



# Public Services and Community Safety Existing Conditions Memo

## About the Analysis

This memo summarizes existing conditions related to public services and community safety in Huerfano County. It was developed as part of the *2023 Huerfano County Cooperative Planning Projects*. This chapter will complement other chapters and inform recommendations for the updated Huerfano County Comprehensive Plan.

## Key Takeaways

- The county has experienced very limited population growth and land use change since it last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2018. As such, demand for public and community safety services has essentially remained level, however challenges and needs remain as explained in this memo.
- The County Sheriff's Department faces continued challenges with its ability to recruit and retain personnel for open positions. This is an issue in the sense that Huerfano County has the third highest rate of violent crimes per capita (among Colorado counties). Recently, several community stakeholders engaged for this plan update voiced concerns about drug-related crimes throughout the county, but particularly in Walsenburg, where there is greater population density.
- As discussed later in this memo, the county's fire response and prevention districts are generally well equipped in terms personnel, volunteers, and equipment. However, the level of wildfire risk is high throughout the county given the relatively arid climate, and expanses of dense forests, and dry grassland. Furthermore, due to variable levels of precipitation, and increasing (average) temperatures during the warmer months, ensuring the adequacy of response staff and equipment is critical to community safety now and in the future.
- Given the county's limited population growth in recent years and relatively limited amount of new development, its demand for water has remained relatively flat. However, the ability to meet today's demands does not, by default, translate to the ability to meet demands 20 or 30 years from now. Looking ahead, the county will need to be thoughtful and strategic about the amount and form of new development it permits and what effect that, as well as increased tourism, could have on the availability of a reliable water supply.

## Defining Public Services and Safety

This section provides an overview of essential services and supporting infrastructure in Huerfano County. These include fire response, law enforcement, water supply, sanitary sewer, stormwater management, electricity, and trash/recycling collection. This is a current snapshot of the services in order to inform plan update recommendations and decisions about future growth and development in different parts of the county.

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## How Public Services & Safety Relate to the Larger Goals of This Plan

The provision of adequate public services and community safety is central to the county's stability as place to live, do business, and visit. The capacity of the county, agencies, and districts to provide, maintain, upgrade, and staff their services is essential to maintaining the existing standard of living for county residents and to providing a certain quality of visitor experience for non-residents. To ensure the future success of the county, public and safety services must function well and must be scaled appropriately to meet the needs of any new development and potential population growth.

### Risk Reduction

As documented in 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan and recently heard through stakeholder engagement, the county is susceptible to a variety of naturally occurring hazards such as a wildfire or a flood. A thorough baseline understanding of what hazard response personnel and equipment currently exist in the county is essential to planning for risk and effectively responding to incidents. Through strategic coordination, responders can more preemptively practice risk reduction (e.g., brush thinning), respond to incidents after they have started, and support community recovery efforts after the fact. Taken together, a cohesive understanding of capacity ultimately reduces risk and the adverse economic, health, and social effects stemming from an incident.

### Smart Growth and Sustainability

Sustainability is a condition in which a current generation uses resources in a way that does not diminish those resources for successive generations. Growing sustainably means conserving critical resources (i.e., water resources, farmland, etc.) so they are not exhausted to a point when they can no longer support the needs of a population. Adequate water supply is perhaps of greatest importance here. Especially with rising average temperatures and ongoing variability in annual precipitation levels, suppliers must ensure that demand for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses in the county in the years ahead does not exceed supply. Similarly, land use changes and growth must be thoughtful to ensure that sanitary sewer and stormwater drainage systems, for example, aren't taxed to the point of failure, which could cause significant impacts to water resources and ecosystems.

### Economic Prosperity

As the county considers ways to diversify and grow its economy, increased business investment and tourism will increase demand on public and community safety services. The adequacy of these services will be a cornerstone to successful economic development in the county; to retain and grow existing business and attract new business. Looking ahead, cultivating new economic activity in the county and growing its revenue will require that adequate public services be available. Depending on the amount of and location of new investment, improved or new services may be necessary.

