

CCA / Partners for Western Conservation Ag Water NetWORK

Mission: "Keeping Ag Water Connected with Ag Land"

Phil Brink, Consulting Coordinator



2019 Project: Watershed & Stream Management Plans - Outreach and Training to the Agricultural Community

1. Survey:

- a) Assess ag familiarity with watershed management plans
- b) Help identify water-related priorities of ag
- c) Guide outreach and training

2. Outreach: Raise awareness, understanding among ag producers

3. Training: Train ag-oriented individuals interested in coordinating / leading / volunteering locally on watershed and stream management plan planning & implementation.



Question?

Why are we suddenly talking about

WATER

so much?!

THE DENVER POST

December 24, 2018

With 80,000 new residents, Colorado is the seventh-fastest growing state in the U.S.

- +700,000 people since 2010
 - *Source: Denver Post / U.S. Census Bureau
- Current: ~ 5.7 M
- Current 2050 Projection: ~ 8.1 M

Upper Gunnison RB Counties:

County	2000	2050	% increase
Gunnison	13,988	21,387	53%
Hinsdale	792	1,159	46%
Saguache	5,982	6,444	8%

Based on CO State Demographer's Office estimates, Nov. 2019

Rising Demand versus Finite Supply

- **Non-consumptive:** Hydropower, Recreation, Environmental (aquatic, including T &E)
- **Consumptive:** Municipal, Industrial, Agricultural

Little known fact:

“More than 99.9% of the water used by an irrigated crop or turf is drawn through the roots and transpires through the leaves. Only a small amount (0.1%) of the water taken up by plants is actually used to produce plant tissue.”

Source: CSU Extension https://coagmet.colostate.edu/extended_etr_about.php

Planning is key to minimizing crisis and conflict

Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) The Colorado River Watershed supplies:



- 7 states + Mexico
- 40 million people*
- ~ 5.5 million irrigated acres*
- Aquatic life & wildlife*
- Recreation / Hunting, etc.

*some in other basins relying on the Colorado watershed

Drought Contingency Plan (DCP): 3 components:

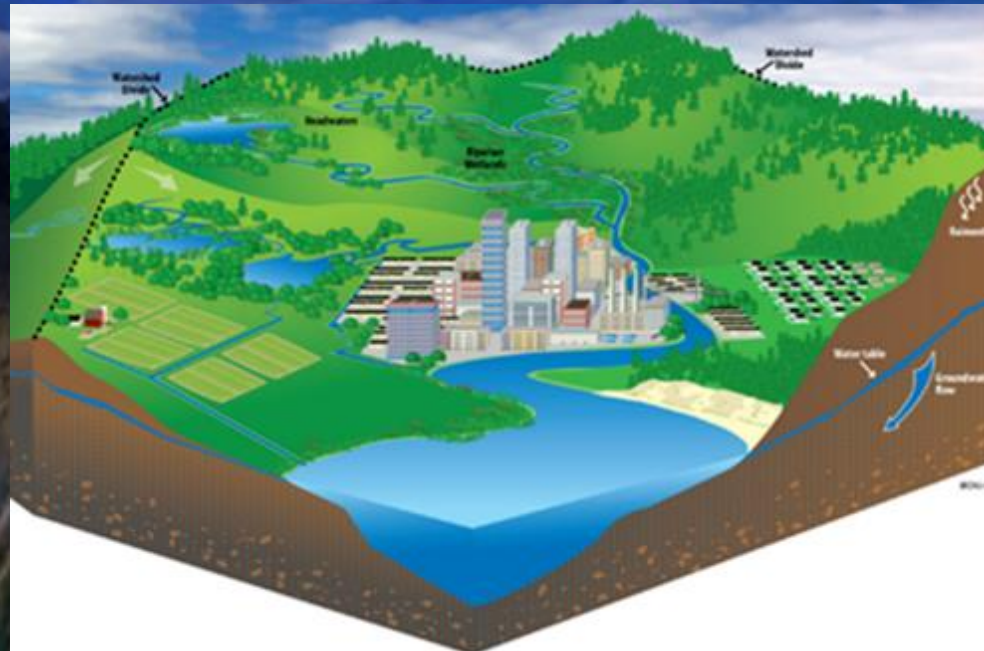
1. Increase supply (tamarisk removal & cloud seeding)
2. Storage (Upper Basin Reservoirs; Lake Powell savings account)
3. Demand Management (conserved consumptive use, ie. rotational fallowing, deficit irrigation, interruptible supply agreements, M & I conservation)

Colorado Water Plan goal:

“Develop Watershed Master Plans that address the needs of a diverse set of local stakeholders.”

Water Plan Measurable Objectives by 2030:

- 80% of the locally prioritized rivers have **Stream Management plans**.
- 80% of critical watersheds have **Watershed Management Plans**.



Does Agriculture Need to be Involved in watershed and stream management planning?

