

SDA NEWS

MARCH 2022

Supporting Community-Based Government

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Designed by Emmett Jordan

? Ask Evan

Q • What is an Election Judge and a Watcher?
• Who are they and what can they do?

A • Judges
For every special district election, the governing body, or the DEO if authorized, shall appoint at least two Election Judges and may appoint additional Judges as deemed necessary for the conducting of the election. §1-13.5-402, C.R.S.

Election Judges must be registered to vote in Colorado and be at least 18 years of age. Judges in special district elections are appointed without regard to party affiliation. §1-13.5-401, C.R.S.

Judges may be appointed for specific tasks, such as Supply Judge, Counting Judges, and Judges at polling places. Each Election Judge is entitled to receive compensation for their services and may be paid expenses and reasonable compensation for attending Judges' training sessions, which they are expected to attend.

Compensation can be set for the various tasks and must be uniform for all Judges. The DEO may find that it is difficult to attract Judges to serve unless the compensation is at a worthwhile level. Judges must provide their social security number to the DEO.

Watchers

Each candidate, and parties that are interested in a ballot issue or ballot question, are entitled to appoint a person, who must be an eligible elector, to act on his or her behalf in every polling place in which he or she is a candidate or in which the issue or question is on the ballot.

Note: The DEO may, by lot, reduce the number of Watchers to one for and one against the ballot issue or ballot question for each location where Watchers are allowed. §1-13.5-602(1), C.R.S.

Watchers must be eligible electors, and since special district elections are nonpartisan, Watchers are not designated or appointed pursuant to po-

litical parties, as they would normally be in partisan elections. Watchers are required to take an oath, swearing or affirming that they are eligible electors; that their name has been submitted to the DEO as a Watcher for this election; and that they will not in any manner make known to anyone the result of vote counting until after the polls have closed.

Note: Neither a current candidate for Director nor any immediate family member, to the second degree, of such candidate is eligible to serve as a Watcher for that candidate. §1-13.5-602(1)(a)(1), C.R.S.

A Watcher has the right to:

- » Maintain a list of eligible electors as the names are announced by the Election Judges;
- » Witness and verify each step in the conduct of the election from prior to the opening of the polls through the completion of the count and announcement of the results;
- » Challenge ineligible electors; and
- » Assist in the correction of discrepancies. §1-13.5-602(1)(c), C.R.S.

On the other hand, Watchers may observe the procedures and the actions of the Judges, but may not:

- » Interrupt or disrupt the processing, verification, and counting of any ballots or any other stage of the election;
- » Write down any ballot numbers or any other identifying information about electors;
- » Handle the poll books; self-affirming oath and affirmation forms; ballots; mail ballot envelopes; mail-in ballot envelopes or provisional ballot envelopes; voting or counting machines; or machine components;



Evan Goulding, Consultant and former SDA Executive Director.

- » Interfere with the orderly process and conduct of any election, including issuing ballots, receiving ballots, voting, or counting of ballots;
- » Interact with election officials or Judges. Their concerns should be aired with the DEO, not Judges or other officials;
- » Watchers are not allowed to have a cellular phone, camera, recording device, laptop or tablet, or other electronic data capture device in the polling place. §1-13.5-602(3), C.R.S.

A Watcher who commits or encourages fraud; violates any of the prohibited behaviors outlined above; violates the oath that he or she has taken; is abusive or threatening toward election officials or other persons in the polling area; or are generally disruptive to the election process, may be removed by the DEO. §1-13.5-602(4), C.R.S. 🍌

Election Judge Training is Coming Soon!

Please watch your emails and our website at www.sdaco.org for more information on Election Judge Training for both mail ballot and polling place elections!



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Election Corner

From now through the May election, please look here for reminders of important dates to keep in mind for election items for the month. Below are the items to keep in mind for March. And, don't forget to watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for information on additional election training webinars and resources.