In addition, it's essential to consider how new business investment in the county will benefit and increase access to services or job opportunities for local residents, as well as tourists. Special

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districts, such as cultural, recreational, or tourism districts may be an effective vehicle for guiding these investments and optimizing benefits for residents.

**Trends** This section highlights trends affecting the future capacity and viability of staff, equipment, and infrastructure for public services and community safety. As the county looks ahead, it should track these trends to help guide and ensure the adequate provision of services and safety.

### Wildfire Risk

In part based on rising average temperatures and increased levels of aridity, many counties throughout Colorado face an ongoing or growing risk of wildfire. Huerfano County is no exception. Due to the high amount of dense, forested land within the county, especially its western portion, and open grasslands, the county is exposed to a high level of risk. Many peer counties and regions throughout Colorado are preemptively taking measures to address wildfire risk and reduce the potential loss of life, property, and mature forest growth. These practices also reduce the impacts from associated smoke inhalation. Huerfano County should stay apprised of best practices being utilized by its peer counties and consider leveraging them in the years ahead to reduce its risk and susceptibility to loss.

### Water Supply Concerns

As documented in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, Huerfano County generally experiences an arid climate. Given variations in annual precipitation rates and rising average temperatures, availability of a long-term water supply commensurate with current levels is not a guarantee for the county. Moreover, as documented by the HCWCD, water storage capacity in the Cucharas basin has significantly declined in the last 70 years.

Many communities throughout Colorado are conducting long-range water supply studies to determine how surface and ground water availability relates to current or increased levels of demand. Similarly, many communities are developing and implementing water conservation plans to reduce demand and optimize reuse. Looking ahead, the county will need to critically assess and quantify the availability of reliable water sources and whether those could serve existing demand, as well as any increased demand that would result from new development and new visitation (tourism).

### Labor Force Issues

Many Colorado communities are struggling to adequately staff key positions related to the adequate provision of public services and community safety. Continued vacancies can lead to systemic issues within the community, such as increased crime and disinvestment. Through communication and collaboration with its peer counties, Huerfano County will need to continue exploring and execute new and potentially innovative ways to attract and retain qualified employees that serve critical functions.

### Public Services / Safety Stakeholders & Existing Policy

The adequate provision of public services and safety throughout the county involves commitment from several different municipalities, agencies, and districts. The following stakeholders helped to inform this section of this plan update and will play an important role in supporting the plan's recommendations. As the county explores changes and improvements in the years ahead, county





staff should coordinate with these stakeholders as needed to optimize outcomes and help meet the vision and goals of the overall plan.

- Huerfano County (across departments)
- City of Walsenburg
- Town of La Veta
- The Community of Gardner
- Cuchara Water and Sanitation District
- Gardner Public Improvement District
- Huerfano Water Conservancy District
- Huerfano County Fire Protection District
- La Veta Fire Protection District
- Upper Huerfano Fire Protection District
- SIEA Energy
- Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center

### Relevant Plans

In developing this section, the project team reviewed several existing plans and documents and corresponded with staff from multiple entities responsible for the provision of public services and community safety.

- Huerfano County Comprehensive Plan Update 2018
- Huerfano County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018)
- Walsenburg Comprehensive Plan (2015)
- Huerfano County Community Survey (2022)
- Southern Mountain Loop Planning and Environmental Linkage Study (2019)

### Existing Goals & Objectives

In the County’s 2018 Comprehensive Plan and Walsenburg’s 2015 Comprehensive Plan, there are several policies that speak to public services and community safety. Taken together, these provide an important benchmark and will be considered in the development of the updated Plan’s recommendations. Those most relevant to potential changes or growth in the county in the years ahead are included here. Taken together, they suggest that the county anticipates and will welcome a certain degree of future growth and new investment, but that it must not conflict with the adequate provision of public services and community safety.