Farms comprise approximately 48% of the land area in Colorado*

*Colorado Ag statistics 2017 Farm Operations; 31.8 M ac.
www.nass.usda.gov/

Agriculture controls most of the water in Colorado

**Watershed / Stream Management Planning:
Need All water stakeholders
at the Table!**



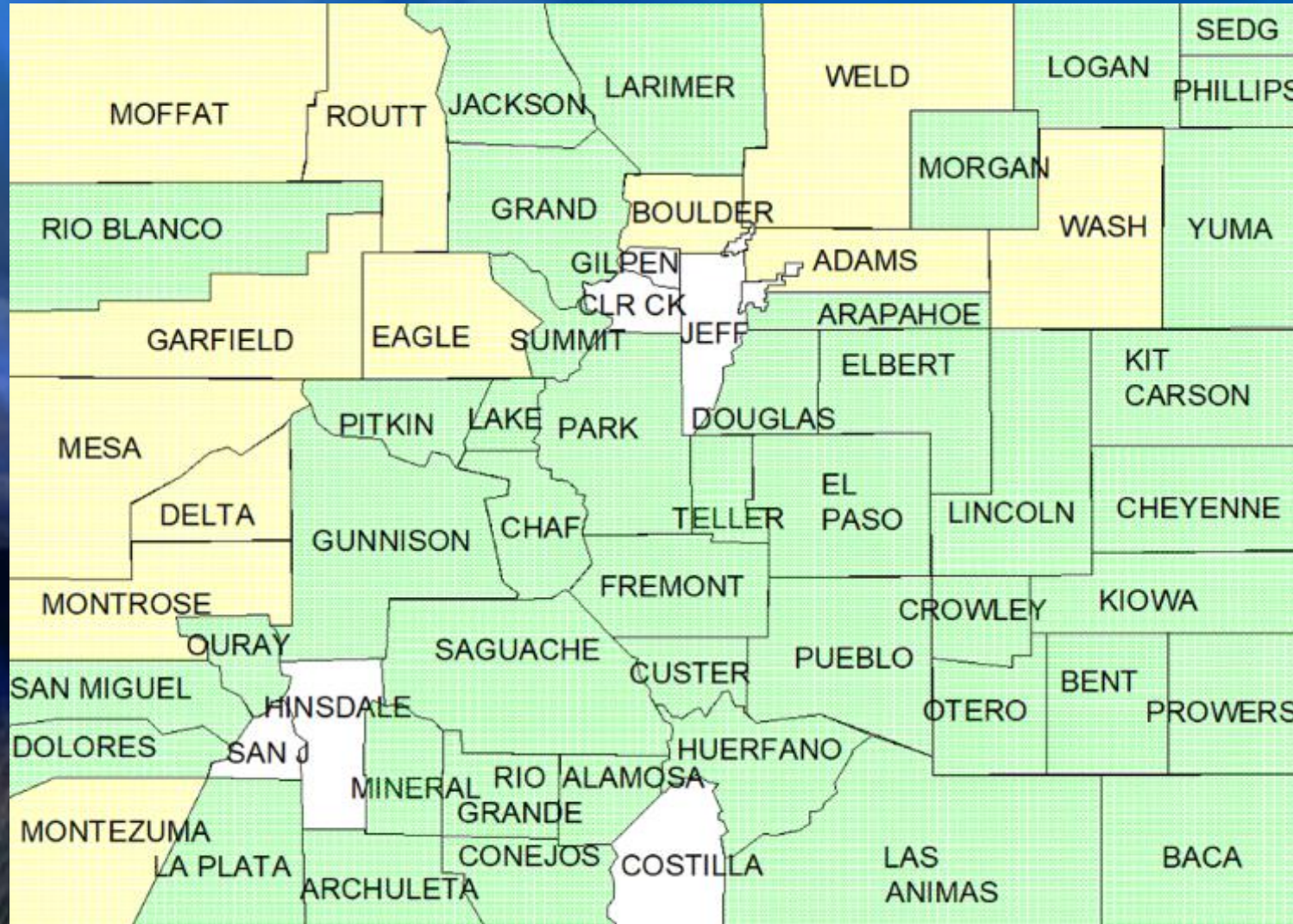
Producer involvement is crucial to balanced plan and protecting agriculture's interests (water rights, land, etc.)

2019 Survey of Ag Producers on Watershed and Stream Management Planning

Survey Facts:

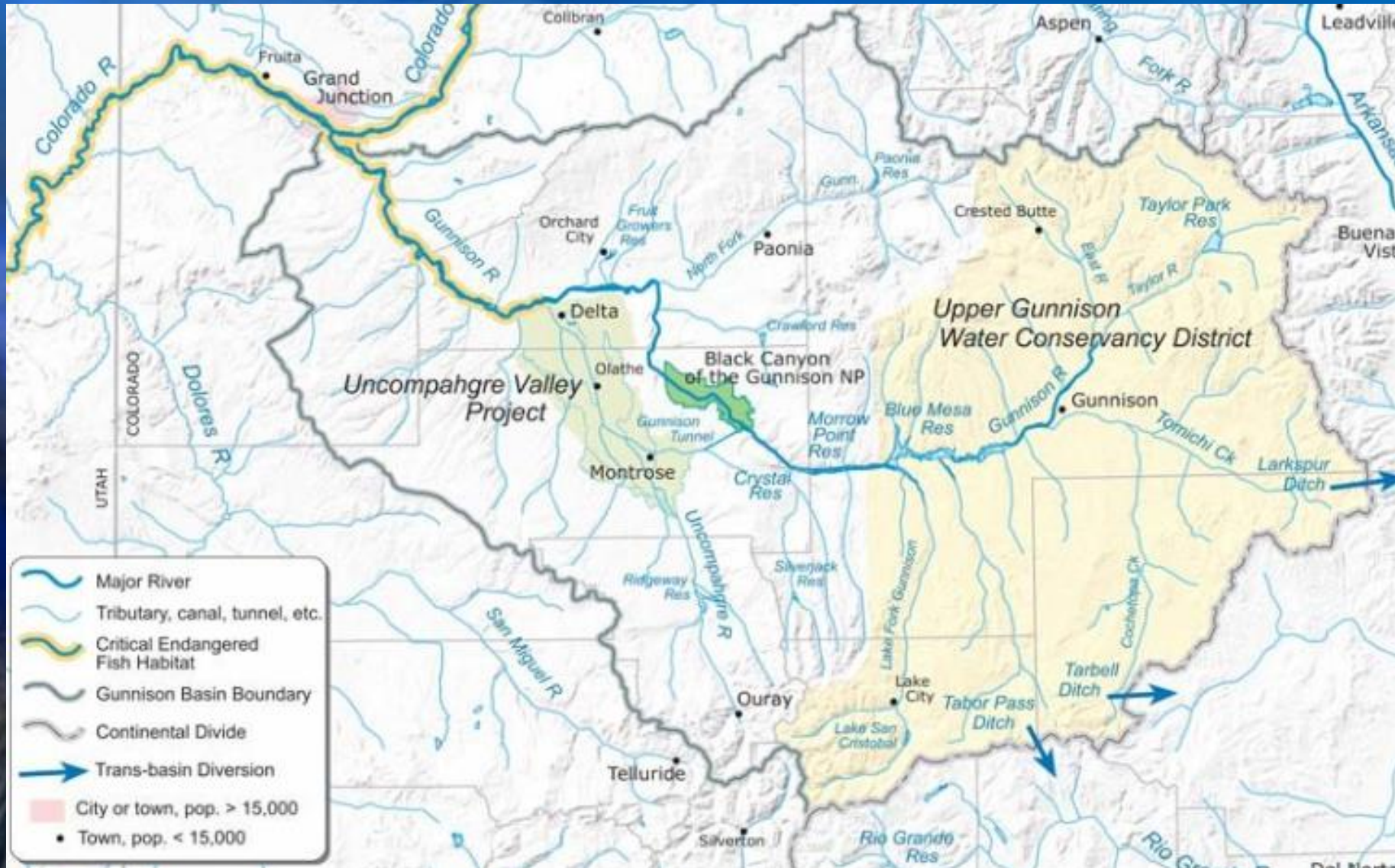
- Survey period: January 16 – April 30, 2019
- 330 total responses received, 288 responses used
- Responses received from producers in 56 counties (88%)
- 84% irrigated, 16% dryland operations
- Eight (8) drawings for a \$100 or \$50 Cabela's gift card during survey period.