May 3, 2022 Regular Mail Ballot Election Calendar

Date	Action	Authority
3-1-22	Designated Election Official, if instructed by resolution of the Board, may cancel election if there are no more candidates, including write-in candidates, than positions to be filled, and there are no ballot issues or ballot questions, and declare the candidates elected (at the close of business on the 63rd day before the election or anytime thereafter). If the electors are to consider the election of persons to office and any ballot question or ballot issue, the governing body may by resolution withdraw the ballot question(s)/ballot issue(s) and cancel the election at any time prior to the election, if there are no more candidates, including write-in candidates, than positions to be filled. No election may be cancelled in part. Notice of cancellation of the election must be published. The Notice must be posted in the office of the Designated Election Official, and in the office of the County Clerk and Recorder. A copy of the Notice shall be filed with the Division of Local Government. Designated Election Official shall notify the candidates that the election was cancelled and that they were elected by acclamation. SPECIAL NOTE: If the election is cancelled, the term of office of the persons declared elected shall commence at the next meeting of the Board of Directors of the special district <i>following the date of the election</i>, but no later than thirty (30) days <i>following the date of the election</i> and upon the <i>signing and filing of an oath with the County Clerk and Recorder</i> and posting of a bond.	1-13.5-513(1) 1-13.5-513(3) 1-13.5-513(6) 1-13.5-112(2)
3-4-22	Certify ballot content (no later than 60 days before the election). Every ballot shall contain the names of all duly nominated candidates for the offices to be voted for at the election. The arrangement of the names shall be established by lot at any time prior to the certification of the ballot. The Designated Election Official shall notify the candidates of the time and place of the lot drawing for the ballot. The drawing shall be performed by the Designated Election Official or a designee. If any ballot question(s) or ballot issue(s) will be included on the ballot, they must follow the list of candidates.	1-13.5-511 1-13.5-902(2) 1-13.5-902(7)
3-4-22	FCPA NOTE: Each candidate or the Designated Election Official shall file with the Secretary of State a copy of such candidate's Self-Nomination and Acceptance forms or Affidavits of Intent to be a Write-In Candidate, no later than 60 days before the election. If the Self-Nomination and Acceptance form contains a statement that the candidate is familiar with the provisions of the Fair Campaign Practices Act, then no filing of a "Candidate Affidavit" under the Fair Campaign Practices Act is required. FCPA NOTE: A candidate who does not accept contributions but who expends money for campaign purposes shall not be required to form a Candidate Committee, but shall be required to file disclosure reports for the reporting periods during which the expenditures are made. FCPA NOTE: Candidate Committees shall register with the Secretary of State before accepting or making any contributions. Issue Committees shall register with the Secretary of State within 10 calendar days of accepting or making contributions or expenditures in excess of \$200 to support or oppose any ballot issue or ballot question.	1-45-108(3) 1-45-108(3.3) 1-45-110(1) Article XXVIII, Section 2(10), Colorado Constitution Secretary of State Rules 2.1, 16.1 and 16.3 of the Rules Concerning Campaign and Political Finance

Continued on page 7

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May 3, 2022 Regular Polling Place Election Calendar		
Date	Action	Authority
3-4-22	Certify ballot content (no later than 60 days before the election). Every ballot shall contain the names of all duly nominated candidates for the offices to be voted for at the election. The arrangement of the names shall be established by lot at any time prior to the certification of the ballot. The Designated Election Official shall notify the candidates of the time and place of the lot drawing for the ballot. The drawing shall be performed by the Designated Election Official or a designee. If any ballot questions will be included on the ballot, they must follow the list of candidates. Designated Election Officials of special districts with overlapping boundaries must meet, confer and, if practical, hold the elections in a manner that will permit the eligible electors in the overlapping area to vote in all of such elections at one polling place.	1-13.5-511 1-13.5-902(2) 1-13.5-902(7) 1-13.5-504(3)
3-4-22	FCPA NOTE: Each candidate or the Designated Election Official shall file with the Secretary of State a copy of such candidate's Self-Nomination and Acceptance forms or Affidavits of Intent to be a Write-In Candidate, no later than 60 days before the election. If the Self-Nomination and Acceptance form contains a statement that the candidate is familiar with the provisions of the Fair Campaign Practices Act, then no filing of a "Candidate Affidavit" under the Fair Campaign Practices Act is required. FCPA NOTE: A candidate who does not accept contributions but who expends money for campaign purposes shall not be required to form a Candidate Committee, but shall be required to file disclosure reports for the reporting periods during which the expenditures are made. FCPA NOTE: Candidate Committees shall register with the Secretary of State before accepting or making any contributions. Issue Committees shall register with the Secretary of State within 10 calendar days of accepting or making contributions or expenditures in excess of \$200 to support or oppose any ballot issue or ballot question.	1-45-108(3) 1-45-108(3.3) 1-45-110(1) Article XXVIII, Section 2(10), Colorado Con- stitution Secretary of State Rules 2.1, 16.1 and 16.3 of the Rules Concerning Campaign and Political Finance
3-18-22	Designated Election Official shall mail absentee ballots to those eligible electors who have applied and are designated as a "covered voter" under the Uniform and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) (not later than 45 days before the election).	1-13.5-618 1-8.3-103(1)(d) 1-8.3-110(1)
3-19-22	Earliest date to hold a class of instruction concerning the tasks of an election judge (not more than 45 days prior to the election).	1-13.5-408
3-24-22	Last day for the Designated Election Official to order the voter registration and property owners lists (no later than 40 days prior to election). Designated Election Official may order an initial voter registration and property owners lists be received 30 days prior to the election, with a supplemental list provided 20 days prior, or complete lists provided as of the 6 th day prior to the election	1-13.5-203(1) 1-13.5-204(1) 1-13.5-204(2)