### Huerfano County Comprehensive Plan, 2018

GOAL WR.I: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IN HUERFANO COUNTY WILL BE SUPPORTED BY PHYSICALLY AND LEGALLY RELIABLE WATER SUPPLIES

Policy WR.1.1: The County typically will approve development water supplies which are assured by firm water supply contracts with governmental water providers such as the City of Walsenburg, the Town of La Veta, and the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District.

Policy WR.1.2: In the absence of governmental water supply contracts, the applicant should provide evidence of a reliable water supply.





Policy WR.1.3: In those rare events that the above (reliable supply) documentation is not available, the County may elect to do its own analysis in consultation with the appropriate Water Commissioner (Districts 16 or 79) and the Huerfano County Water Conservancy District.

Policy WR.1.4: Applicants should avoid reliance on either: 1. Wells which have been permitted solely for “exempt” purposes. Such wells rarely satisfy the County requirements of a reliable water supply for development purposes. 2. “Haul” water for which a firm contract for a specific amount of water over a specified period of time has not been entered into with the water provider.

## GOAL LG.2: PLAN FOR GROWTH THAT MINIMIZES AND ADDRESSES ANY IMPACTS ON THE COUNTY.

Policy LG.2.1: Ensure that new development under the jurisdiction of the County is appropriately located with adequate access to utilities and services.

## GOAL RU.1: PROTECT THE HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE AND BEAUTY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHEN LOCATING RESIDENTIAL LAND USES IN THE COUNTY.

Policy RU.1.1: Encourage residential uses to locate where there are adequate services, including utilities.

Policy RU.1.4: Ensure that new residential uses have adequate water and sewer provisions.

Policy RU 2.4: New residential development is encouraged to utilize water conservation techniques in housing and landscaping.

Policy RU.1.2: Encourage the clustering of residential development in order to protect agricultural land. Ensure that adequate water is available for any cluster developments per C.R.S. 37-92-602(1)(b).

Policy ED.5.3: Leverage governmental water and wastewater infrastructure to promote targeted growth.

Policy ED.5.5: Develop utility infrastructure for large land parcels for agriculture and industrial development.

Policy ED.5.14: Provide county-wide urgent care and ambulance service.

Policy PSA. 3.1: Require applicants proposing new development or a land use change to work with the providers of the impacted public utilities, services and facilities.

Policy PSA.3.2: Encourage development in locations where the necessary public facilities and services, such as water and sewage disposal, can be provided economically, safely and efficiently.

Policy PSA.3.4: Support law enforcement and emergency services in their efforts to address public safety issues to protect the quality of life in the County.

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Policy RH.4.6: Require all new subdivision development that results in five (5) lots or greater to be approved for access and layout by emergency services including fire, sheriff's office, and ambulance services.



## Major Projects Overview

As discussed, the Huerfano Water Conservancy District is currently undertaking engineering / design work leading up to the probable construction of water supply storage facilities in the Cucharas Basin. Assuming the projects in design advance to completion, they will significantly increase the District's capacity to collect and store water within Huerfano County.

Other project concepts discussed that may evolve to physical improvements within the next five years are the replacement of the sewer system in Gardner, an upgrade to the primary gas transmission line serving Walsenburg and Aguilar, and upgrades to Walsenburg's stormwater collection and conveyance system. While not a capital project, the amount of job vacancies within the County Sheriff's Department remains a critical concern and will need to be addressed.

## Public Input

### 2023 Cooperative Planning Projects Community Survey

As part of the 2023 Cooperative Planning Projects efforts, a community survey was distributed to solicit feedback from residents on a variety of topics. The survey included some questions related to public services and safety. Below are some key takeaways from those responses that will help focus and shape plan recommendations. While some of the feedback conveyed strongly negative sentiments, many responses highlighted the positive feelings that residents have about living and working in Huerfano County.