2019 Ag Producer Survey Results

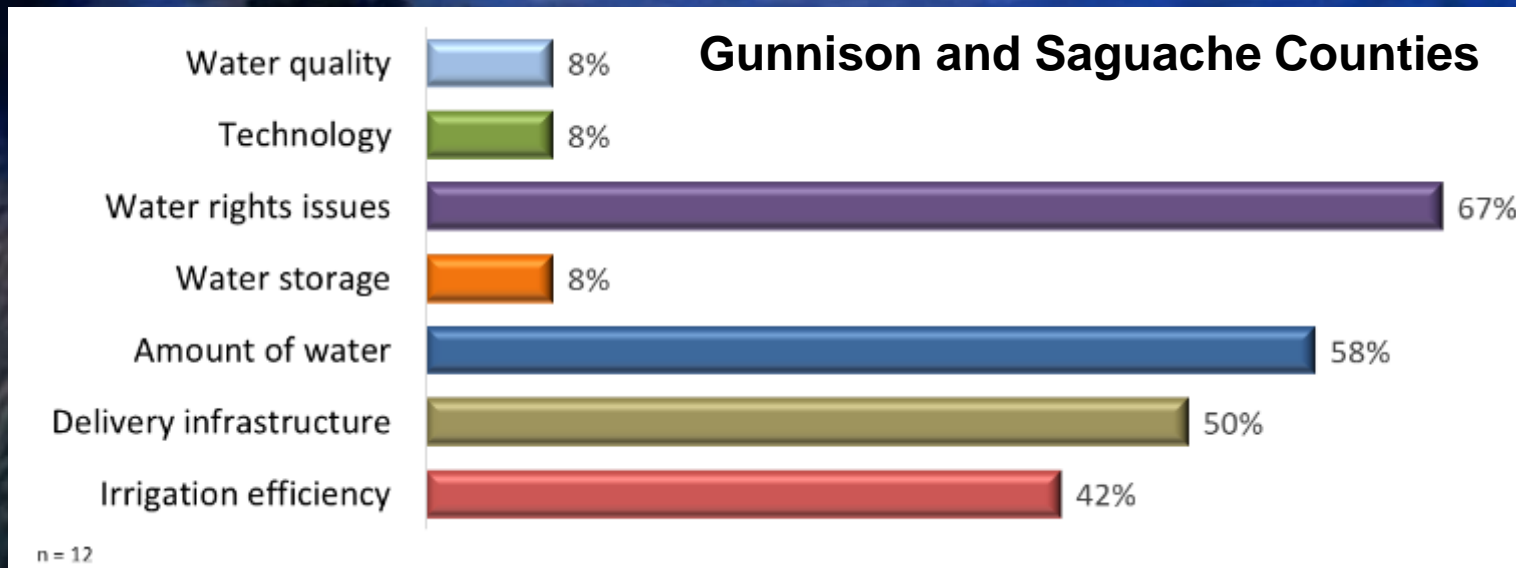
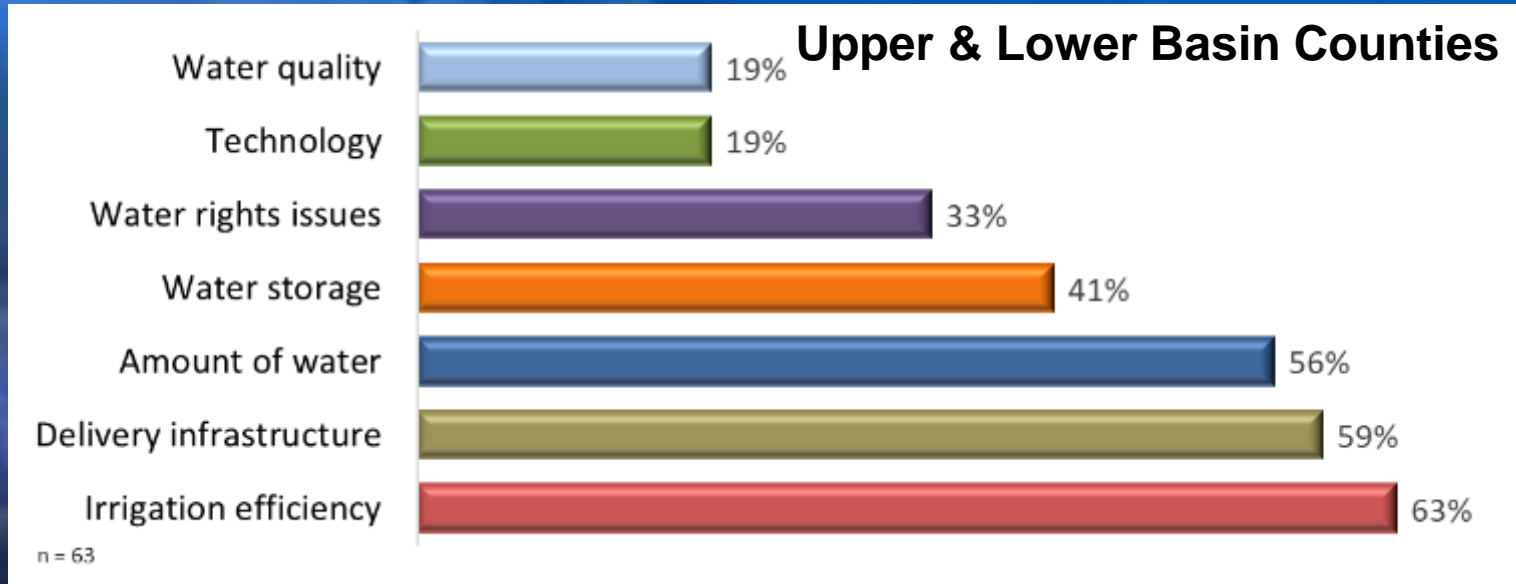


- Gunnison + Saguache Counties: 12 responses (Hinsdale = 0)
- Upper + Lower Gunnison Basin Counties Combined*: 63 responses

