subdivisions of the state are required to make financial and other filings each year. DOLA also works closely with SDA and the other local government associations, including Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) and the Colorado Municipal League (CML).

Focus on Resiliency in 2016
A major area of focus this year will be educating local governments on best practices in planning for resiliency and for financial stability when revenues are disrupted.

DOLA has just released a new guide, Planning for Hazards: Land Use Solutions for Colorado, to help communities prepare for and mitigate multiple hazards by integrating resilience and hazard-mitigation principles into their plans, codes, and standards for land use and the built environment. The guide and additional helpful materials may be found at a new website, www.planningforhazards.com.

Information about resiliency best practices will be offered to SDA, CCI, and CML as well as in budget workshops DOLA will hold throughout the state.

Future Direction
Looking ahead, DOLA’s Executive Director Irv Halter says that DOLA will remain focused on its core missions.

He adds that in this 50th year, “We are taking a moment to reflect on all that DOLA has achieved, the relationships we have made, and work that has been accomplished since the creation of this agency. We wish to thank all of the partners, agencies, and local governments for their unwavering support and dedicated collaboration.”

Counts to Honor DOLA
Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) will honor DOLA at its summer conference in Steamboat Springs (June 6-8, 2016). SDA, who works closely with CCI on a number of local government issues, will join CCI at the conference to help salute DOLA’s 50 years of service to counties, special districts, and the citizens of Colorado.

The theme of this year’s CCI conference is “Navigating the Issues Facing Colorado Counties.” For more information, visit www.ccionline.org.

Human Resources Trends Study Coming
SDA is proud to announce that we have partnered with Metropolitan State University of Denver to conduct a human resources trends study. The goal of this study is to provide our members key information about workforce changes in the next ten years. This data will be valuable for Board members and management staff for strategic planning, revamping job descriptions, and preparing for what will be needed in the future. The study will take place over the summer, with the results being presented at the SDA Annual Conference in September.

Stay tuned for additional details as we begin this process!
A Day in the Life of the Alamosa Mosquito Control District

By Susan M. Thornton

5:30 a.m. It’s 5:30 a.m. on a summer morning, and while others may still be in bed, the men and women of the Alamosa Mosquito Control District are already out in the field, picking up 22 traps that use carbon dioxide to attract adult mosquitoes, and bringing the traps back to the District’s laboratory.

There, two lab technicians count the mosquitoes in each trap and record them by species (there are 12 different mosquito species in Colorado). The technicians pay particular attention to culex tarsalis, the most common species of mosquitoes in the region, and the primary carrier of the West Nile virus. They also test in-house for West Nile Virus using a system called the Rapid Analyte Measurement Platform, which has an accuracy of more than 90 percent.

8:00 a.m. By 8:00 a.m., three crews of six seasonal workers known as “larvaeiciders” are out in the field on all-terrain vehicles and amphibious machines, spraying wet breeding areas to eradicate mosquito larvae. The goal is to eliminate the larvae before the females can fly, which is when they can bite and spread disease. (Males don’t bite; they feed on nectar.)

12:00 p.m. By noon, District Manager Teyler Hurst has the lab results. He explains that because the District has been setting the traps in the same location since 2002, he has a good historical reference to compare mosquito populations this year with previous years. “I will go over a map to set priorities [for spraying],” he says, adding, “Everything we do is very data-driven. We spray where the mosquito populations dictate.”

Dawn to Dusk The District owns a plane that sprays for larvae in rural areas in the morning, then sprays for adult mosquitoes from 7:30 p.m. until dusk. Hurst says that in about 30 to 40 minutes, the plane can cover ten square miles.

7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. In addition, in Alamosa itself, from 7:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m., other crews are using two to three trucks to spread chemicals by “fogging” for adult mosquitoes.