Special District Association of Colorado
Supporting Community-Based Government

We are Back in Person!

Mark Your Calendars for After the May Elections...

SDA Annual Regional Workshops are Coming in June!

We are finalizing all of the details, but right now we are planning to once again hit the road during the month of June to bring you the ever-popular SDA Annual Regional Workshops! And this will be the perfect time right after the May elections!

These lively and educational trainings apply to all types of districts and are sure to provide a wealth of valuable information for your district. Whether you are a Board member or district employee, a seasoned veteran or brand new to your position, we will have something for everyone. Plus, this is a great way for any newly elected or appointed Board members to dive right into the special district world.

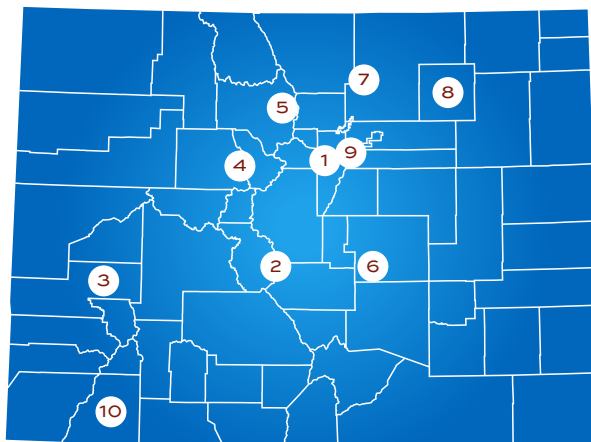
We will cover a wide variety of important topics such as open meetings, conflicts of interests, TABOR, public records, and our 2022 legislative update, just to name a few. On top of all this, every attendee will receive a copy of the 2022 SDA Board Member Manual.

This year we will be visiting 10 locations around the state, and each workshop will run for approximately half a day in the morning (the Durango workshop will run half a day beginning at midday). We are also working on the possibility of livestreaming from one of the locations so stay tuned for more on that!

We have many more details to come; watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for all the information as it becomes available. We will see you there! 🌟

Whether you are a Board member or district employee, a seasoned veteran or brand new to your position, we will have something for everyone.

- 1 Friday, June 10 (Morning)
Evergreen
- 2 Monday, June 13 (Morning)
Salida
- 3 Tuesday, June 14 (Morning)
Montrose
- 4 Wednesday, June 15 (Morning)
Avon
- 5 Thursday, June 16 (Morning)
Granby
- 6 Monday, June 20 (Morning)
Fountain
- 7 Tuesday, June 21 (Morning)
Windsor
- 8 Wednesday, June 22 (Morning)
Fort Morgan
- 9 Thursday, June 23 (Morning)
Denver
- 10 Monday, June 27 (Midday)
Durango



Why Prepare for Landscape Season Now?

Guest article by Shad Parrish from BrightView Landscape Services

With winter seemingly having just begun, some might think it odd to start focusing on your landscape. However, as the next few items will point out, now is the perfect time.

Acknowledge the Times, Count on Stability

Due to well-known circumstances, issues of supply and demand are “dynamic” to say the least. More than ever, being able to budget, plan, and secure appropriate resources (labor, equipment, materials) as early as possible are crucial. Even the most successful companies work with variables beyond their control, and the more time given, the more time we’ll have to overcome obstacles. Make decisions earlier than “normal” and shoot for stability.

Timing is Everything

Having a healthy, beautiful landscape requires setting a strong foundation in early spring:

- » Early spring weed pre-emergent to ensure seasonal long control
- » Treat insects in March and April before and right when they become active
- » Trim shrubs according to horticultural need (some when still dormant)

Irrigation in the Winter

We’re not suggesting running the sprinklers now when the temperatures are below freezing. However, we are recom-

mending taking advantage of warmer periods to temporarily activate the system to evaluate its operational effectiveness. Be sure to note necessary repairs and/or upgrades and perform the repairs where possible.

