### *Innovating for Viability Land and Water Tour of the Lower Arkansas Basin* Tour Logos.png

### Tour Overview:

### The Colorado Foundation for Water Education, National Young Farmers Coalition, Colorado Ag Water Alliance and the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union are partnering together to offer this one-day tour focused on innovative solutions for agricultural viability. Hear from speakers and visit operations focused on irrigation efficiency, soil health, adaptation for climate change, alternative transfer methods, water quality, farmland succession planning and more.

### Participants will enjoy a unique local meal during the tour and will walk away with a stronger understanding of the local nexus between water and the agriculture industry.

**Tour Goals:**

***Informed Coloradoans-***Help interested citizens, elected official and community leaders gain a well-rounded, objective look at regional water management considerations so they leave feeling more equipped to engage in local and statewide conversation and to approach leadership and decision-making roles with confidence.

***Stewardship-*** Showcase the local nexus between water and the agriculture industry, including opportunities for working towards a more secure water future.

***Collaboration-*** Convey the importance of partnerships in water resource management, water supply planning, soil health practices, and river health and the innovative water technologies surrounding the agriculture industry.

***New Perspective-*** Bring diverse audiences together to learn from each other and create an environment for collaboration.

***Farmland Access/Succession-*** Discuss the importance of ensuring secure farmland access and succession planning for the next generation of farmers and ranchers in Colorado to maintaining the state's agricultural heritage, supporting rural economies, and passing down stewardship of our land and water resources.  
  
 **Tour Agenda:**

**Meeting and Parking:** Tour will start from and end at the Arkansas Valley Organic Growers (AVOG) Building located at: *Confirming Address*

**8:00- AVOG open-** Time to get settled and used the restroom before we board the bus.

**8:15- Welcome and Introductions**

We will begin the day with a welcome from host organizations and an overview of the day.

**8:45- Depart AVOG for the Rusler Family Farm (15 minute drive)**

*Bus Talk: Greg Peterson, Colorado Ag Water Alliance*   
 Introduction to CAWA  
 Setting the stage and tour expectations

**9:00- Rusler Family Farm Tour and Discussion,**

*Speaker: The Rusler Family, Rusler Family Farm (40 minutes)*

The Rusler Family has been active in agriculture scene in the lower Arkansas Valley. At this farm we   
 will learn about the local Bessemer Ditch Project and Study, Water Rights, Land Development and   
 Succession Planning on the farm and how those topics are incorporated into daily operations.   
   
  *Speaker: Jeff Goats, National Resource Conservation Service (20 minutes)*

Jeff will speak to work he is doing to assess and improve soil health for farmers. He will show us   
 how he collects samples and what the current soil health conditions look like in the region.   
  
**10:15 Depart for Hirakata Farms (40 minute drive)**

*Bus Talk: Aubriel Jones, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union* Introduction to RMFU  
 *Bus Talk: Matt Heimerich, Palmer Land Trust and Crowley County Farmer* History of Water and Agriculture in the region  
 Provide farmer perspective on owning a water system and ditch and land access

**11:00 Hirakata Farms** *Speaker: Michael Hirakata, Hirakata Family Farm (45 minutes)*

The Hirakata Family has influential in the creation and coordination of the Rocky Ford Growers   
 Association that was created after the listeria outbreak in 2011. We will hear about how the   
 the growers in the region came together to address water quality. We will also visit the   
 cantaloupe packing facility for the region and hear about how the Hirakata’s are involved in the   
 Catlin Canal project and how it impacts their operations and leasing water.   
  
**12:00 Depart for Colorado State University’s Arkansas Valley Research Center (5 minute drive)**

**12:15 Lunch-** Catered by Christine’s Fine Dining- Meal prepared from local pork and chicken and local   
 vegetables.

**12:45 Lunch Discussion**

*Speaker: Mike Bartolo, CSU Arkansas Valley Research Center (20 minutes)*

Overview of the research center and what work is being done there

How climate change is impacting agriculture in the region and considerations for future   
 operations  
  
**1:15 Depart for Aurora Water Revegetation Fields and Lease Back Site (10 minute drive)****2:00****Aurora Water Revegetation Fields and Lease Back Site** *Speaker: Jerry Knapp, Aurora Water (40 minutes)*

Drive by the revegetation fields and learn about the purpose of the fields.

Visit the lease back site- Learn about the project, challenges, and how it impacts the region.

**2:45 Depart for AVOG (40 minute drive)**

*Bus Talk: Kate Greenberg, National Young Farmers Coalition* Introduction to NYCF  
 *Bus Talk: Blake Osborne, Colorado State University Water Institute* His role at the Water Institute  
 Basin Round Table Involvement and local update on projects included in Colorado’s Water   
 Plan.

**3:30 Small Scale Operation Perspective**

*Speaker: Dan Hobbs, Hobbs Family Farm (15 minutes)*

The Hobbs Family Farm is a prime example of a small scale operation in the region. Dan will share   
 with us his perspective as a farmer on how his farm fits into the food infrastructure in the area   
 and how he uses different crop systems and operations for his farm.

**3:45 Tour Wrap Up** *Speaker: Stephanie Scott, Colorado Foundation for Water Education*

Final thoughts, feedback and discussion

Next steps and how to engage with host organizations **4:00 Tour Concludes**