- When asked, 'What are Huerfano County's greatest strengths today?', only six percent of respondents selected community facilities and services.
- When asked, 'What are the greatest challenges facing Huerfano County today?', 51 percent of respondents selected 'crime.'
- Write-in responses to this same question included:
  - 'Increasing scarcity of water.'
  - 'Lack of water rights'
  - Four separate respondents identified illegal drugs / drug use and addiction with one respondent specifying concern about drug use in Walsenburg
  - 'Lack of police presence in the outlying county areas.'
- When asked to provide 3 words or phrases to describe Huerfano County, multiple respondents highlighted positive assets or characteristics with an emphasis on the county's natural beauty. However, several responses highlighted important needs related to public services and community safety. These included:
  - Transients in Walsenburg/crime/lack of law enforcement
  - High criminal and drug activity
  - Lack of law enforcement

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- Lawless
- Drug and Alcohol filled
- Crime
- Poverty in Walsenburg/crime
- Poverty
- High Poverty
- Arid
- Poor (7)
- Lack of services
- No infrastructure (2)
- Lack of water
- Small pool of qualified citizens to fill community position
- Underserved
- Safe place for criminals

- When asked, 'Are there specific hazard concerns or problematic areas that you think the planning committee should pay attention to?', several expressed concerns about the ongoing risk of wildfires and the need for both Walsenburg and the county to coordinate efforts to reduce risk (not just in forested areas) and increase readiness to detect a fire early and respond efficiently.
- Several other expressed concerns about the quality of drinking water in the county and its potential effects on peoples' health and the need for regular monitoring.
- Another respondent opined that there is insufficient sewer capacity in Walsenburg.
- When asked to rank actions that should be taken to reduce damage and disruption from hazard events in Huerfano County:
  - The majority assigned a high priority ranking to, 'Strengthen critical public facilities such as police, fire, schools and hospitals.'
  - The majority assigned a high priority ranking to, 'Strengthen infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water/wastewater and electric power supply facilities.'

## 2022 Community Survey

In 2022, Huerfano County conducted a community-wide survey. Again, many respondents made clear what they enjoy and embrace about living in Huerfano County. However, when asked to describe the top issues, priorities, or problems that the Huerfano County Government should be addressing the most, responses included:

- "Crime, drugs, road/street condition, more assistance for the elderly population which is growing."
- "Law enforcement, better schools, enforcement of drug activity and criminal activity."
- "Employment opportunities, affordable housing, education, crime prevention."

When asked to what degree a series of different issues were a problem in Huerfano County, 70 percent identified drugs as a major problem.

## Open House Engagement

More recently, in May 2023, the project team managing this plan update had the opportunity to meet with community members in-person at an open house event. The key takeaways that are related to public services include:





- The county should scale up emergency services and manage risks with regard to drought and wildfire;
- There was disagreement on whether the county’s emergency facilities, equipment and personnel are currently sufficient to ensure the county’s health, safety, and welfare – La Veta residents mostly answered in the affirmative, but all Walsenburg respondents answered in the negative; and
- Participants were most interested in investing in fire response, police, and EMT services.

## Potential Areas of Focus

The following are recommendations for areas of focus based on community input, existing planning documents and existing conditions data.

**Condition:** Several residents expressed concern about crime and drug use in the county as a priority issue that needs to be addressed.

**Response:** County planning staff, the Board of Commissioners, and the County Sheriff’s Office should more fully collaborate to identify ways that crime prevention and effective enforcement can be improved through community partnerships, utilization of data, and use of best practices from peer agencies in other jurisdictions

### Potential Strategies:

- County planning staff and the Sheriff’s office should plan and hold a one-day forum with community members and community-based organizations to present crime statistics from the last five years and discuss options for residents and organizations to support community policing efforts (i.e. Neighborhood Watch, Volunteer Neighborhood Liaison Program).
- Conduct outreach to law enforcement departments in other jurisdictions to identify innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining new personnel to address the county’s capacity gap.
- On an annual basis, the Sheriff’s office should digitally map where crimes are occurring (by type) to identify hot-spots and increase monitoring and enforcement in those areas.
- County staff and partners should continue pursuing opportunities for increased employment, community-building (volunteer) activities, and destinations that provide programming (i.e. recreation / community centers) as means of reducing drug use and crime.
- Research and consider utilization of the Larimer County, CO model to increase community communication and access to resources through facilitated community groups and educational materials to support community safety and resilience.
- Support the development of drug treatment centers and related facilities within the county to assist residents in recovery.