Take Advantage of the Offseason

For many landscapers, times of little snow means inactivity for their field staff. Often contractors will offer better rates on certain improvement projects that can be performed in the “off-season” to keep their employees busy.

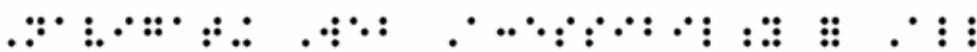
Beat the Rush

When spring arrives and planting becomes appropriate, there is a tendency to want landscape projects done immediately. The earlier you meet with your contractors, the greater the likelihood your projects will be done in the timeframe you want. Below are a few helpful tips to help achieve this:

- » Order plants and flowers now!
- » Allow contractors to work with the greenhouses and nurseries
- » Discuss flowers and plants grown specifically for a particular property or project
- » Healthier, fuller, and more colorful plants will be ready at the time of planting

Editor’s Note: Shad can be reached at shad.parrish@brightview.com if you have any additional questions.





Navigating Web Accessibility for All



In 2017, 7.08 million Americans had some form of vision loss or blindness

—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Guest article by Amanda Croskrey and Alex Terlecky from the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool (CSD Pool) and Dianne Criswell from SDA and the CSD Pool

Recent legislation from the Colorado General Assembly, House Bill 21-1110 (Strengthening protections in the Colorado statutes relating to persons with disabilities), made Colorado the first state in the nation to expressly require that the websites of “public entities,” including the state and local governments, meet certain standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities and to establish consequences for failing to do so.

On one hand, HB 21-1110 will dramatically improve the experience of Coloradans with disabilities as they navigate the websites of local governments, and on the other hand, it will make it easier for noncompliant local agencies to be sued for discrimination.¹

In this article, we are going to focus on website ADA compliance, detail the recent legislation, and provide you with a brief history of this act. We’ll also cover what you need to know in regards to implementation of these web standards.

The Facts About HB 21-1110

HB 21-1110 requires that state agencies develop and submit website accessibility plans to the Office of Information Technology (OIT) by July 1, 2022. Those submitted plans need to be implemented by July 1, 2024, meeting all

accessibility standards.

True web accessibility, according to W3C, Web Accessibility Initiative, means that “websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them.” This means that people can not only perceive, understand, and navigate the web; they can interact with it as well.²

Web accessibility should accommodate all individuals with disabilities including those with auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech, and visual impairments.

One major part of HB 21-1110 outlines the consequences for noncompliance. The result of excluding people with disabilities from receiving services or benefits is a violation of Colorado’s civil rights for persons with disabilities.

Not meeting OIT’s standards can expose public entities, including special districts, to injunctive relief, a court order requiring compliance, recovery of actual monetary damages, or a fee of \$3,500



60% of screen reader users feel that web content accessibility is getting worse.
—webAIM.org

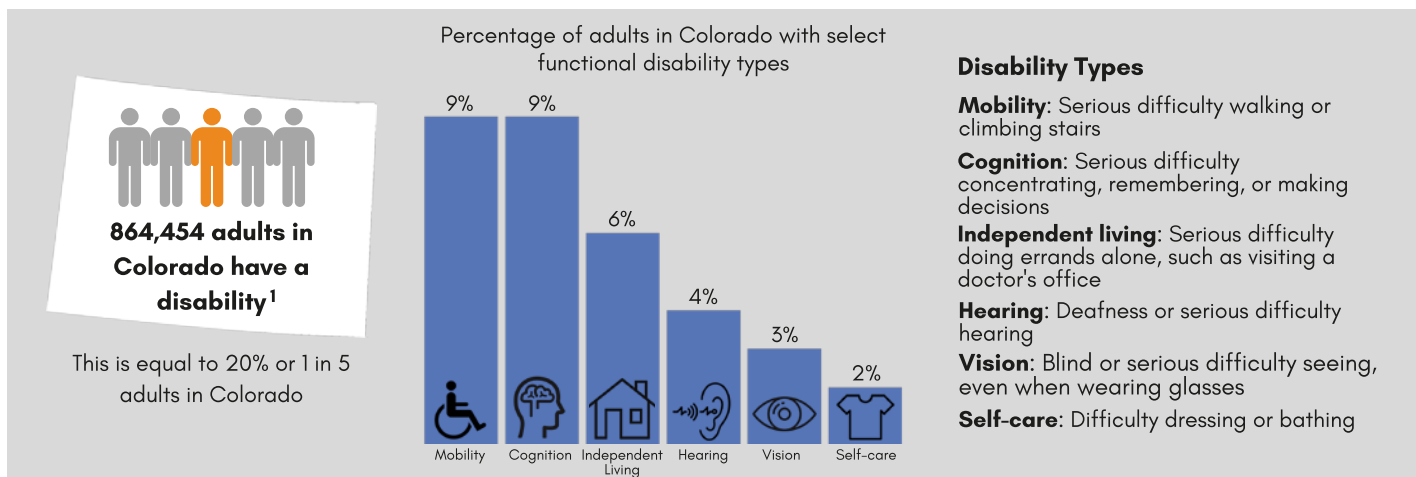
for each violation payable to the qualified individual bringing a civil suit for a violation based on his or her disability.