Focus on Larvae

Hurst says 80 percent of the District’s annual operating budget of $360,000 is spent on attempting to eliminate mosquitoes in larval form, with the other 20 percent devoted to eradicating the adult insect. At the larval stage, the cost of treatment is less and the chemicals used are more environmentally friendly, according to Hurst. But given the mosquitoes’ life cycle (it can be as quick as three days from the laying of larvae to adulthood in the summer, he says), eradi-
The District owns a plane that sprays for mosquito larvae in rural areas in the morning, then sprays for adult mosquitoes from 7:30 p.m. until dusk.

The mosquito is a worthy enemy for mosquito control districts, having survived as a species for at least 46 million years. A mosquito found preserved in shale rock—with blood detected in its abdomen—was found in 2013 in northwestern Montana. *Nature*, the International Weekly Journal of Science
cating the larvae is an ongoing challenge.
A female can lay as many as 300 eggs in water as small as a cow’s hoof-print, he says. Much of the area around the town of Alamosa is irrigated agriculture, with flooded fields and lots of places for mosquitoes to breed. In addition, natural grasses and hay grow in the area, and if they get too tall, spraying from the airplane can’t reach the water where mosquitoes breed.

**Quality of Life a Goal**
The District’s work is important to the quality of life in the region. Hurst says, “Oldtimers tell stories of having to run from the house to the truck with their faces covered. Mosquitoes would be in their eyes and noses. They’d be inhaling mosquitoes, it was so bad. They say the mosquitoes could almost carry you away.”

Hurst says his goal and the goal of his crew is to reduce mosquitoes to “let people enjoy a barbecue in the back yard, play at the park, or enjoy a softball game.”

The District, formed in 1965, has a five-member elected Board. This year the Board election was cancelled because there were no challengers to the incumbents.
The District’s mill levy of four mills supports Hurst and an assistant, plus 18 seasonal employees.

**The Battle against Disease**
West Nile Virus is always a concern in Colorado. It appeared in the District last year, and when asked if he expects it to show up again in 2016, Hurst says, “If we don’t expect it, it will catch us off guard.”
The mosquito that carries the Zika virus, which has been linked to microcephaly in Brazil and other southern climates, has not been seen in Colorado—at least not yet.

Some mosquito control districts in California and Florida are genetically modifying male mosquitoes to make them sterile, hoping that will cut down on populations of the more dangerous females.

**Some Opposition to Control Efforts**
“All of our staff is invested in using environmentally safe chemicals to reduce disease and improve the quality of life for residents,” Hurst says. But not everyone agrees with their approach.

Some people don’t want chemicals sprayed around their homes or fields, so the District has developed policies that shut off spraying around organic farms, areas where there are bees, and properties where people have a note from their physician saying they have a health concern.

“We follow a lot of state and federal laws about the use of chemicals,” Hurst says. “We don’t spray anywhere near the Rio Grande River, and we keep a very close eye on the Clean Water Act.”

If he’s able to educate people about the chemicals, most times their concerns are satisfied, Hurst says. But not everyone is open to listening.

Last year, he says the mosquitoes in the area were “horrendous.” “There was a lot of water and a lot of mosquitoes. Some people were upset that we weren’t spraying enough, and some people were upset that we were spraying too much. It’s sometimes easier to handle the bugs than the opposition,” he says.

**Unique Alternative Approach**
To reduce mosquitoes around the homes of people who opt-out of spraying, the District has initiated a Natural Mosquito-Repelling Plant Program. The District plants seeds for geraniums, bee balm, lemon grass, and citronella, and gives the plants away to residents at fairs and other events.

That approach has been “pretty well received,” Hurst says.

**Taking Advantage of SDA Offerings**
Hurst says that he and one of his Board members are enrolled in SDA’s Leadership Academy, and that he has been attending SDA’s Annual Conference every year since 2006.

