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Subject:	Colorado Statewide Water Poll – Key Findings
Date:	January 23, 2026

The Colorado Water Poll — December 2025 results are based on a hybrid poll of 800 likely 2026 voters statewide in Colorado, including an oversample to achieve 446 likely Democratic Primary Voters. The sample is distributed to accurately represent likely voters based on party registration, gender, age, education, region, and ethnicity. The adjusted worst-case margin of error at the 95% level for this sample of 800 respondents is ± 3.8% and for the oversample of 446 Democratic Primary voters is ± 4.6%. The poll was conducted from December 1 – 7, 2025, by Keating Research, Inc.

Key Findings:

1. Voters perceive a severe water deficit and across party lines demand increased state action.

There is high anxiety regarding the adequacy of Colorado's future water resources. A clear majority (59%) say Colorado does *not* have an adequate supply of water to meet future needs, while only 18% say that Colorado does.

- **Intensity of Concern:** This sentiment is driven by Democrats (65%) and Unaffiliated voters (57%), but notably, even a majority 53% of Republicans agree that Colorado's water supply is inadequate.

Consequently, a 57% majority believe the State of Colorado is doing "too little" to conserve and protect Colorado's water.

- **Consensus on Inaction:** While highest among Democrats (66%) and younger voters 18-49 (56%), a plurality of Republicans (46%) also agree the state is doing "too little" to conserve and protect Colorado's water, compared to only 6% who believe the state is doing "too much."

2. The strongest general messaging is "Clean Drinking Water" and "Water for Families, Cities, Towns, and Ranches – Make Sure Rivers and Streams Remain Healthy."

Before discussing specific policy negotiations, the poll tested the most effective message frames to use when talking about water conservation in Colorado.

- **Clean, Safe Drinking Water** (78% Convincing): *Healthy rivers and streams are essential to maintaining our water quality. Colorado's water sources must be protected to ensure that Colorado's families, cities, towns, farms and ranches have access to clean, safe drinking water when they turn on their taps.*
  - This is the top-tier message for Liberals, Moderates, younger voters 18-49, Denver/Boulder voters and those who think Colorado is headed in the right direction.

- **Water for Families, Cities, Towns, and Ranches – Make Sure Rivers and Streams Remain Healthy** (74% Convincing): *Water is critical for Colorado's economy and way of life. With prolonged drought, our state's water supply is shrinking. We must prioritize the water needs of families, cities, towns, farms and ranches to keep our state healthy and our economy strong, while making sure that our rivers and streams remain healthy.*
  - This is the most persuasive message for Conservatives, Exurban voters, families under $100k in income, and those who think Colorado is headed in the wrong direction.

3. Prioritizing water conservation so our rivers have water is a winning message statewide.

When forced to choose between competing priorities, the majority 57% of voters agree that "Colorado should prioritize water conservation on farms, ranches and in communities, so our rivers and streams have healthy water flow," while only 22% believe "Colorado should prioritize water for users (farmers/ranchers/communities), even if rivers and streams have less water."

- Republicans are the only partisan group to lean toward prioritizing users (43%) over conservation (31%), whereas Democrats (79%) and Unaffiliated (57%) voters break heavily for conservation.

4. Support for a *negotiated settlement* on the Colorado River is nearly unanimous.

Colorado voters decisively favor collaboration over litigation regarding the Colorado River. Nearly 8-in-10 voters (78%) prefer to "negotiate an agreement where each state makes concessions" versus only 7% who want to "fight it out in court."

- **A Unifying Issue:** Negotiation unites the electorate. It is supported by 90% of Democrats, 78% of Unaffiliated voters, and 63% of Republicans.

- **Rural Support:** 68% of Rural voters support a negotiated agreement. "Negotiation" is a safe political frame even in rural areas.

5. "Colorado Led Solution" is the most powerful message frame for the negotiations.

Voters are most persuaded by arguments that frame negotiation as strength and Colorado control.

- **Colorado Led Solution** (84% Convincing): *By leading negotiations, we control our own destiny and get a seat at the head of the table to craft a Colorado-led solution that protects our water rights and secures our water for the long term.*
    - This message was the highest testing message in the poll. It bridges the partisan gap effectively, convincing 91% of Democrats, 85% of Unaffiliated voters, and 75% of Republicans.

- **Risk** (74% Convincing): *Working together with other Western states to find a solution is the only way to get certainty and avoid the risk of losing our water. Going to court is an unpredictable gamble we could lose. A single judge could permanently cut Colorado's water creating chaos for Colorado's families, cities, towns, farms and ranches.*
    - The argument that we must negotiate to prevent Washington politicians or judges from deciding our fate is highly effective and particularly persuasive with Democratic Primary Voters.

6. Voters reject the "Blame Game" narrative, though Republicans are split.

When presented with a choice, by a nearly 3-to-1 majority, 67% say Colorado should "stand firm in negotiations and be a leader in water conservation," while only 24% agree that "Colorado doesn't need to conserve more water. The reason there is a crisis is because California and Arizona are taking too much."

- **Democrats and Unaffiliateds Back Leadership:** More than 8-of-10 Democrats are in favor of Colorado taking the lead on conservation (83% vs 11%). Unaffiliated voters break nearly 3-to-1 in favor of Colorado taking the lead on conservation (68% vs 23%).