Metro Denver Nature Alliance  
Stakeholder Convening  
December 7, 2018 – The Alliance Center @ 12:30 am - 5:00 pm  

Purpose  
Metro DNA’s semi-annual Stakeholder Convening is an opportunity for partners and friends to get together and network, learn, and co-create collaborative projects. At this gathering we:  

- Celebrated progress on and envisioned next steps for our first two collaborative projects, Nature Narratives and the Regional Vision for People + Nature.  
- Workshopped Metro DNA’s Equity Principles, a statement of our shared commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that will help shape the character and direction of our alliance.  
- Re-committed to partnership and leadership that will keep our work together thriving in 2019 and for years to come!  

Agenda  

- 12:30 - 1:00 pm Metro DNA Overview + Orientation for new Partners and Friends  
- 1:00 - 1:15 pm Introductions + Grounding Activity  
- 1:15 - 1:30 pm Celebrating Success in 2018 and Setting the Stage for 2019  
- 1:30 - 2:45 pm Equity Principles Workshop  
- 2:45 - 3:00 pm Networking + Bio Break  
- 3:00 - 3:15 pm Nature Narratives - What's Working? What's Next?  
- 3:15 - 4:45 pm Regional Vision for People + Nature - Where are We Headed and Why?  
- 4:45 - 5:00 pm Next Steps!  
- 5:00 - 8:00 pm Networking Happy Hour, Green Latinos Tapas + Learn  

Next Actions  

- Equity Committee - Review workshop feedback and follow up with external reviewers. Collaborate with Steering Committee to finalize principles and guide their use.  
- Programs Committee - Review Regional Vision workshop feedback and develop subcommittee of interested partners to plan, find resources to support, and implement this project.  
- All - Connect with colleagues (list of attendees is at the end, along with photos from the event!) and join a committee or subcommittee to stay engaged and contributing. Complete meeting evaluation.  

Workshop Notes  
The following notes were compiled from small group and large group conversation, video recordings, and flip charts. This information and any follow up feedback will be used to refine Metro DNA products and processes in the interests of all partners. If you have any questions, concerns, or additional feedback, please contact Dana Coelho - dana@metrodna.org or 303-883-9405.
Equity Principles

Our goal for this workshop was to evaluate partner understanding of and comfort with the proposed Metro DNA Equity Principles and to define next steps for their refinement and implementation. Attendees spent their time discussing one or more principles in small groups, rotating among tables/topics, before coming back as a large group to report out.

Overall, the group was comfortable with the principles, appreciated the language used, and engaged in conversation about what they mean to our work as an alliance and within individual organizations, how they can be used, and how they can be communicated effectively internally and externally.

Access

Ongoing questions and discussion:
- Not all parks and open spaces are appropriate for public access at all times (safety, privacy, sacred spaces, etc.). When is access OK? When access is OK, how do we work to ensure it is equitable?
- How do/can our ideas, conversations, and work affect policy - of Metro DNA as well as communities, counties, etc.?
- What kind of tools (checklists, training, etc.) do we need/want?

Keep in mind:
- Barriers are more than physical; they can be political, cultural, psychological, etc.
- Safety and risk (real and perceived)
- Cultural competency
- Language - translation and avoiding jargon

Voices and sectors to engage:
- Always listen to community voices and honor local needs for safe and inexpensive/free routes to parks and open spaces.
- Align our conversations with local and regional planning efforts.
- Understand current school, family, and community programs (awareness, communication, education).
- Don’t expect other sectors to come to us; go to them and always acknowledge the costs of collaboration.

Influencing our Regional Vision and other Projects:
- Identify and share barriers in order to overcome them.
- How do partners and communities want to interact in the process?
- Know and cultivate community champions.
- Always ask - Could access have been easier (to a park, program, meeting, etc.)?
Mutual Respect of Diverse Ways of Being, Knowing, and Experiencing Nature

This Principle:
● Supports interdependence, a helpful stance for collaboration and regional planning.
● Important for us all to consider together and in our respective organizations.
● Encourages risk taking and making progress, e.g., organizations engaging in work they wouldn’t normally, getting out of our comfort zones, exploring new solutions based on community priorities.
● Working with mutual respect reflects and requires a shift from “I need to teach you” to “I want to learn together with you”.
● All forms of knowledge and experience are valuable.
● Wisdom and knowledge come from different pathways.
● We respect different ethnic, cultural, political, age, income, comfort levels with the outdoors and what this means for access, communication, and other aspects of our work.