Of the Conferences, he says, “It’s a great time, you learn a lot on topics specific to special districts, and the networking opportunities are endless.”
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A Powerful Voice for Colorado’s Water

By Susan M. Thornton

When 350 diverse water interests speak with one voice to address water issues, they wield heavy influence with policy-makers. In the case of the Colorado Water Congress (CWC), these interests include: water user organizations; cities, towns, and counties; water conservation and conservancy districts; agricultural interests; engineering and environmental consulting firms; environmental organizations; water law firms; brewing companies; insurance and financial services companies; Native American tribes; oil and gas interests; real estate; water users; water and sanitation districts; and state and federal agencies.

That’s the idea behind CWC, founded in 1958 as a nonpartisan organization to address water issues – and it’s working. Since 1981, CWC has logged the amazing average success rate of 85 percent with state water-related legislation that the organization has endorsed. It’s rare that a bill opposed by CWC is signed by a Colorado Governor.

The organization’s voice carries all the way to Washington, D.C., as well, helping to shape water legislation at the federal level.

Large Board Provides Direction
With a full-time staff of three and an annual operating budget of $1 million, CWC is led by a Board of 34 people who meet five times a year and provide financial and strategic direction for the organization. Calling itself “The Leading Voice of Colorado’s Water Community,” CWC is the largest organized water community in the state, according to Doug Kemper, Executive Director.

CWC advocates for sound water policy, conducts educational workshops and webinars, and holds networking events for its members. It also hosts two large conferences, one in the winter and one in the summer. (This year’s Summer Conference will be August 24-26 in Steamboat Springs; registration will open in May at www.cowatercongress.org.)

Tracking Federal and State Legislation
At any given time, CWC is tracking about 50 bills at the state and national level.

At the federal level, CWC is pleased to see both of Colorado’s U.S. Senators supportive of the “Good Samaritan Act,” which would reduce liability for organizations or agencies that reclaim old and abandoned mines. “We have been excited about this for a long time,” Kemper says, adding, “We need a sensible way to clean up” toxic mining waste.

When asked about CWC’s views on Colorado’s Water Plan, Kemper says the organization is very supportive of water conservation and of South Platte River storage, but is waiting to see what legislation and/or agency actions will be taken to implement the plan.

Watching Colorado’s Initiative Process
As the November election season approaches, Kemper says CWC is watching several initiatives to see if they make the November ballot.

One is Initiative 40, the “Right of Local Communities to Self-Government.” Supporters had passed initial hurdles and were out gathering signatures as this was written. Aimed at fracking, the proposal would broaden local governments’ control over such things as pipelines, which could potentially affect special districts and other CWC members.

Kemper says that CWC is also monitoring Initiative 63, the “Right to a Healthy Environment.” While everyone wants clean air, water, and land, he says, the proposal would establish a constitutional requirement that local governments “assign the highest priority” to a healthy environment.

“Every special district already has protection of the environment as a high priority,” he states. “But how would implementing this requirement impact special districts’ projects? There is a very real possibility that we would see more decisions being made by the courts rather than local and state governments” if this passes.

Surveying Public Attitudes about Water
In 2015, CWC conducted a major statewide survey of citizens’ attitudes toward water. It was so valuable, Kemper says, that CWC may do another survey this summer. “We need to stay in touch with public expectations for water,” he states.

The survey found that people support and believe in water providers, who Kemper says are seen as doing a very good job and are a trusted source of information.

“We learned that people are generally supportive of water as a public resource, but don’t understand the implication of the Public Trust Doctrine,” he says. The Doctrine, which would make public ownership of water legally superior to water rights, contracts, and private property, is an idea CWC has opposed in the past.

“People want clean water,” Kemper says, “but they don’t understand the implications of the Doctrine. When they understand the issues more fully, support for the Doctrine goes down. That’s one example of why educating people about water is so important.”

Future Directions
A 10-member committee made up of Board members is currently conducting a strategic plan for CWC. One goal is to find tools and ways to maximize collaboration among members to strengthen the organization’s influence on water policy. The plan is expected to be finalized in January of next year.

Another future direction is to diversify CWC’s revenue sources, Kemper says. CWC’s conferences are very popular with members and help to decrease reliance on members’ dues.