Persons with disabilities can bring lawsuits against public entities over web accessibility beginning July 2024.

History of the ADA

One of the most important basis of civil rights for persons with disabilities is the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which became law in 1990. The ADA prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in everyday activities, including discriminatory barriers to participating in governmental programs or services.

The Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice has a helpful publication for state and local governments on how Title II of the ADA applies to them.



98% of the world's top one million websites don't offer full accessibility.
—webAIM.org

The ADA was created before the internet took off, but shortly thereafter, experts and advocates for persons with disabilities began discussions and drafting of accessibility guidelines.

In 1998, Congress incorporated website accessibility by establishing guidelines for federal agencies and contractors.

These are sometimes referred to as Section 508 standards (incorporated into federal law by amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

While these Section 508 standards do not necessarily apply to state and local governments (they may apply to public entities receiving types of federal funding or grants), there is a growing consensus that government websites at all levels should be accessible to

71% of website visitors with disabilities will leave a website that is not accessible.
—Forbes

persons with disabilities, and individual claims filed against public and private entities have been working their way through federal courts for many years.

As a result, many businesses and governments are working to ensure that their websites are compliant with federal or state ADA laws.

It should be noted that federal guidelines for ADA web accessibility still confuse many.

For example, in the past, it has not been clear whether a business website with low traffic is required to apply ADA rules. The upside in Colorado is that HB 21-1110 will make state standards clear through agency rulemaking.

For CSD Pool Members, the best way to avoid the consequences of failing to implement HB 21-1110, even though it is not enforceable until 2024, is to consider taking the following actions:

- » Begin the process of running accessibility checks on your district's webpages;
- » Incorporate accessibility into any planned website updates;
- » Develop new content with accessibility in mind;
- » Listen to feedback from persons with disabilities;
- » Document your approaches to making your district's website accessible (keep feedback, copies of old web pages); and
- » Follow the larger trends, including OIT rulemaking.

What Does it Mean to Be Compliant?

Becoming a fully compliant website may be nearly impossible for some

websites. It is in your best interest to focus on the Level A issues that can severely limit the ability of someone with a disability to use your website.

There are four areas of focus that can help an organization or web developer build their website to comply:³

1. **Perceivable:** the website must have presentable information that anyone can perceive, regardless of disability.
2. **Operable:** the user must be able to navigate through a website by various means, regardless of disability.
3. **Understandable:** the user must be able to understand the information presented.
4. **Robust:** the user must be able to use assistive technology on the website.

How Can I Make My Website Compliant?

There are many online resources on ADA website compliance. There are websites that offer free ADA compliant checks as well as checklists to go over yourself. Below are a few basic steps to help guide you through how to build an ADA compliant website.

When beginning, assess the current status of your website. You can do this by using a checklist and going through the four areas of focus outlined above.

There are also ways to check for compliance by using an automated ADA checker. Even then, make sure to still go through and use the checklist as some automated checkers can miss some items.

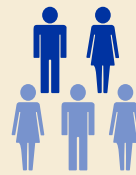
Continued on page 14

Disability and COMMUNITIES



Disability is especially common in these groups:

2 in 5 adults age 65 years and older have a disability



1 in 4 women have a disability



2 in 5 Non-Hispanic American Indians/ Alaska Natives have a disability



<https://www.cdc.gov>

In addition, it is important to read the updated laws and regulations of accessible websites. Since legislation has been constantly changing in the last couple of years, it is important to keep your website updated according to the most current ADA laws.⁴

Areas of Attention

There are four major areas to pay attention to when considering re-tooling a website to make it compliant. These include: website design and presentation; user access, control & navigation; alternatives and descriptions; and language, titles, and text.