Needs/Resources:
● Continue the Nature Narratives project with an eye toward building understanding for and sharing the many ways of knowing/experiencing nature.
● Continued conversation.
● Understand that among such a large and diverse alliance and in large organizations it can be a challenge to ensure all audience needs are heard and met at all times. Be open, proactive, and reasonable.
● Education is key - We’ll need best practices and strategies for community engagement that are built on practical experience and research and can be built into training resources and curricula.
● Evaluation and reflection are essential - What does success look like? Can we reach everyone? What are our shared goals?

Recognizing Dynamics of Power and Privilege

● Reflect on Boyd’s OODA Loop (observe, orient, decide, act) and other models for learning organizations in order to understand current conditions, identify goals and select strategies, and act.
● Study and share history to unravel personal, cultural, and institutional discrimination which creates and sustains privilege for some while creating and sustaining disadvantage for others.
● Understand that privilege leads to assumptions and blind spots; work to overcome our blind spots.
● Metro DNA can serve as a supportive venue/hub for change agents in participating organizations, leading to knowledge transfer, idea sharing, and development and use of best practices in our work together and in our organizations.
● We need to recognize power dynamics within this alliance own organizations (hierarchy, behavior, finances, etc.).
● We need to work gracefully with perceived loss (of power, resources, opportunity, etc.) for those with privilege by framing change as both necessary (for conservation and equity) and as a gain of other resources of value.
Reducing Systemic Barriers

- This is a process of re-examination for Metro DNA and partners - internal and external in order to create and sustain and open forum and network.
- We need to recognize and work on staff and steering committee (board) dynamics within Metro DNA and encourage this work in partner organizations.
- We need to examine more deeply and come to a common understanding of some terms in this principle (physical, economic, cultural, etc.).

Supporting Representation

- What is Metro Dever? Who are our partners? Who is our audience? Whom are we seeking to represent (demographics, groups, sectors, etc.) and give voice and a seat at the table to?
- We need to connect this principle back to our shared vision for people and nature.
- Partners are people not just organizations and programs - create and sustain an awareness of the different levels where representation can be applied/cultivated.
- We need (need to develop?) to develop training and other resources (tool kit, check list, etc.).
- With authentic representation comes alignment of projects with community needs.
- We have an opportunity and a responsibility to create a set of values for decision making that Metro DNA and any organization can use that don’t relate solely to funding.
- The Colorado Health Foundation may be a good source of support for this work (authentic community engagement).

Use and Collection of Data

- Need to define and share best practices (and pitfalls!) around collection of data (privacy, compensation, community benefit, etc.)
- How can we be transparent and open with data while also respecting privacy?
- Can the principle define/acknowledge accountability?
- There are inherent challenges in knowing what you need, who to go to in order to collect data, and ensuring collection is unbiased.
- How do we collaborate to obtain good data? How do we centralize good data?
- How do we ensure that data collected result in some direct or indirect community benefit?

Regional Vision for People + Nature

Our goal for the Regional Vision workshop was to uncover the key elements, outcomes, audiences, and process considerations of interest to partners as we move forward with designing and implementing this collaborative project. Attendees spent their time discussing one or more topics in small groups, rotating among tables/topics, before coming back as a large group to report out.
Overall, the group engaged in a lively discussion resulting in concrete recommendations around what to address in the Regional Vision and how. From further consideration of these elements, goals, and outcomes in figure workshops will flow strategies, tactics, and plans for implementation, evaluation, and monitoring.