**Condition:** Huerfano County is highly susceptible to wildfire risk due to the aridity of the climate, the amount of mature forest and open grasslands, rising average temperatures, and variability in annual levels of precipitation.

**Response:** Ensure regular communication and collaboration between fire districts operating within the county to optimize their preemptive actions, response effectiveness during an incident, and capacity to support recovery after an incident.

**Potential strategies:**

- County Emergency Services should hold a twice annual meeting among all district staff and volunteers so they can share project updates, critical equipment or staffing needs, and lessons learned from the last six months.
- County Emergency Services should pursue a grant to complete a county-wide wildfire protection plan to geo-locates varied levels of risk and proves a prioritized list of mitigation actions.
- All districts should conduct an annual audit of all available equipment to identify critical gaps and pursue immediate funding from the county or grant sources to address those gaps.
- Ensure that mutual aid agreements between districts in the county are all in good standing as well as any districts or agencies in neighboring Las Animas and Pueblo counties.
- As financial resources allow, invest in the latest wildland fire detection technologies to better enable immediate response.
- Collaborate with partner agencies (i.e., US Forest Service) to continue biofuel removal programs to reduce the amount of excess fuel loads within forested areas.
- Start or continue pursuit of annual grant with the Colorado Forest Service through their existing program to conduct risk reduction / mitigation activities.
- Continue active recruitment of and sufficiently train new volunteers for each of the districts serving the county.

**Condition:** Based on its current water sources, the aridity of its climate, and rising average temperatures, Huerfano County needs to be thoughtful about the amount, type, and location of future land development and population growth in order to sustain a long-term water supply.

**Response:** The County should take the steps necessary to understand the quantity and quality of its long-term water supply and any limitations on the ability to adequately serve new land development and population growth.

**Potential strategies:**

- Complete a 30-year water supply study to determine whether current and projected supplies would be sufficient to serve the County’s projected resident and employee population in 2055.
- As part of the supply study, Count planning staff should closely coordinate with the Huerfano Water Conservancy District on their ongoing capacity / storage projects to determine the degree to which those would augment supply volumes.





- Leveraging the expertise of and plans completed in the last five years by several other Colorado communities, the county should commission a Water Conservation Plan / Water Efficiency Plan.
- If mid-to long-term shortages are identified through the supply study, County staff should coordinate with staff at CSU Extension Water and the Colorado Water Conservation Board to identify and share best practices on reducing demand within the agricultural and ranching sectors.
- Consider the role of private wells in managing water resources on a county scale
- Continue to seek new water rights in collaboration with municipalities
- Support Walsenburg’s efforts to augment water resources to facilitate affordable and attainable housing development in Northlands

## Addendum: Summary of Current Services & Providers

This section describes the existing services, personnel, and equipment within the county. This information will help to inform recommendations for how and where improvements in services may be necessary. This section breaks down services by provider (e.g., County, municipality, district) to clearly outline the current responsibilities of the county in terms of community services.

### Assets / Facilities / Services

#### Fire Prevention and Response

##### Huerfano County Fire Protection District

The county, including Walsenburg, is served by the Huerfano County Fire Protection District. The District owns and operates two stations. One is located at 310 Main Street in downtown Walsenburg and the second is in the Navajo Ranch sub-division approximately seven miles west of Walsenburg.

The District does not employ any full-time, paid staff. Four officers receive a small, monthly stipend and are supported by 17 volunteers. The District’s contact indicated they would ideally like to have 8 additional volunteers on call for a total of 25.

In terms of equipment, the District owns and operates 14 vehicles including 4 structure (response) engines, 3 water tenders, 1 rescue vehicle, 2 incident command vehicles, and 4 brush trucks, however two of these are slated to be decommissioned in the near future.