These next few tips provide detailed technical direction for updating websites. Depending on experience and time constraints, it may be beneficial to seek outside help from a professional web designer.

Website design and presentation

This area is typically the primary consideration to whether a website is compliant or not. When working on design and presentation, make sure proper markup techniques are used, such as the cor-

rect heading tags and use of ordered and unordered lists. Auditing current websites is important, as well. Be sure to check for broken links or error pages.

User access, control & navigation

ADA-compliant websites are meant to be navigated with a keyboard alone because some individuals are unable to use a mouse.

Keyboard only users should not be able to get stuck on any part of the website and should be able to move back and forth between pages without use of a mouse.

In addition, be sure to provide users with multiple ways to access different pages on a website. A link to a sitemap is critical, as is having a search bar or navigation menu.

Alternatives and descriptions

In this category, it is important to never use images of text in place of actual text. The exceptions to this rule include the use of images for branding, logos, and charts with labels and infographics.

However, infographics and charts—as well as all images—must include de-

scriptive captions as well as alt text that is coded into the website upon upload. This allows users that use screen reader software the ability to navigate easily.

Language, titles, and text

Each page of a website is required to contain descriptive page titles that clearly explains what the page is about.

The point of this measure is for persons with disabilities to easily determine where they are on a website.

Additionally, if a website contains abbreviations or uncommon words, explanations are needed to provide understanding of the word's meaning. Also consider the use of anchor text.

When linking to a URL, do not simply say "click here." Instead, make sure to provide the content and value of what is being clicked on, such as "Our Staff" or "Programs and Services."

Final Thoughts

Having a website that is accessible for persons with disabilities under Colorado's laws is not only the right thing to do, but it also ensures that your district's website is open to everyone, which is a huge benefit to the public.

Your district can best serve your residents by avoiding costly claims or even by raising general concerns that your district does not value accessibility.

Although the steps and requirements may seem daunting at first glance, these changes are easy to make and can be done with a limited understanding of web design and coding.

With a little time and effort, your district's website can easily be updated to adhere to accessibility guidelines. 🟡

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the Autumn 2021 issue of the CSD Pool's Risk Management Review, and we would like to thank Amanda, Alex, and Dianne for allowing us to share it with all of our readers as well!

Endnotes:

¹ <https://coloradonewslines.com/2021/07/20/colorado-first-web-accessibility-government/>

² w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/

³ <https://www.washington.edu/accessibility/checklist/>

⁴ <https://orases.com/2021-ada-website-compliance-checklist/>

We Want to Hear from You...

Send Us Your Ideas for Speakers and Topics for the 2022 SDA Annual Conference!

The Call for Speakers and Topics for the 2022 SDA Annual Conference opened on **Wednesday, February 9**, and now is the perfect time to send us all your ideas!

As you are thinking about what should be included in this year's breakout sessions, here are a few things that might help get those ideas flowing:

- » What are the hot topics that districts need to know more about?
- » Are there successful projects or case studies from which others could learn?
- » Is there a general subject that you could use a refresher course on (and maybe others could, too)?
- » Are you an expert who has suggestions on important topics to present?

Whatever ideas you have, big or small, we want to hear from you!

And the best part is the process is super easy. Simply go to the SDA website at www.sdaco.org to share your suggestions for a breakout session, recommend a great speaker, or both!

The deadline to submit is the end of March so don't delay!

As always, please call our office at 303-863-1733 if you have any questions.

And don't forget to mark your calendar to join us in Keystone, September 13-15 (remember, that's Tuesday-Thursday)! 📅



Navy SEAL Commander Rorke Denver was a huge hit at the 2021 SDA Annual Conference.



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Governor Polis and Water Education Colorado Launch Water '22 Initiative to Implore Coloradans to Conserve and Protect Water Amidst Historic Drought, Fires



22 Water-Saving Tips Debuted to Help Coloradans Save 22 Gallons of Water a Day

On January 26, just less than a month after one of Colorado's most destructive fires caused in part by drought, Governor Polis and Water Education Colorado launched Water '22, a statewide, year-long initiative that implores Coloradans to take an active role in securing the state's water future.

One of the key ways Water '22 asks Coloradans to engage is by taking a pledge to engage in "22 Ways to Care for Colorado Water in 2022," which includes simple actions that can save at least 22 gallons of water per day while keeping waterways clean. This amounts to 8,000 gallons a year for every Coloradan or 48 billion gallons a year across Colorado, which will help protect and preserve the state's rivers, watersheds, and water supplies.