Elements

- **Water & air**
  - Connected waterways, smart use
  - Pollution and environmental quality
  - Water systems and watershed level perspectives, cross-community resources, stormwater management
- **Wildlife**
  - Wildlife corridors for a range of animal groups and land uses (e.g., Fort Collins)
- **Land** - Network of functional ecosystems, landscapes → ecosystem services
- **Healthy people and places** - parks, trails, recreation, green infrastructure, habitat
  - Fun with/within nature
  - Fostering stewardship
  - Cultural preservation
  - Storytelling
- **Equitable access**
  - Recognizing multi-use/purpose opportunities (e.g., trails to grocery stores)
- **Intersections of people + nature with other values, plans, policies, sectors, and systems (public health, disaster risk, energy, water, food, transportation, housing affordability, etc.)**
  - Economic benefits
  - Wildfire
  - Urban farming

Goals and Outcomes

- **Avoid:**
  - Green gentrification and displacement
  - Creating additional barriers, exacerbating existing problems
  - Continued urban sprawl
- **Work toward:**
  - More environmental education and interpretation → community organizing around environmental issues → positive environmental action (tree planting, water conservation, etc.)
  - Bridging/removing political obstacles
  - Climate equity, climate resilience, climate justice
  - Greater biodiversity, native and non-native environmentally adapted species
  - Sustaining a functional, connected network of natural systems
  - Community engagement driven by active involvement and responsible ownership, co-management of parks
○ Preservation/restoration and steward critical habitats, open space
○ Identifying opportunities for investing in new nature space
○ Connectivity - human and wildlife
○ Greater awareness of what is already there (spaces, programs, etc.)
○ Activating new advocates and stewards of the land
○ Positive health outcomes (physical, mental, community)
○ Getting people outside
○ A collective and broad community definition of nature, access to nature, and barriers to accessing and enjoying nature
○ Resilient/regenerative use of open spaces (in response to overuse)
○ Smaller regional carbon footprint

● Outputs:
  ○ Decision support tool, help users identify places with certain amenities, experiences
  ○ Best practices - communicate value to public

● Implementation, relevance, and buy-in:
  ○ Create a framework that can be applied across the region and that communities can apply as they need/desire
  ○ Collaboration and breaking down political boundaries
  ○ Make it implementable, understandable, graspable
  ○ Relevance to both people + nature
  ○ Align with regional priorities around green infrastructure, etc.
  ○ How to build in accountability, shared ownership (not just for/about policy makers)?
  ○ Building trust with communities, can't feel like a take over

● Scale:
  ○ Regionally specific, neighborhood specific (nested scales)
  ○ Access - defined by “micro-region”, at relevant scales

Audience

● Metro DNA or everyone? Is there a way to be both?
● What is the main goal/outcome? Policy change? Land acquisition? This affects for whom the vision is written and who is engaged in its development.
● Connect with other industries and audiences, break down rivalries - Who are nontraditional partners (agriculture, farm to table, consumptive recreation, etc.)?
● Celebrate diversity and communicate with new residents and visitors (many don’t understand the local ecosystem), youth, anyone can be a catalyst for change
● Primary audience(s) will change based on phase of project, also need to consider segmented/targeted communications.
Process

- Leverage existing resources.
  - Find experts and leverage what we have, what has already been done.
  - Celebrate what we have and grow expectations; understand user experiences.
  - Align/connect with/learn from existing and ongoing plans and initiatives such as America’s Great Outdoors, Rocky Mountain Regional Greenway, One Water, etc.
  - Learn from existing model for community engagement (DMNS, GOCO Inspire, etc.) and enhance where appropriate (e.g., continue to deepen the GOCO Inspire work and connect hubs within the metro area).
  - Do not interfere with what others are doing - support, identify and fill gaps, Metro DNA should not be the star of the show.
  - City/community partnerships that led to policy change (e.g., Cultivando, ReVision).
  - Research what exists and has been effective (thrive vs. fizzle) locally and in other regions (while acknowledging cultural, regional, and other differences which could impact replication).

- Create and stay true to a representative process that is informed, valued, and trusted by individuals, organizations, and communities.
  - Avoid a specific/singular definition of nature and unaccessible language.
  - Listen to community needs, develop community-driven outcomes.
  - Keep it regional.
  - Listen to legacy and new residents.
  - Give communities the tools to have their own version of the conversation (vs. direct facilitation of smaller scale conversations).
  - Expand our network - business community, civic leaders.