The District has mutual aid agreements in place with the La Veta Fire Protection District and the Upper Huerfano Fire District. As needed, they will respond to calls and provide support for these other districts and vice versa.

##### La Veta Fire Protection District

The La Veta District currently has two full-time paid employees and 25 volunteers. It does not currently have any open positions  for hire. It owns and operates two stations.





One is located at 100 Birch Street in downtown La Veta and the second is located at 400 Panadero Avenue just west of Cuchara's center.

The District owns and operates 13 response vehicles including three Type 1 engines, one Type 3, one Type 4, one Type 5, three Type 6, 1 tender and three ambulances equipped with Advanced Life Support (ALS) equipment.

On an as needed basis, District staff and volunteers will support any neighboring districts in responding to calls and vice versa.

### Upper Huerfano Fire District

This District currently has 14 volunteers, but no paid staff. It owns and operates two stations. One is located in Gardner and the other is a sub-station in Redwing to the southwest of Gardner.

The District owns and operates seven response vehicles including one command/ chase vehicle that is outfitted with dry foam, two Type 6, one Type 2, one Type 7, one Type 1 support tender and one Type 2 support tender.

Because existing volunteers are not always available and able to respond to calls, the District is constantly in search of new volunteers. The District has mutual aid agreements in place with the La Veta and Huerfano County districts already discussed. It will support them on calls on an as needed basis and vice versa.

The three districts share a page out notification system for structure and wildland fires. All staff and volunteers receive a page whenever a fire is reported, regardless of its location within the county. The page is canceled if staff or volunteers from any of the three districts are not needed to support response.

### Law Enforcement

#### Huerfano County

The County Sheriff's Department serves all of Huerfano County, including Walsenburg. As of 2016, Walsenburg does not maintain its own Police Department. The Sheriff's Department currently employs nine full-time law enforcement staff. Notably, the Department's point of contact indicated that it currently has 11 open positions and is understaffed.

Owned by the county, the Huerfano County Jail & Correctional Center is a medium-security jail located at 500 South Albert Avenue in Walsenburg. The facility houses male offenders who are convicted for crimes committed under Colorado state and federal laws. Opened in 1998, the facility has a capacity for 752 inmates. According to the Department's point of contact, the jail is usually at capacity.

In the last five years, according to the County Sheriff, crime rates (accounting for all crime types) in the unincorporated county and Walsenburg have remained relatively stable. However, crime statistics suggest a high level of need for prevention and enforcement. Huerfano County has a slightly higher than average rate of violent crime compared to the national average. The rate of violent crime in Huerfano County is **SE GROUP** 25, while the US average is 22.7.





Additionally, Huerfano County has a higher-than-average property crime rate. Property crime in the county stands at 35.7, which is greater than the US average of 35.4.

### La Veta

The Town employs one Marshal who is solely responsible for responding to calls within La Veta. He operates one vehicle but the Department has two vehicles because there is currently an open position for a Deputy Marshal. In addition, the Department employs one part-time support staff responsible for managing body camera footage and videos.

If necessary, the Marshal will call the Huerfano County Sheriff's Department for back up. According to the Marshal, crime rates in La Veta over the last five years have been increasing.

### Lathrop State Park

Colorado State Patrol keeps a small office inside the park office and, as needed, has the option to keep one vehicle on-site. While it's not regularly staffed, a state patroller can use it as a staging location in support of Huerfano County sheriffs or deputies if called upon.

### Emergency Responders (EMTs)

#### Huerfano County

The Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center is located on Highway 160 just west of Walsenburg. The center owns and operates an ambulance service that is equipped to respond to calls for all of Huerfano County. The service owns four ambulances and typically two are in operation each day. The service includes 14 full-time staff and 4 on-call staff. All staff are employed by the health center. Currently, the ambulance service is fully staffed and does not have any positions open. As needed, Spanish Peaks staff will support the La Veta Fire Protection District through a mutual aid agreement.