The Water '22 campaign was created to educate Coloradans about how the state's water is one of its most important resources and to encourage conservation and protection in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change, which has led to persistent drought conditions. Those conditions helped fuel the most damaging fire in the state's history in late December, as well as the three largest wildfires on record which burned in 2020, causing degradation to forested watersheds where 80% of Colorado's water supply originates. Increased water awareness is a fundamental step in helping Coloradans understand the risks to a sustainable water future and the need to work together innovatively to stretch scarce supplies. Some examples of how drought impacts Colorado include:

- » The Marshall Fire is considered the most destructive wildfire in Colorado history, and climate experts say drought, heavy winds, and recent warm weather created the atmosphere for the fire to flourish and that similar events will be more common in the future.
- » Spring snowmelt, the primary contributor to Colorado streamflows and water supplies, is being sapped by ultra-dry soils in the state's watersheds. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, though the statewide spring snowpack measured at 90% of average by late spring last year, streamflows were dramatically lower, registering below 30% in many of the state's stream systems.
- » Less water can be drawn from Colorado's aquifers and pulled from rivers, of which 86% is used to grow crops and raise livestock. By 2050 drought may cost agriculture \$511 million in damages annually in Colorado, according to the Colorado Cattlemen's Association.
- » Reduced snowpack and runoff in the state's rivers also impacts the state's tourism industries, including skiing and river recreation, both significant economic drivers. A 2019 study by Business for Water Stewardship found that river and water-related recreation contributes \$19 billion annually to Colorado's economy.

Continued on page 19

732,500

New Coloradans were born or moved here between 2010-2020.
2021 State population:

5.81 million

Saving

22

gallons of water per day per person

=

8,000

gallons a year for every Coloradan

=

48 billion

gallons a year across Colorado



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» More than two decades of drought has severely impacted the Colorado River, which supplies 40 million people and millions of acres of agricultural land across seven states and Mexico. Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the two largest reservoirs in the U.S., both hold Colorado River water and fell to record-low levels last summer.

“From the Western Slope to the Eastern Plains to southern Colorado, our economy depends on water,” said Colorado Governor Polis. “Together with Water Education Colorado, I’m asking everyone to conserve and protect Colorado waters for today and for future generations. Simple actions can make a big impact on our state’s most important resource.”

Water ‘22 encourages Coloradans to learn more about the state’s water, starting with knowing where their water comes from, to foster a sense of connection to the source. Then, Water ‘22 asks Coloradans to take a pledge to commit to engaging in 22 simple actions that can help conserve and protect water for future generations, resulting in savings of more than 22 gallons of water a day per person. Some examples of these actions include taking a shorter shower; operating dish and clothes washers only when they are full; fixing leaks and drips in faucets and toilets; and practicing smart outdoor watering on landscapes, such as avoiding watering during the heat of the day.

To give even more life to the campaign, Coloradans are asked to share a story or post of themselves taking one of the Water ‘22 actions and use the hashtag #Water22. Each month, five Coloradans who share their commitment to #Water22 on social media will be selected to win incredible prizes such as gift cards, tickets to events, or Water ‘22 branded gear. Statewide athletes, celebrities, and officials like Governor Polis will also share videos of themselves taking action to help promote the campaign.

“Water ‘22 is a year-long celebration of Colorado’s water, dedicated to the idea that ‘It all starts here,’ which highlights our sense of pride and responsibility as a headwaters state,” said Jayla Poppleton, Executive Director for Water Education Colorado. “Our

snowmelt flows to tens of millions of people in 18 other states and Mexico, and it’s up to us to be good stewards of this resource. This campaign is about Coloradans from all corners of the state recognizing the value of water and growing in understanding of how water connects us all through our shared reliance and appreciation. We’re encouraging more Coloradans to see themselves as water stewards who can take proactive steps in the face of drought and climate change to make sure our water can meet all of the needs of today and for future generations. We each need to do our part.”

Water ‘22 will also provide opportunities for Coloradans throughout the state to engage with the campaign through a variety of planned activities, including a statewide book club and author talks, volunteer days, film screenings, a student water awareness week in schools, a statewide watershed beer competition, on-the-ground tours, and much more. Water ‘22 will also plan activities during major events like World Water Day (March 22) and National Drinking Water Week (May 1-7) as well as call attention to milestones like the 100th anniversary of the Colorado River Compact (Nov. 24)—the fundamental agreement governing shared use of Colorado River water across the seven U.S. states that rely on the river’s diminishing flows; the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act (Dec. 2); and the release of the updated Colorado Water Plan for public comment this summer.