- Resources needed:
  - One person or organization cannot do this alone - voluntary efforts will not be sufficient, need more staff and capacity.
  - Recognize this process is iterative, and set reasonable expectations.
  - Communication plan, branding and messaging - for development, implementation, and monitoring phases.
  - Regular Metro DNA report out from other conferences (COSA, RMLUI, etc.) to keep information flowing and the vision moving forward.
  - Student contributions (story collection, etc.) will remain of value.
  - Must nail down audience/s and define roles
  - Solidify partner buy-in and sustain engagement.
  - Translate between technical and lay audiences, facilitate communication.
  - Allow participants to self-identify and define their commitments and contributions

- Next steps:
  - Refine audience, elements, goals → focused/clear plan, timeline, roles and responsibilities
- Develop metrics, indicators, and evaluation tools - Where are we headed? How do we get there? How do we know when we’ve arrived?
- Write the plan!
- Follow through and use the plan to inform projects, policies, investments, etc.

- Outstanding questions:
  - How to engage decision makers along the way and make engagement valuable to them?
  - How to balance creating the vision (moving forward) and receiving feedback (looking back and adapting)?
  - How do we best leverage our networks?
  - How do we tap into other networks and discussions?
  - How do we bring together/incorporate other sector voices (mission-based focus groups)?
  - How do we learn from other outreach and planning efforts (e.g., SHIFT)?

**Notecard Input**

Attendees were invited to share significant accomplishments from 2018 and goals for 2019 with the group. These will be used as we plan the year’s communications, such as partner updates (email) and Facebook posts, to best serve as champion for Metro DNA partners. They will also factor into our continued work on the Equity Principles, Nature Narratives, Regional Vision for People + Nature, and other potential projects that align with partner programs, priorities, goals, and needs.

Denise Hartsock, Kaiser Permanente, denise.hartsock@kp.org
- In 2018, collected and analyzed 1 year worth of pilot coalition data for GOCO Inspire initiative.
- In 2019, begin initial analysis of youth survey data from 15 GOCO Inspire coalitions.

Maria Talero, Climate Courage LLC, maria@climatecourage.cc
- In 2018, developed and pilot-tested a bilingual storytelling for face-to-face advocacy training (training leaders to tell short, effective personal stories to build common ground and authentic connection).
- In 2019, finding my niche in local initiatives that connect climate, equity, and the outdoors.

Beth Nobles, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, bnobles@sandcreekgreenway.org
- In 2018, added information and presentations by naturalists to our volunteer workdays on the greenway.
- In 2019, surveying volunteer opportunities and training programs among nature-based orgs in Metro Denver to determine if there is a need/opportunity to build a collaborative Urban Master Naturalist program to serve our communities and landscapes.

Barry Duncil, Davey Resource Group, barry.duncil@davey.com
- In 2018, helped create urban forestry master plans for various municipalities and colleges.
- In 2019, networking and collaborating with an emphasis on urban forestry and natural resources, expanding business opportunities in the Front Range, looking to sponsor events related to urban forestry.

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[Logo: MetroDNA]
Peggy Zemach, Consultant, zemach.peggy@gmail.com
● In 2018, collaborated with several organizations.
● In 2019, continuing collaboration and communication; interested in new connections, expanded reach and visibility, shared vision.

Mikaela Oles, USFWS, mikaela_oles@fws.gov
● In 2018, hired as a permanent USFWS employee - more power to make a difference!
● In 2019, helping to create stronger relationships with partners and our field stations through collaboration and meaningful communication.

Michael D’Agostino, USFWS, michael_dagostino@fws.gov
● In 2018, communicated about the recreation and ecological values of Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.
● In 2019, increase digital storytelling and use of influencers and brand ambassadors to reach new audiences.

Skot Latona, South Suburban Parks & Rec (South Platte Park), skotl@ssprd.org
● In 2018, created inroads with low-income and Hispanic communities in Sheridan through a GOCO Inspire grant, connected kids and families to nature.
● In 2019, figuring out long-term, sustainable funding model to remain engaged in these communities when the GOCO grant expires.

Corey Martz, DU, corey.martz@du.edu
● In 2018, contributed to the City Nature Challenge (spring) and DU Nature Challenge (fall).

Suzanna Jones, High Line Canal Conservancy, suzanna@highlinecanal.org
● In 2018, supported a regional, collaborative, jointly funded tree canopy care initiative along the canal.
● In 2019, complete the High Line Canal Framework Plan and promote in a way that moves projects toward implementation.