### La Veta

The La Veta Fire Protection District provides fire prevention and response and emergency medical services in La Veta and Cuchara. The District owns and operates three ambulances, all of which are equipped with Advanced Life Support (ALS) equipment. Two are stationed in La Veta and one is stationed in Cuchara. The District employs one full-time Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) who is supported by 14 volunteer EMTs. Because volunteers are not always available and able to respond to calls, the District is consistently looking for additional volunteers. The District has a mutual aid agreement with the Spanish Peaks Health Center ambulance service and it will also respond to calls in Las Animas County, as needed.

### Water Supply

The availability of an adequate water supply is a critical issue in considering potential land use changes and population growth in the county in the years ahead; not only the availability of water





but the capacity of service providers to treat and convey the water and maintain the associated infrastructure.

As indicated in the 2018 County Comprehensive Plan:

“Huerfano County is arid country, historically water-short. Its rivers and streams, as well as their associated groundwater, are over-appropriated; flows vary wildly from month to month and year to year. As a result, securing a physically and legally reliable water supply is an essential requirement for land development and often the most difficult. Failed land use developments adversely affect county infrastructure and services. Inadequate water supply is one of the most common causes of failed development.”

### Huerfano County

The county owns and maintains the water supply in Gardner. It stores water in a tank that provides water to the village. The tank is supplied by two wells that the county owns.

### The City of Walsenburg

The City, which has senior water rights on the Cucharas River, currently owns five dam reservoirs. Due to the limitations of current storage capacity, the city is currently investigating expansion opportunities for holding treated water. It does not, however, have any near-term plans for increasing its treatment or conveyance capacity.

The City Public Works Department, which is responsible for maintaining the reservoirs, also maintains a treatment facility for this water supply. The facility is approximately 2.5-miles west of the city boundary. Public Works is also responsible for the installation and maintenance of water service lines and meters. Structure owners are responsible for the infrastructure between the meter and the tap or outlet. The city currently serves a total of 2,000 residential and commercial structures within the city.

The City also sells water to some of the units in the Spanish Peaks residential sub-division to west. In addition, the city has a water haul station that people living within a 10-mile radius of Walsenburg’s boundaries can apply to access. This water is sold at a higher rate than water within the city and purchases are limited to 3,000 gallons a month per residential property.

### La Veta

The Town of La Veta collects, stores, treats, and distributes its own water. It owns two ponds that it stores water in prior to treatment, which is then held in 500,000 and 250,000-gallon storage tanks. Water is pumped from the ponds through the treatment plant then into storage tanks. It almost exclusively serves customers within the town limits. The Town has one extra territorial conveyance line that serves 8 taps outside city limits. Staff is responsible for the installation and maintenance of conveyance lines up to the meter, from which point the structure owner is responsible. The Town currently serves approximately 600 taps. In the last five years, the level of demand has been very stable with approximately two new taps coming into service each year. The Town has indicated that that there is enough water for any parcels that could potentially be





built on in La Veta based on current zoning allowances. Increased development or density through rezoning(s) would likely increase demand on the Town's supply.

### Cuchara Water and Sanitation District

The District collects and stores its water in four holding tanks within Cuchara. It treats its water at the Spanish Peaks Water Plant before it is distributed to its customers. The District is responsible for the installation and maintenance of service (delivery) lines and meters. Customers are responsible for equipment from the meter into the structure. The District currently serves 660 customers and in the last five years, the number of its customers has essentially stayed the same. Its customers are generally located in or close to Cuchara.

According to the District's Business Administrator, the District is not experiencing, nor does it foresee any supply constraints. As such, it does not have any capacity or conveyance expansion projects planned.

### Gardner Water and Sanitation Public Improvement District

As indicated, the county owns and maintains the water supply in Gardner, but it is administered by the Public Improvement District. The District, which exclusively serves the community of Gardner, treats its water at a well prior to distribution. It stores its supply in a water tank, supplied by two wells, located in Gardner. It's responsible for the installation and maintenance of PVC service delivery lines and meters. Customers are responsible for the equipment between the meter and the served structure. The District currently serves 72 customers and in the last five years, demand for new service has remained static. The District may be replacing customers' meters in the coming years but has not confirmed its plans or timing for doing so. It does not have any other storage, treatment, or conveyance projects planned at this time.