Still another major effort will be developing special programs such as the Water Stewardship Project, which was created to raise awareness of initiatives that could negatively affect members.

Partnering with SDA and Others to Educate
Kemper adds that because “many organizations are not set up to be public education machines,” CWC partners with SDA, the Colorado Municipal League, and others to get water messages out. Each organization has “different communication channels,” and can network with its members to provide trusted, open communication about issues, he says.

CWC’s partnership with SDA goes far beyond just providing communication platforms. Asked if he ever attends SDA’s Annual Conference, Kemper laughs and says, “I’m typically a speaker at SDA Conferences. We have a great working relationship with SDA.”
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Rangely Hospital District Provides Vital Services Despite Economic Challenges

By Susan M. Thornton

When you have to rip off a bandage, do it quickly so it will hurt less.

This is the philosophy of the Rangely Hospital District, in the northwestern corner of Colorado, which last year cut $1 million from its budget rather than be faced with a large number of employee layoffs.

A Rural Hospital's History

It was a very different time before the hospital first opened. Prior to 1946, the only physician available for medical care was one who rode his horse to Rangely from Meeker. It was a great improvement when in 1946 a physician began to see patients in the back of the local drug store.

In May of 1947, the hospital, then known as Rangely Community Hospital, opened. At that time the nursing staff sewed the window drapes, did the grocery shopping, and cooked the meals. The last nurse on duty of the shift was assigned to "stoke" the coal furnace so that the oncoming nurse wouldn't get her uniform dirty.

By 1953, the only doctor in town worked all day and spent most nights at the hospital, sleeping on a gurney in a hallway. It wasn't until 1954 that a second physician came to Rangely.

Today, the hospital has three physicians and one nurse practitioner who live in the town of approximately 2,000 people, and two physicians come to town on weekends to tend to patients.

Bond Issue to Build a New Hospital

By 2010, the District was in urgent need of a new hospital facility, and the only care facility for frail seniors in the area was in danger of being shut down if it didn't meet modern codes.

Despite the recent recession, the District went for a bond election. It was a difficult time to ask voters for a new assessment. Nick Goshe, who came to town in 2008 and became the hospital's Chief Executive Officer in 2009, says the District held 23 meetings to educate the voters about the $3.6 million bond issue, which will "sunset" when the bonds are paid off.

He says, "We went to local businesses' staff meetings. We met with teachers at the college and school district. We met with the town Board. We went to wherever we could find people during the day, in the evenings, on workdays, and on weekends."

The bond election passed in 2010 by a margin of 56 percent, and the new hospital opened in 2013. The hospital boasts 18 beds and provides a broad range of services, including EMS.

Among the most unusual provisions provided by the District is an assisted living facility with 20 beds, and the only retail pharmacy in Colorado that is owned and operated by a hospital. Goshe says that including the pharmacy was essential because until the hospital opened one, people had to drive an hour to Vernal, Utah, to get prescriptions filled.

Avoiding Mass Layoffs

About the time the new hospital opened, Goshe says, the District knew challenging times were coming. The local economy is heavily dependent on the oil and gas industry as well as on a coal mine, extraction industries that have been facing difficulties.

Goshe says the District could predict that its operating revenues would drop, so it "took steps to have the budget reflect what was happening in the community."

Rather than wait and have to do mass employee layoffs, the District "ripped the bandage off" and reduced expenses by $1 million per year. (The District has had a 5.05 mill levy revenue for operations for many years; its current operating budget is about $20 million.)

Continued on page 21
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Water Fluency Scholarship Recipients

The Colorado Foundation for Water Education’s Spring 2016 Northern Front Range Water Fluency course is well underway, and the new class is already finding themselves immersed in the world of water. Water Fluency is a popular and successful professional development program which helps decision makers understand and analyze water’s influence on local issues.

