7/17/19
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Follow-up to the July 9th Executive Water Finance Board Meeting
On Strategic Water Management

Summary of the concept:
The management of Utah's water is complex, costly and impactful enough for the state and its citizens to warrant rigorous strategic planning to ensure correct decisions are made. The presentation introduced the idea of applying strategic planning and management principles to Utah's water. Strategic plans involve two tiers: (1) program plans to join stakeholders in shared vision, missions, goals and strategies to drive solutions, which would lead to the identification and phasing of projects to develop information required for decision-making and to implement those decisions, and (2) project plans to manage the work. For Utah's Water Management Program, plans could be defined and integrated across 3 levels (the state, counties/regions and, as appropriate, cities) in order to manage projects most efficiently. While a strategic plan is technical in nature, the real challenge is in the leadership required to organize stakeholders to form shared strategies and identify solutions for implementing them. It is a common, practical and effective way to manage strategic decision-making and implementation. A prototype could reveal the costs and benefits.

Issues:
Some issues were raised during the EWFB meeting and in a follow-up meeting with DWRe management. They are listed below with a short response:

1. *There are differences in terminology, constraints and processes, including decision-making processes, between the public and private sectors that may make strategic planning different for the management of Utah's water.*
   True, the context in which a strategic plan is developed (terminology, constraints, internal and implementation processes, etc.) differ across the sectors (and even within them). However, the basic principles of the strategic planning process are the same: engage stakeholders, agree on vision, missions, goals and strategies; have a transparent evaluation of solutions using verified data and analysis; make decisions based on facts and data (and values); define and execute projects that both gather information for decision-making and implement solutions. There challenge of stakeholder engagement is different in the public sector.

2. *Some of the grading on the analysis maturity (presentation slide 9) seems incorrect*
   Indeed, it may be. Corrections and rationales are welcome. Maturity is judged on not only the existence of the specific data, analysis or planning element, but on its probability assessment, level of verification, the level of transparency and the degree of stakeholder engagement.

3. *Many of the data, analyses and planning objects exist*
   The response to issue 2 applies.

4. *Engaging the public may introduce time delays (raised in the afternoon DWRe meeting)*
   This depends largely on when the engagement is made. If the first engagement is made late in the planning process (e.g., when a Request for Proposal is ready to issue), the point is agreed. But the engagement should be far upstream, and there would be no delay once the plan is defined. RFPs should be able to fly out the door whenever the plan specified.

Public engagement may introduce some additional time into the strategic planning/decision-making process, but it could equally reduce the time, paying dividends in avoiding expensive mistakes and getting everyone aligned early.

Follow-up actions that were offered:

1. The EWFB agreed to consider the concept and if/how to proceed.
2. Eric Millis offered to send the analysis of the LPP Water Right to CSU for review and comment.
3. The DWRe offered to explore the "water budgeting analysis" with us. (We're in communication about how/when to do this.)

Additional ideas for follow-up:

1. Related to the assessment of data/analysis maturity: the DWRe could send existing analyses from the list on slide 9 in order to properly determine their maturity level, and/or they could use our comments on the Water Conservation Goals as a vehicle to discuss analysis maturity. As a simple example, we could review the Washington County "water conservation rate" analysis (the 25% reduction since 2000 – it seems to be using incorrect baseline data).
2. Related to the assessment of plan maturity: the DWRe could give us feedback on the maturity level of the Water Conservation Plan template (slides 13 and 14 of the presentation), and send any significant existing plans to CSU for review as a step in determining their maturity level. CSU has done a cursory review of the State Water Infrastructure Plan (no date, but apparently after 2013) and the Utah's Water Plan - 2001. While they contain a lot of valuable material (e.g., data and analysis results), they do not constitute "plans": there are few program planning elements deriving projects (from vision, goals, strategies, solution evaluation and selection, project definitions and sequencing), and no references to project plans or execution accountability.
3. The DWRe could apply strategic planning concepts to the planned updates to the Regional Water Conservation Goals (slide 10 of the presentation) and the State Water Plan update (e.g., sequence prerequisite analysis/data; consider probabilities, verification, stakeholder engagement and transparency).
4. And of course, we're willing to meet again to further discuss the Strategic Water Planning concept and consider the approach, challenges, costs and benefits of implementing it.