Nona Shipman, MSU/One World One Water, nshipman@msudenver.edu
● In 2018, spent 9 months traveling, meeting with communities, and collecting data to create a statewide water education asset map; results are being used by state agencies and incorporated into another statewide education project.
● In 2019, leading and hosting multiple successful study abroad courses to Perugia, Italy to study and learn about international water resources and apply lessons in Colorado.

Austin Troy, CU Denver, austin.troy@ucdenver.edu
● In 2018, funded and launched, in collaboration with DRCOG, the Imagine a Great Region project.
● In 2019, finish and disseminate STEW-MAP survey, build Denver Urban Field Station network.
Melake Getabecha, Groundwork Denver, melake@groundworkcolorado.org
  ● In 2018, employed over 70 youth to implement environmental and community improvement projects; continued water quality monitoring of Bear Creek; green infrastructure maintenance training for youth team supervisors.

Bart Berger, Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, wbb@wbberger.com
  ● In 2018, realized initial activation of Morrison CCC campus with HistoriCorps as first tenant.
  ● In 2019, find and commit nature-based training/education occupants for Morrison CCC campus facilities with Denver Parks & Rec and other partners.

Gordon Robertson, Denver Parks & Recreation, gordon.robertson@denvergov.org
  ● In 2018, completed 20-year vision “Game Plan for a Healthy City”, Denver citizens passed 2A funding measure.
  ● In 2019, developing a successful vision for 2A implementation.
  ● Fundraising idea = Round Up for Metro DNA @ SCFD institutions

Antonio Barrero, Mile High Youth Corps, antoniob@mhyc.net
  ● In 2018, launched our first ever youth outreach crew to increase awareness of and access to education, recreation, and employment opportunities that help get youth and families outdoors, funded by the GOCO Inspire Generation Wild Northeast Metro Coalition; launched first identity-based crew (women’s crew); launched first wildland fire crew.
  ● In 2019, growing these programs (perhaps in partnership with Metro DNA) by working in other neighborhoods and with other organizations to reach more Metro Denver youth and impact more open spaces and public lands.

Annemarie Heinrich, Tri-County Health Department, aheinrich@tchd.org
  ● In 2018, along with the Denver Metro Partnership for Health (a 7-county collaboration of health departments), hosted a Climate and Health Equity Summit to explore public health’s role in promoting and achieving climate resilience.
  ● In 2019, working with a diversity of stakeholders to move forward health promotion policies that have co-benefits with other sectors such as economic development, housing, and transportation.

