

John Berggren, Ph.D.

Regional Policy Manager, Healthy Rivers



John Berggren is a regional policy manager with Western Resource Advocates (WRA), where he develops and advances equitable policies to improve regional and inter-state water governance and management in ways that benefit rivers and the communities, recreation opportunities, and environment they support. Using his deep knowledge of Western river and water issues, he collaborates with conservation community partners, water providers, federal and state agency staff, and other decision makers to further the next generation of water management strategies.

A key focus for Berggren at WRA is pushing policies and governing practices surrounding the Colorado River Basin to be more inclusive, equitable, and responsive, especially in the face of climate change. He works closely with colleagues and stakeholders to provide innovative ideas and suggest new ways to better manage the river to benefit the waterway itself and ensure rivers and the environment are considered in local, state, and federal decision making.

Berggren also does extensive work to further integrate water with land-use planning and help communities become as water efficient as possible. As the Colorado River Basin is home to some of the fastest growing states in the country, he publishes reports and guidebooks, conducts outreach, and provides on-the-ground support to encourage water-efficient development. In addition to providing direct assistance to interested communities, he also supports the Sonoran Institute and Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy in facilitating workshops for municipalities, after which attendees leave with a tailored one-year action plan to meet their water-saving goals. One of his proudest accomplishments while at WRA is partnering with the Babbitt Center and Utah State University to expand that Growing Water Smart workshop program to Utah after securing a grant from the state and collaborating with local stakeholders.

Berggren's favorite part of his job is seeing the real-world impact, whether that is helping a community think through their vision for water and growth or helping to pass the first state-wide turfgrass replacement bill in Colorado. He values the opportunity to work with and consistently learn from the smart and hardworking people in the water world. Prior to joining WRA, he was a doctoral student at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where he interacted with a variety of nonprofit groups working on Colorado River policy. He appreciated the ability of nonprofit groups to push for needed changes, and he was drawn to WRA's thoughtful and productive approach to the river.

Safeguarding rivers is personal for Berggren. He sees all Western values reflected in rivers and believes that the way we treat rivers is emblematic of our society. His love for and drive to protect rivers was reinforced with the birth of his young daughter, in whom he hopes to instill an ethos of conservation and love for rivers.

Berggren has a Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Studies from the University of Colorado at Boulder, a Master of Health Sciences from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University. He serves on the city of Boulder's Water Resources Advisory Board, is a member of the Colorado Water and Land Use Planning Alliance, and was certified as a Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper.

Originally from Salt Lake City, Berggren lives in Boulder, Colo. with his wife and daughter, who consumes the bulk of their time, energy, thinking, and affection. He loves to fish, mountain bike, trail run, and has a knack for woodworking.

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