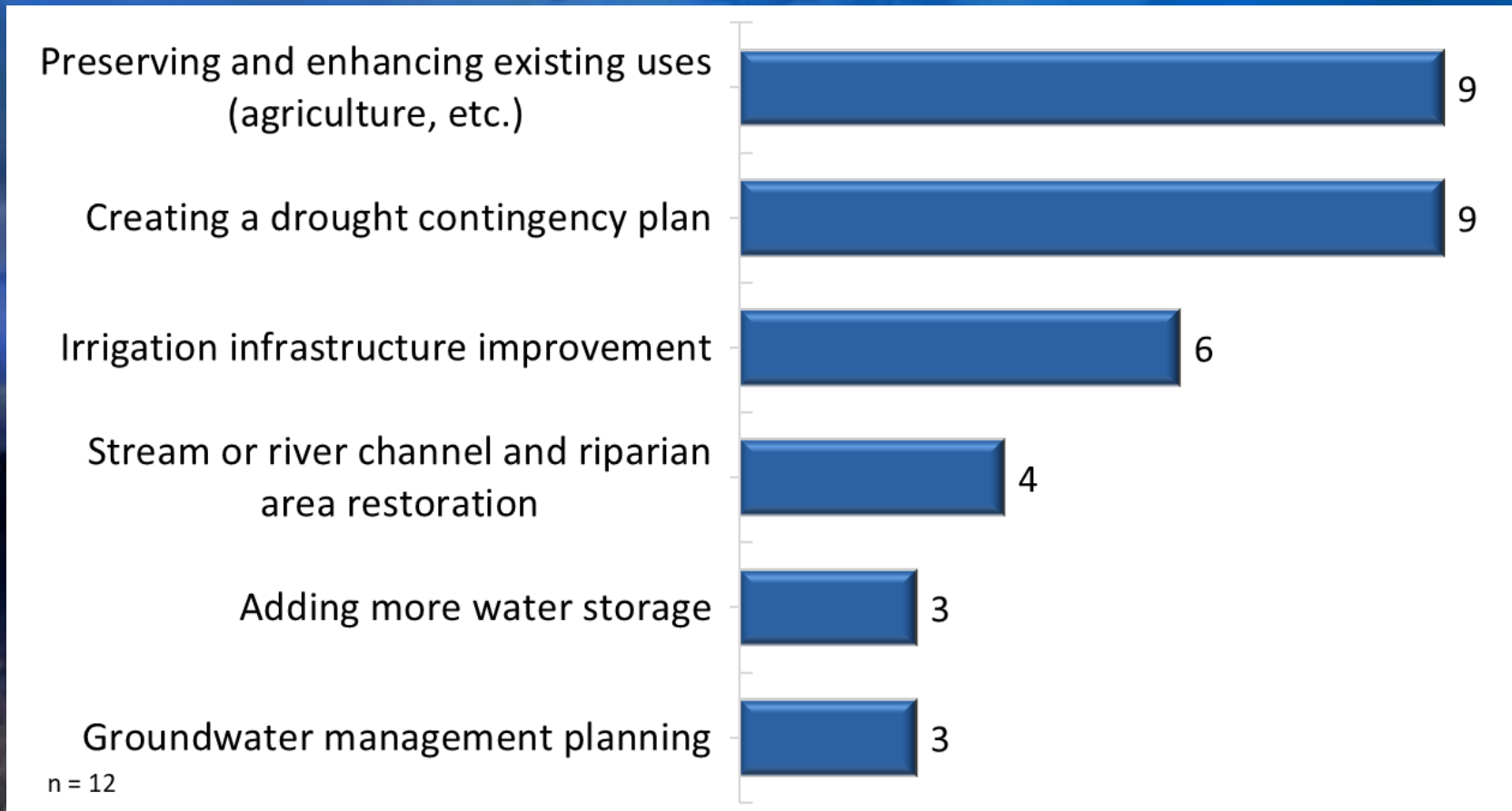
Gunnison River Basin



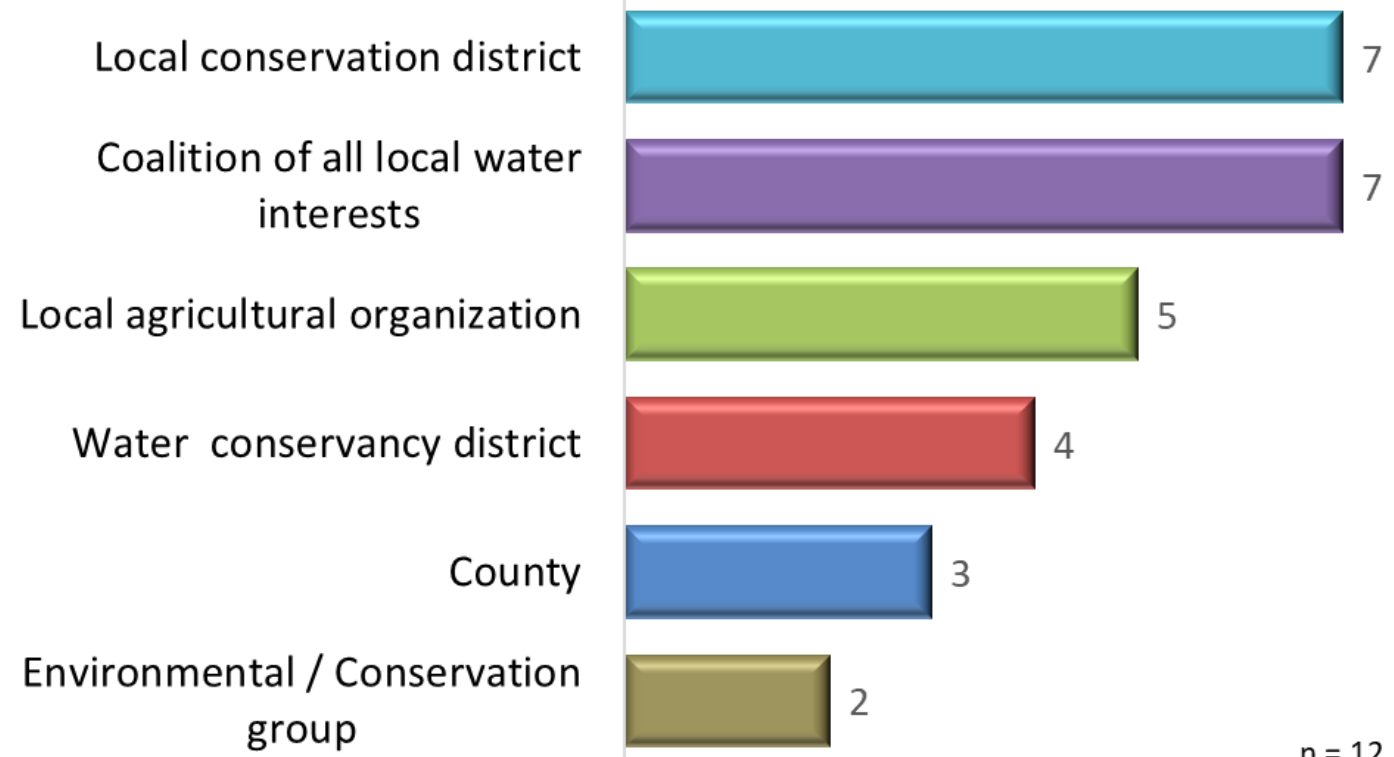
For your operation, what water-related challenge(s) would you most like to improve upon?