SDA is a proud partner of Water Fluency, and we had a limited number of scholarships available for special district participants. Please join us in congratulating the scholarship recipients for the spring class:

» Lorrita Vance from San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
» Susan Soloyanis from Cascade Metropolitan District #1
» Jennifer Gruber Tanaka from White Bear Ankele Tanaka & Waldron
» Randy Warren from Mulhern MRE, Inc.
» Sarah Smith Hymes from Upper Eagle Regional Water Authority
» Robert Acker from Little Thompson Water District
» Larry Brandt from Little Thompson Water District
» Zack Shelley from Big Thompson Watershed Forum

To achieve this, as employees left, many when their spouses lost jobs in the oil fields, they were not replaced. The resulting reduction in personnel costs made up the bulk of the $1 million. With approximately 150 employees, 120 of them full-time, Goshe says the hospital is one of the community’s top employers, and he is proud that the District did not have to lay off any employees.

In addition, the District combined departments without layoffs, increased employees’ deductibles on health insurance from $1,500 to $3,000, and took electronic medical records (EMRs) in-house. Goshe says his small hospital district was forced to hire outside consultants to help them set up required EMRs. That was very expensive, he says, and the District has since trained its employees to manage the records internally.

**Looking to the Future**

Asked what the future holds for the District, Goshe says, “Health care is in turmoil right now. I know it sounds terrible, but we are just trying to focus on keeping what we have now.”

Having four health providers in town is “new to us” and a positive, he says, but there are no big plans for expansion.

“We’re just trying to survive the drop in oil and gas prices,” he says. “We’re hoping the cuts we made last year will help us weather the storm. We’re just trying to keep our community whole.”

**A Great Place to Live**

Goshe, who says he finds articles in SDA News both interesting and helpful, describes Rangely as a beautiful small town that’s “off the beaten path,” far from airports and major highways.

Although there are economic challenges to running a rural hospital district, including the increase in patients covered by Medicaid, which doesn’t reimburse health providers as well as private insurance, and what Goshe describes as the “ungodly cost” of implementing EMRs, still he finds Rangely a “beautiful, great place to live and raise a family.”

As he says, “I’ll be here as long as they will have me.”

“We’re hoping the cuts we made last year will help us weather the storm. We’re just trying to keep our community whole.”

— Nick Goshe, CEO, Rangely Hospital District
Longtime West Slope Chief Appointed to Lead Division of Fire Prevention and Control

SDA is pleased to congratulate Chief Mike Morgan from Colorado River Fire Rescue on his recent appointment as the new Director of the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control in the Department of Public Safety. Chief Morgan began his new job on April 22, following the retirement of Paul Cooke who was formerly the head of the Division.

Chief Morgan has been in the fire service for 30 years, all of which have been with what is now known as Colorado River Fire Rescue. He first volunteered in 1986 with what was then the Rifle Fire Department and then became Chief in 1997. Chief Morgan helped guide the department’s subsequent merger with the Burning Mountains Fire Protection District, which established Colorado River Fire Rescue in 2012.

Chief Morgan has grown his fire department from an all-volunteer organization with 35 members and one fire station to a combination department of more than 100 members and five staffed stations (one of which is staffed by Interagency Fire and a jointly staffed Division of Fire Prevention and Control engine). He has also served in Offices of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs and as the President of the organization in 2013 and 2014.

In addition, Chief Morgan has developed courses for the National Fire Academy and has taught many classes with and for the International Association of Fire Chiefs’ Volunteer and Combination Officers Section. In 2014, that organization presented Chief Morgan with the John M. Buckman III Leadership Award. This award recognizes a Chief Officer of a volunteer or combination fire department who stands out on the local or regional level as a true professional who has demonstrated leadership, integrity, and outstanding values within the fire service.

Chief Morgan was also involved years ago with the effort to create and reorganize the Division of Fire Prevention and Control. This effort came out of a desire by supporters to streamline and consolidate state fire programs under one roof.

“Chief Morgan is an exemplary leader who will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new position,” said Ann Terry, SDA’s Executive Director. “He will be a true asset to the Division, and we are very excited for him as he begins this new chapter in his career.”

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