Katie Navin, CAEE, director@caee.org
  ● In 2018, brought together practitioners, evaluators, and funders to establish common outcomes for environmental education/connection to nature/outdoor rec, etc. to build capacity for evaluation and better align practitioner and funder priorities.
  ● In 2019, piloting evaluations using these outcomes.
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<td><a href="mailto:alexa.cotton@colorado.edu">alexa.cotton@colorado.edu</a></td>
<td>Alexa</td>
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<td>CU Boulder</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:Alexander.Handloff@colorado.edu">Alexander.Handloff@colorado.edu</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:aheinrich@tchd.org">aheinrich@tchd.org</a></td>
<td>Annemarie</td>
<td>Heinrich</td>
<td>Tri-County Health Department</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:antoniob@mhyd.net">antoniob@mhyd.net</a></td>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>Barrero</td>
<td>Mile High Youth Corps</td>
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<td>McLane</td>
<td>National Park Service</td>
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<td>Denver Mountain Parks Foundation</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:bnobles@sandcreekgreenway.org">bnobles@sandcreekgreenway.org</a></td>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>Nobles</td>
<td>Sand Creek Regional Greenway</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:bcalvert@drcog.org">bcalvert@drcog.org</a></td>
<td>Brad</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:chandi.aldena@tpl.org">chandi.aldena@tpl.org</a></td>
<td>Chandi</td>
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<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:cyuanfarrell@goco.org">cyuanfarrell@goco.org</a></td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Yuan-Farrell</td>
<td>Great Outdoors Colorado</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:cmhawkins@tnc.org">cmhawkins@tnc.org</a></td>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Hawkins</td>
<td>The Nature Conservancy</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:cbrowne@biohabitats.com">cbrowne@biohabitats.com</a></td>
<td>Claudia</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:corey.martz@du.edu">corey.martz@du.edu</a></td>
<td>Corey</td>
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<td>University of Denver, CCESL</td>
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<td>Dana</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:denise.hartsock@kp.org">denise.hartsock@kp.org</a></td>
<td>Denise</td>
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<td>Kaiser Permanente</td>
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<td>Gordon</td>
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<td>Denver Parks &amp; Rec</td>
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<td>Jenifer</td>
<td>Doane</td>
<td>Arapahoe County</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jwhitener@denverzoo.org">jwhitener@denverzoo.org</a></td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Whitener</td>
<td>Denver Zoo</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:jes@citywild.org">jes@citywild.org</a></td>
<td>Jes</td>
<td>Ward</td>
<td>CityWILD</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jessicagodinez@fs.fed.us">jessicagodinez@fs.fed.us</a></td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Godinez</td>
<td>USFS</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:jtenneson@arapahoegov.com">jtenneson@arapahoegov.com</a></td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>Tenneson</td>
<td>Arapahoe County</td>
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<td>Karl</td>
<td>Brummert</td>
<td>Denver Audubon</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:naturelover_21@hotmail.com">naturelover_21@hotmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:director@caee.org">director@caee.org</a></td>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>Navin</td>
<td>Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:kweiss@elkkids.org">kweiss@elkkids.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Madison.Kraus@colorado.edu">Madison.Kraus@colorado.edu</a></td>
<td>Madi</td>
<td>Kraus</td>
<td>CU Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:maria@climatecourage.cc">maria@climatecourage.cc</a></td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Talero</td>
<td>Climate Courage, LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mark.stevens@patagonia.com">mark.stevens@patagonia.com</a></td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Stevens</td>
<td>Patagonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:melake@groundworkcolorado.org">melake@groundworkcolorado.org</a></td>
<td>Melake</td>
<td>Getabetcha</td>
<td>Groundwork Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:michael_dagostino@fws.gov">michael_dagostino@fws.gov</a></td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>D'Agostino</td>
<td>US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mikaela_oles@fws.gov">mikaela_oles@fws.gov</a></td>
<td>Mikaela</td>
<td>Oles</td>
<td>USFWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mmaloy@denverzoo.org">mmaloy@denverzoo.org</a></td>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>Maloy</td>
<td>Denver Zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:nicole.chernick@colorado.edu">nicole.chernick@colorado.edu</a></td>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Chernik</td>
<td>CU Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:nshipman@msudenver.edu">nshipman@msudenver.edu</a></td>
<td>Nona</td>
<td>Shipman</td>
<td>One World One Water, MSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:pmcmullenbushman@butterflies.org">pmcmullenbushman@butterflies.org</a></td>
<td>Parker</td>
<td>McMullen-Bushman</td>
<td>Butterfly Pavilion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:zemach.peggy@gmail.com">zemach.peggy@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Peggy</td>
<td>Zemach</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:rtvermeal@gmail.com">rtvermeal@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Vermeal</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sam.wallace@du.edu">sam.wallace@du.edu</a></td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Wallace</td>
<td>University of Denver, CCESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:samantha.lasher@ucdenver.edu">samantha.lasher@ucdenver.edu</a></td>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>Lasher</td>
<td>CU Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sara.davis@denvergov.org">sara.davis@denvergov.org</a></td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>Denver Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sarah@sarahthomasconsulting.com">sarah@sarahthomasconsulting.com</a></td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:shane@lincolnhillscares.org">shane@lincolnhillscares.org</a></td>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>Wright</td>
<td>Lincoln Hills Cares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:skotl@ssprd.org">skotl@ssprd.org</a></td>
<td>Skot</td>
<td>Latona</td>
<td>South Suburban Parks &amp; Recreation District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:eriksen.stacey@epa.gov">eriksen.stacey@epa.gov</a></td>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>Eriksen</td>
<td>EPA Region 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sstowell@denverzoo.org">sstowell@denverzoo.org</a></td>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Stowell</td>
<td>Denver Zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sdaggett@law.du.edu">sdaggett@law.du.edu</a></td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Daggett</td>
<td>RMLUI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:suzanna@highlinecanal.org">suzanna@highlinecanal.org</a></td>
<td>Suzanna</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>High Line Canal Conservancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t <a href="mailto:coppola@npca.org">coppola@npca.org</a></td>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Coppola</td>
<td>National Parks Conservation Association</td>
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