What should the Priorities of a watershed management plan be? (Gunnison and Saguache Counties)

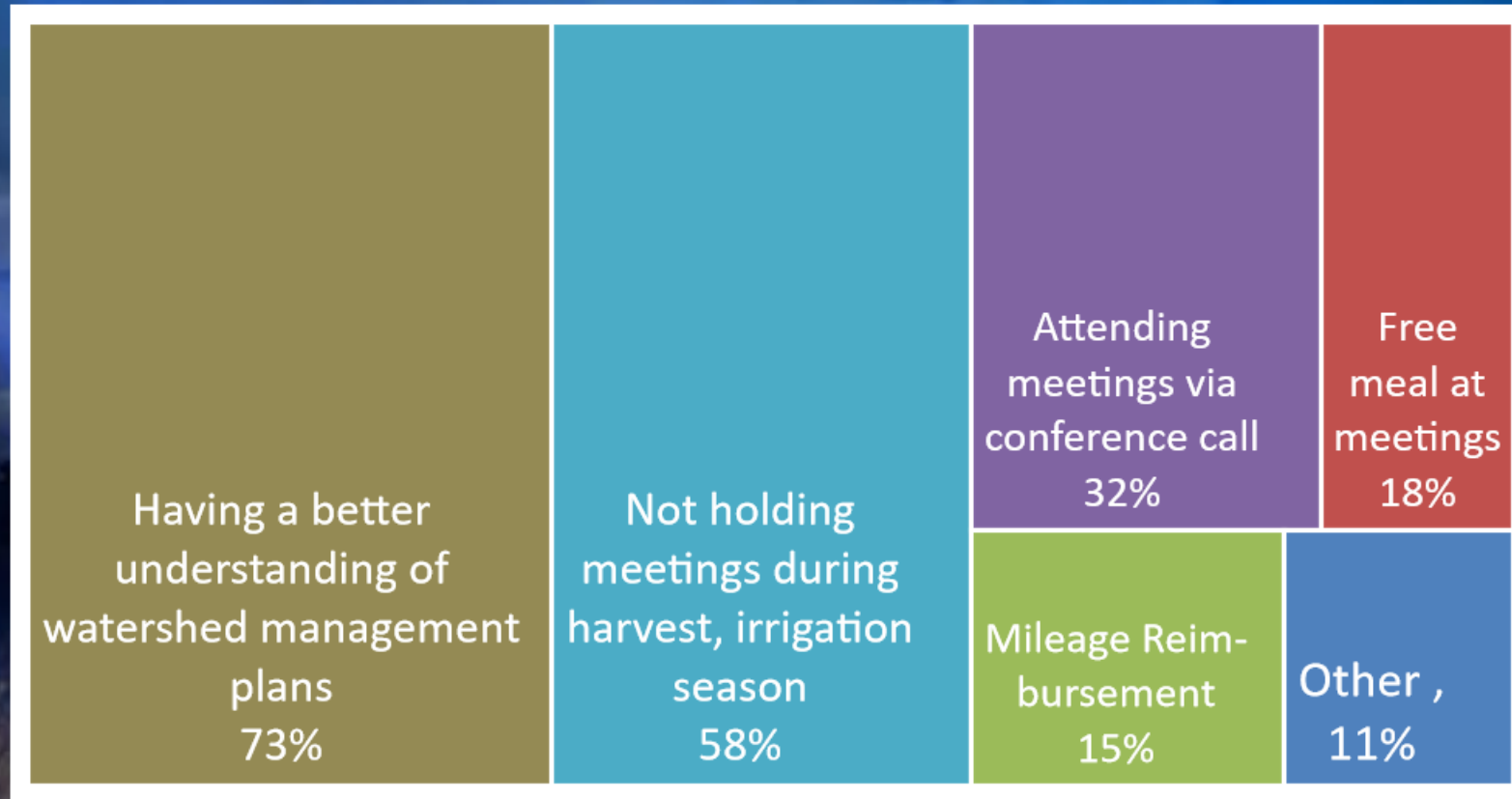


Who should lead watershed planning efforts in your area? (Gunnison and Saguache Counties)