Coloradans can learn more about the state’s water, find events and activities, and take action to conserve and protect 22 gallons of water a day and 8,000 gallons of water a year by visiting www.water22.org and following Water Education Colorado at www.facebook.com/watereducationCO, www.instagram.com/watereducationco/ and at <https://twitter.com/WaterEdCO>.

In addition to being supported by Governor Polis, Water ‘22 has the support of numerous water-related organizations, businesses, and industry groups across the state. The Colorado Water Conservation Board is a supporting partner, and Chevron, Molson Coors Beverage Company, and Wana Brands are presenting sponsors. 🍷

—Water Education Colorado



2022 is a milestone year for water in Colorado.

Among others, it is the 100th anniversary of the Colorado River Compact;

the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act;

the 20th anniversary of Water Education Colorado;

and the year when the 2015 Colorado Water Plan will be updated to continue our long history of ensuring high quality water to support our state’s wide range of water uses and values.



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Important Updates on the Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (FAMLI)

As your district begins its budgeting and planning for the next year, please keep in mind that your district will need to take action or begin planning in late 2022 to implement (or opt-out) of the Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (FAMLI). The FAMLI Program, approved at the 2020 statewide election, generally requires employers and employees to pay payroll premiums, starting January 1, 2023, to provide up to twelve (12) weeks of paid FAMLI leave beginning January 1, 2024. Unlike the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the new Colorado FAMLI requirement applies to employers of any size with the following exceptions: (1) employers may apply to the Division of Family Medical Leave Insurance to provide leave through a private plan that meets or exceeds the requirements of FAMLI; or (2) local governments, including special districts, may decline to participate (the “Local Government Opt-Out”).

The Division of Family Medical Leave Insurance (the “Division”) now has an active website (<https://famli.colorado.gov/>) and has begun its rulemaking. At the

time of publication of this article, the Division’s Local Government Opt-Out rule was adopted on January 14, 2022. The Local Government Opt-Out rule provides direction to local government employers, including special districts, that choose to participate or decline to participate in the program. Further, for local governments that have declined, or opted out of, the FAMLI Program, the rule explains that local government employees may participate in the program voluntarily as individuals (similar to a single-payer system).

SDA participated in the Local Government Opt-Out rulemaking, and many of SDA’s concerns or requested amendments were incorporated into the adopted rule. However, the Division decided to implement the Local Government Opt-Out as a temporary action by the governing Board, to which SDA consistently and vociferously objected. Nevertheless, the Division is requiring in this rule that local government employees must renew or reassert its decision not to participate in the FAMLI Program every eight years, and that the action (likely by res-

olution) be reported to the Division six months before the effective date of the local government’s decision not to participate in the program. While this rule has been adopted, a lot more training and information is necessary in order for local government employers to implement this rule and the rest of the FAMLI program.

As far as the timeline for implementation, the Division has two more rules to issue, and those are not anticipated to be available until the spring. The Division has begun a series of webinar trainings and publishing other information. The best way for your district to get informed, besides watching for additional resources from SDA, is to sign-up for the Division’s newsletter (the link to subscribe can be found under the “Employers” section of the Division’s website).

Put the FAMLI Program in on your to-do list for later in 2022. Your district will either need to participate in the program, opt-out, or apply for a waiver for a similar benefit plan or coverage which it already provides to employees, depending on the Division’s final rules. 🍌



GOCO's 2021 Annual Report Now Available

In fiscal year 2021, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) invested \$50.9 million in 131 outdoor projects in 49 counties across Colorado. As the pandemic continued to challenge communities, GOCO was heartened to see an unprecedented number of people finding solace in outdoor spaces. GOCO funding supported partners in responding swiftly to emerging needs, while continuing long-term progress in land conservation and stewardship, recreation, and advancing equity in the outdoors. This resulted in:

- » 4,896 acres conserved
- » 11,283 acres of habitat restored
- » 29 parks and outdoor recreation areas created and improved
- » 25 trailheads created and improved
- » 278 young people employed through youth corps
- » 40 staff positions supported at 19 organizations

And much more, thanks to organizations like yours. Check out the inspiring work achieved by GOCO's partners in the 2021 annual report which is now available on the GOCO website at <https://goco.org/programs-projects/funded-projects> (then scroll down to see the annual reports). 🍷



Sacramento Creek Ranch, conserved by GOCO, photographed by Bergreen Photography, courtesy of GOCO.

Welcome New SDA Members

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