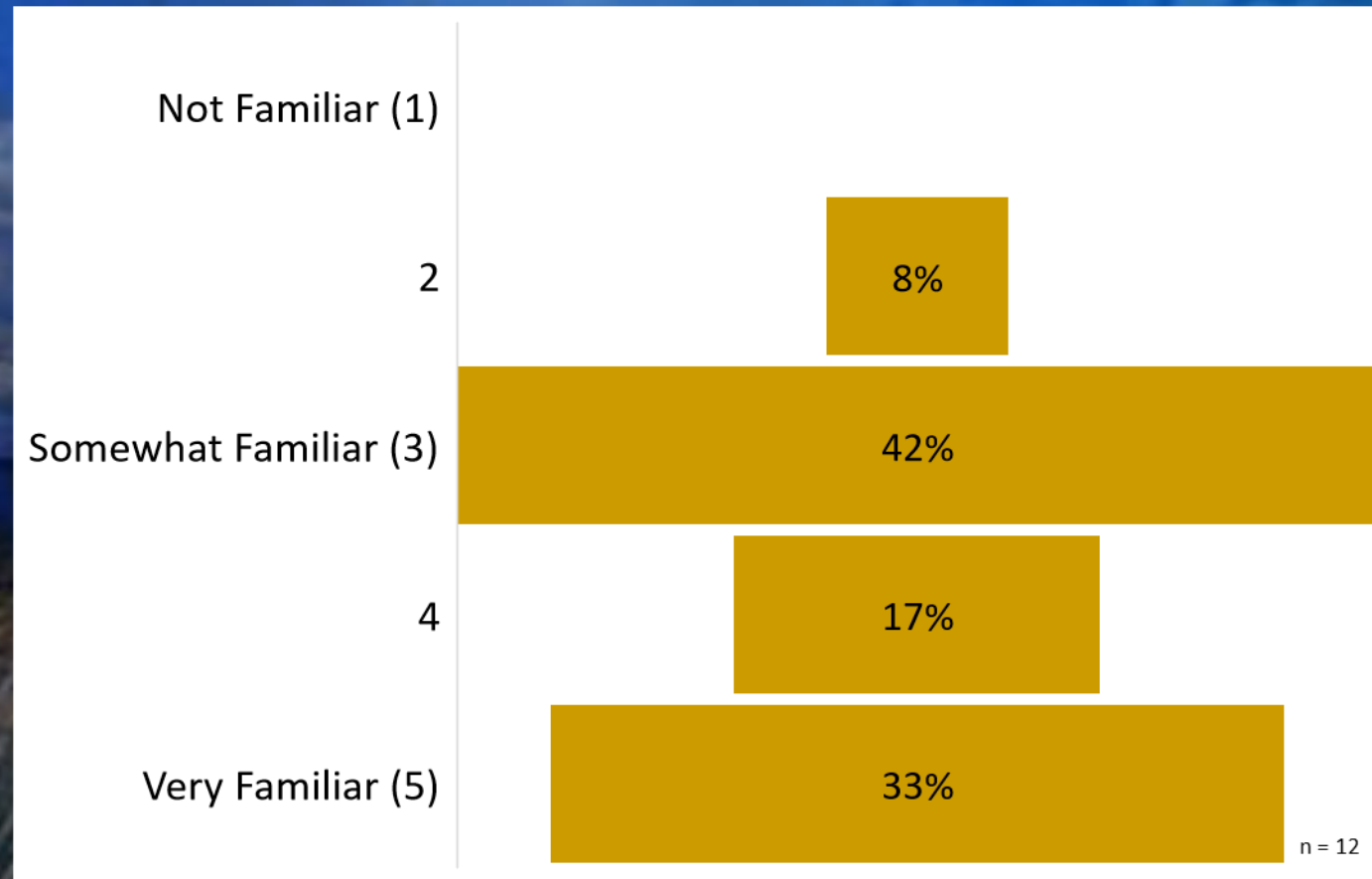
n = 12

If you were to participate in watershed management planning meetings, which of the following would be helpful to you? (Upper and Lower Gunnison Basins)



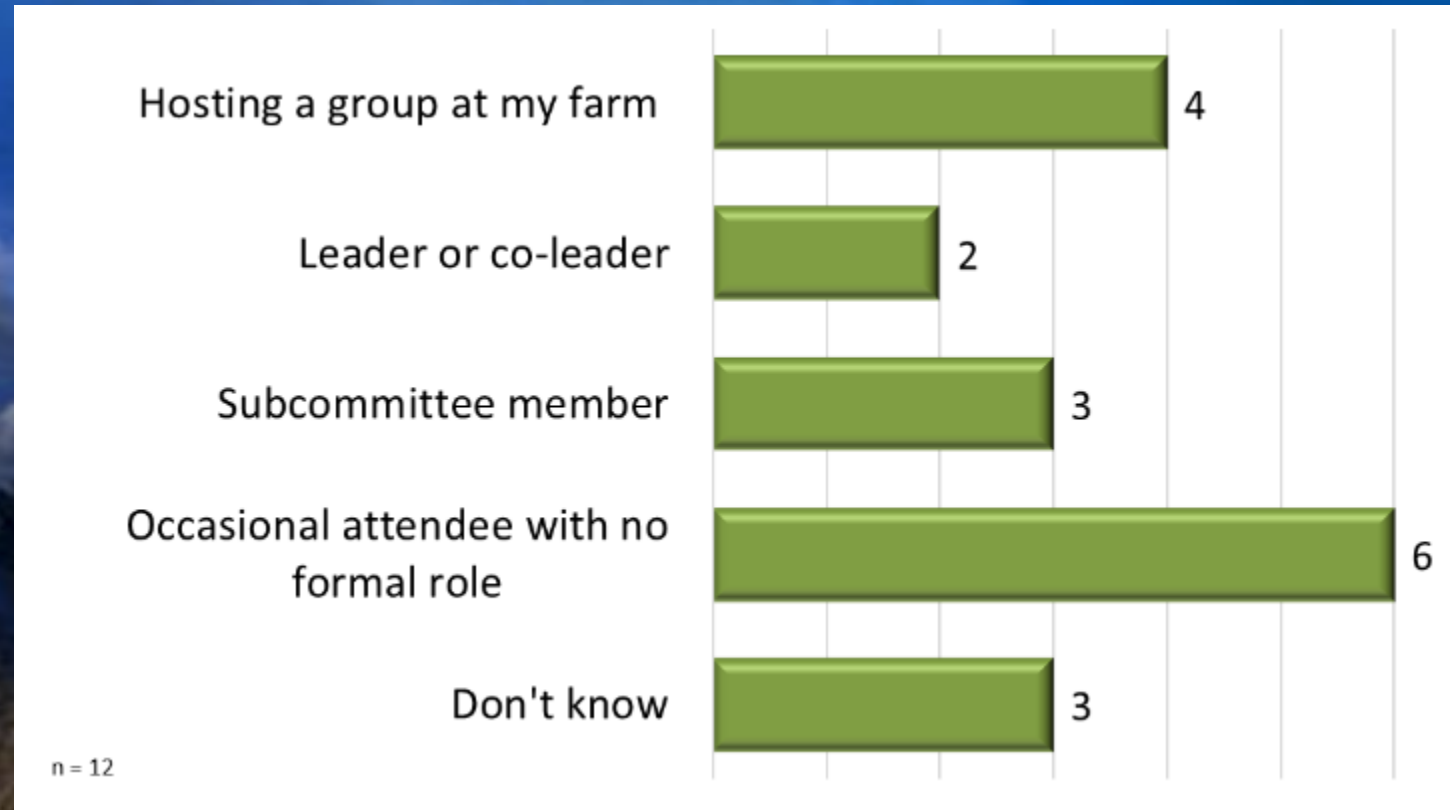
Rate your familiarity with what a watershed management plan is and what it is intended to accomplish?

(Upper Gunnison Counties only)



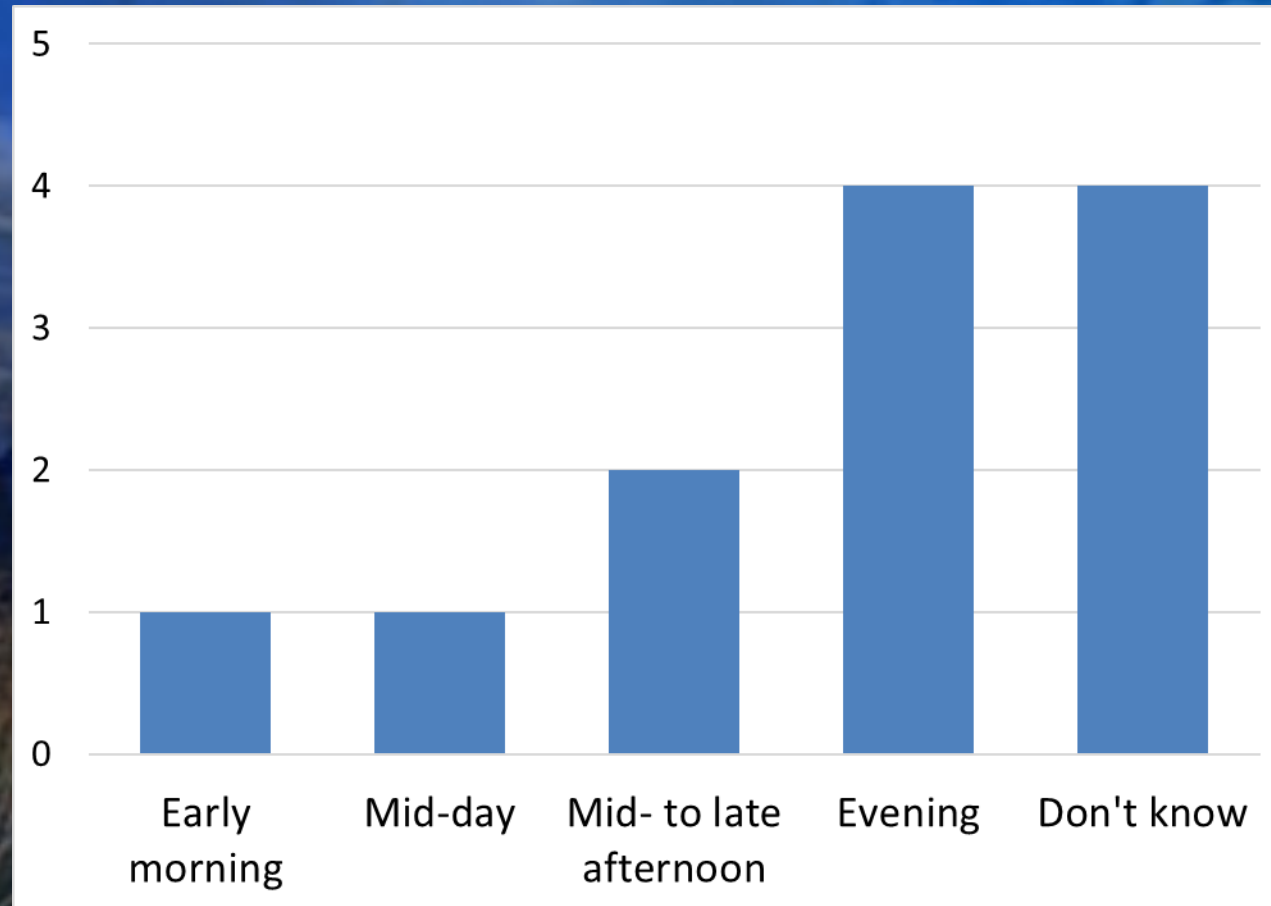
In what role would you like to serve if you participated in watershed or stream management planning activities?

(Upper Gunnison Counties only)

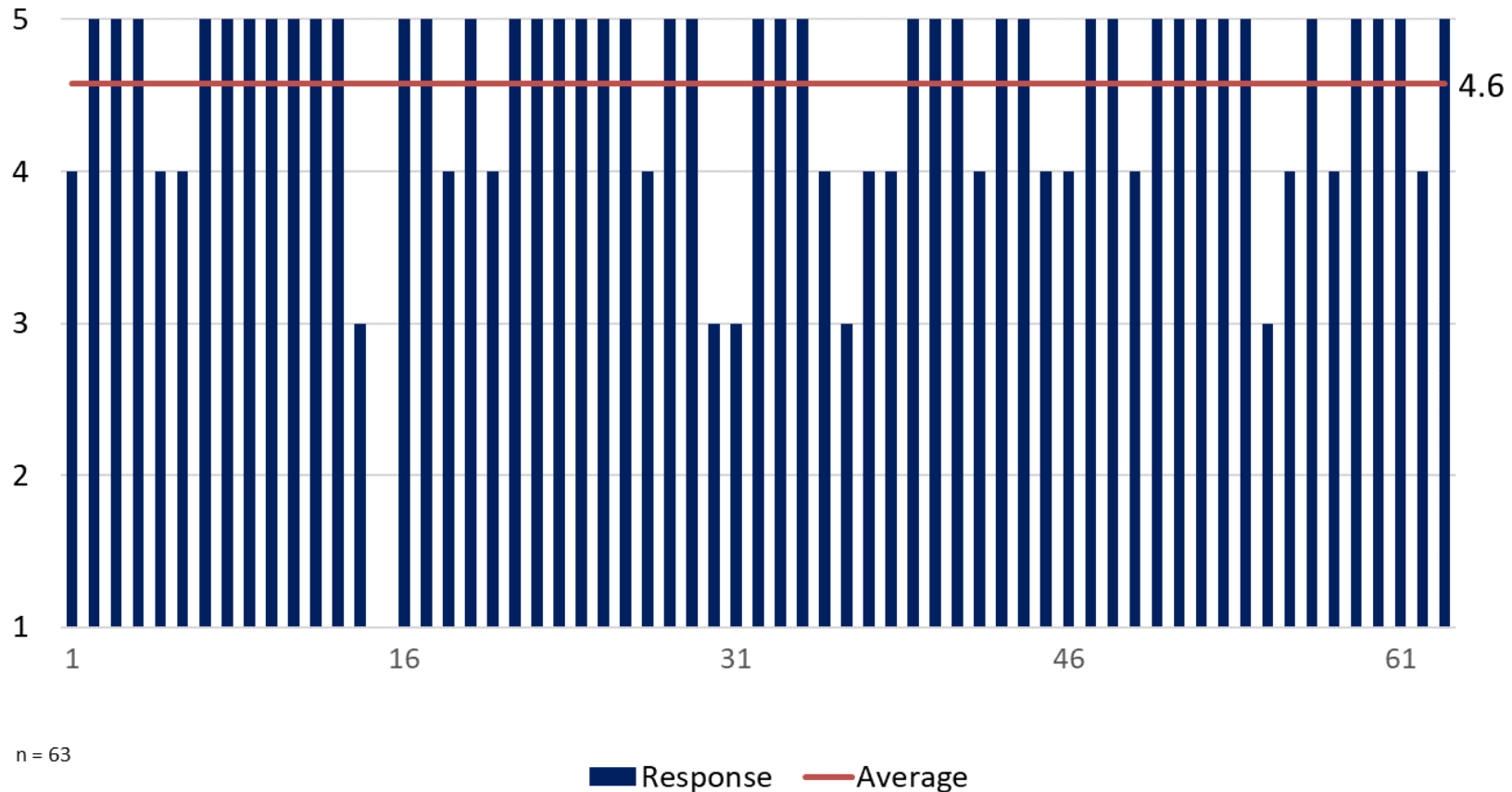


If you were to attend a watershed planning meeting, what time of day would work best for you to meet?

(Upper Gunnison Counties only)



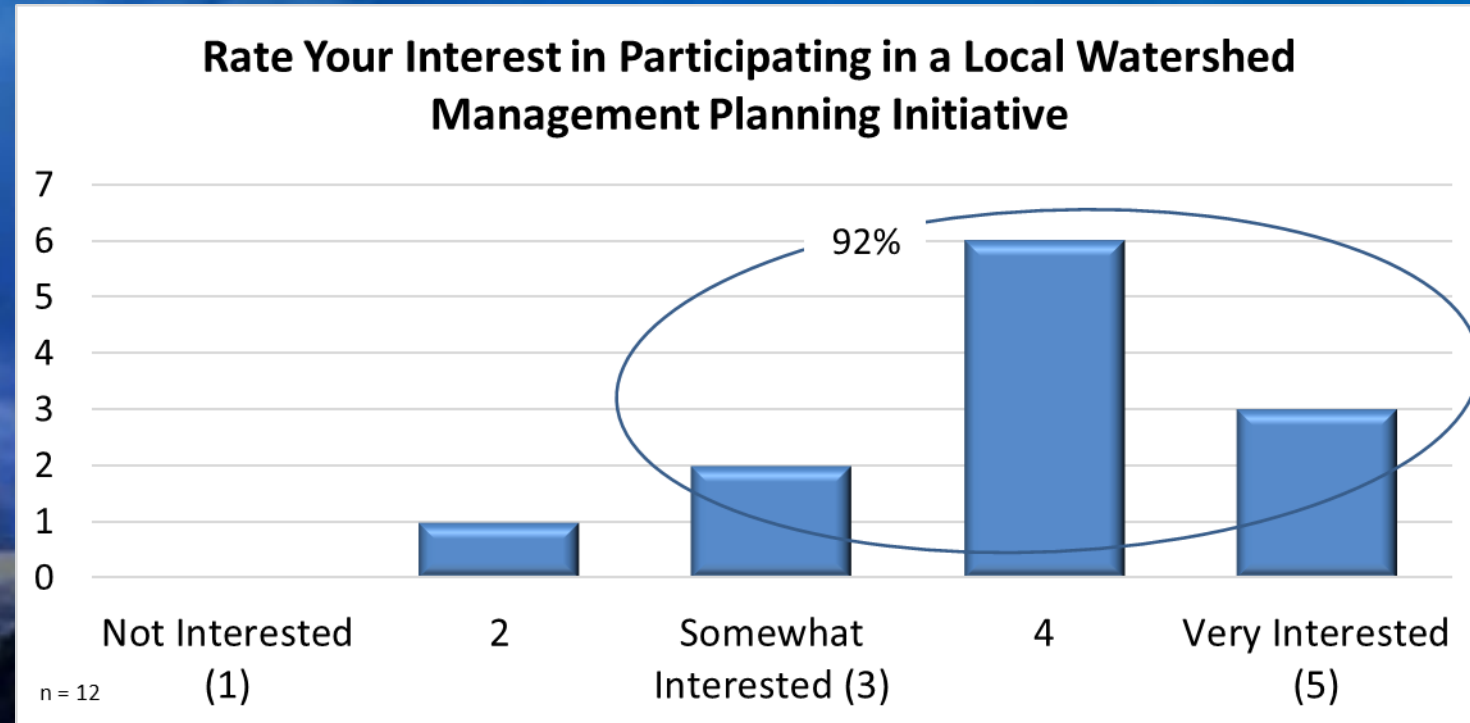
How helpful would it be to have a local ag-oriented person serve as a "lision" to represent agriculture's interests at local watershed management planning and implementation meetings? (1 = Not Helpful; 5 = Very Helpful)



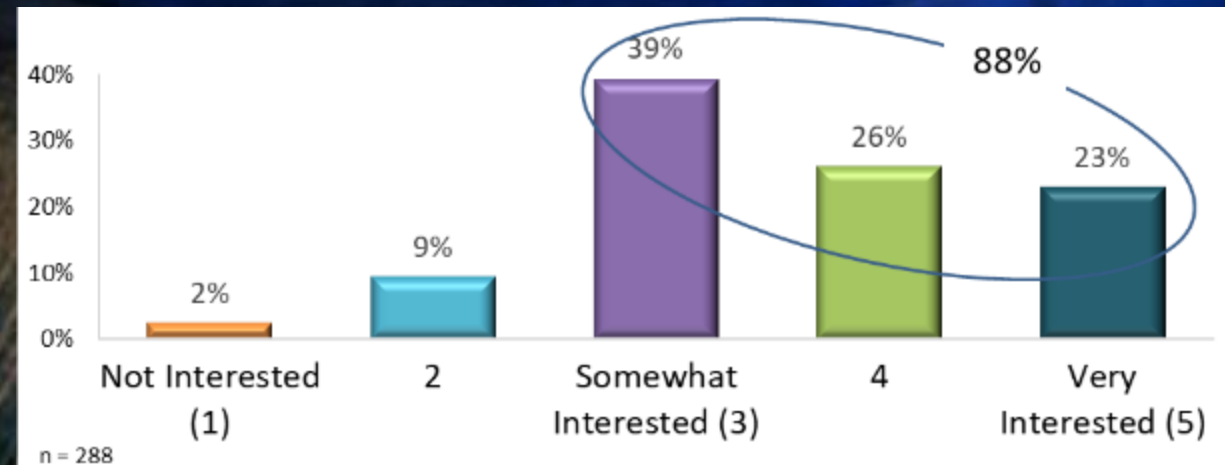
Liaison Limitation – Producer comment: "Ag" is not one thing, and one person would have a hard time speaking for all ag interests."

Last Question!..

(Upper
Gunnison
Counties
only)



Statewide



Summary of Producers Comments & Questions:

- More information is needed on watershed and stream management plans.
- Make it EASY to find out what is going on.
- Meetings: Short with well-defined objectives and timelines, and positive atmosphere.
- Avoid meeting during hunting, calving, irrigation and harvest seasons.
- Get rid of acronyms and jargon.

Agricultural Water Rights:

- Address security of ag water rights and agricultural viability protection.
- Work on ag water leasing (ATMs).

Implementation:

- Reach watershed / stream project implementation phase sooner.
- Funding needed for ag water projects – infrastructure, storage, efficiency.

Potential Projects that Benefit Ag and Other Stakeholders – Funding for:

- Assessment of irrigation infrastructure and funding for irrigation upgrades
- Groundwater recharge area planning
- Storage studies
- Water delivery system improvements
- Channel improvement / bank stabilization
- Drought Contingency / Demand Management Planning



Potential Projects that Benefit Ag and Other Stakeholders – Funding for:

- Forest Health and Fire Risk Assessment / Fire mitigation / Post-fire recovery
- Aquatic habitat improvement
- Create dialogue with other water stakeholders which creates allies outside the ag community.
- Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA)

FLPMA requires “coordination” and “consistency” with LOCAL Land and Natural Resource Plans and Policies (43 U.S.C. § 1712): Bottom Line: Federal agencies must coordinate the planning and management of public lands with land use programs of...local governments”





**The whole point of planning is to get
beneficial things done!**

Agriculture can help shape the goals, the priorities and the values of watershed and stream plans!

Survey report and summary: www.agwaternet.org



Questions? Phil Brink (303) 475-3453 or phil@brinkinc.biz