### Huerfano Water Conservancy District (HCWCD)

The District is part of the Cucharas Basin Storage Collaborative. that also includes the Town of La Veta, Cuchara Sanitation & Water District, and the City of Walsenburg. The District has determined that there is a shortage of water storage facilities in the Cucharas River basin, reducing the availability of readily accessible supply for development. As indicated on the District's web page, "there is a dramatic shortage of water storage facilities (reservoirs) in the Cucharas basin, making dry year supplies tenuous and subject to the whims of annual and seasonal changes. Since WWII, the capacity of Cucharas basin storage facilities has dropped by more than 70%."

The collaborative seeking to increase storage capacity in the basin. The 2017 reconnaissance level investigation identified five preferred storage facilities from the upper to the lower reaches of the Cucharas Basin (Britton Ponds Enlargement, South Baker Creek Reservoir, Bruce Canyon Reservoir, La Veta Town Lakes Enlargement, Maria-Stevens Rehabilitation/Enlargement).

According to the District's Administrator, 50% engineering design has been completed for the Bruce Canyon Reservoir. Thirty (30) percent engineering design has been completed for the Maria-Stevens project. Fifty (50) percent design is in progress and is expected to be complete in 2024. When complete, these two projects are expected to add approximately 1,900 additional acre-feet of storage to the basin. In addition, the District has started a preliminary investigation for feasibility of a potential flood control / watershed conservation project that would combine the Bruce Canyon and Maria Stevens projects.

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Looking ahead to completion of these projects, the Collaborative members have an IGA in effect for the cooperative use of storage and potential exchange of supply.

### Private Wells

Several residents throughout the county get their water through private wells on or close to their property. Approximately [redacted] properties within the county are served by a well.

### Stormwater Management

#### Huerfano County

The County Public Works Department is responsible for the installation and maintenance of inlets and storm sewer mains in some parts, but not all of, Huerfano County. The Department indicated that existing facilities are adequate for the collection and conveyance of stormwater and it does not have any notable capacity/improvement projects underway or starting in the near future. (Sky/ County Public Works to confirm).

#### The City of Walsenburg

City staff is responsible for stormwater collection and drainage within Walsenburg, including the installation and maintenance of drain inlets and drainage lines. The city's system is scheduled for evaluation and review to determine if capacity is adequate and whether it's in a state of good repair. Specific projects and improvements will be identified pending this evaluation.

#### La Veta, Cuchara, and Gardner

There are no stormwater inlets or conveyance lines within these three communities. Stormwater is collected and conveyed through a series of ditches and runoff occurs through other natural means.

### Sanitary Sewer / Sewage Treatment

#### The City of Walsenburg

The Water and Sewer Department within Public Works manages sewage collection and treatment. The city owns and operates a treatment plant just east of the city. The City Administrator confirmed that the facility is operating well within capacity and could serve an additional 1,000 residents, if need be, before an expansion would need to be considered. This is consistent with information in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, which indicated that the facility was operating at 25 percent of its capacity.

#### Cuchara Water and Sanitation District

The District is responsible for the installation and maintenance of sanitary sewer lines in its service area. Sewage is treated at the wastewater treatment plant in Cuchara. According to the District's Business Administrator, they do not foresee any capacity constraints in the next 5-10 years and so are not planning any line or plant expansion projects.

#### Gardner Sanitation District





This District is responsible for the installation and maintenance of sanitary sewer lines within its service area. Sewage is treated in a lagoon system within Gardner. The county has completed an engineering analysis on the system's adequacy and determined that much of it needs to be replaced. Work on these upgrades is expected to start in spring or summer 2024.

### Town of La Veta

RMS Utilities installed new sewer lines throughout all of La Veta in 2015. The Town of La Veta Sewer and Maintenance Departments are responsible for maintenance of the sewer lines.

The Town owns and operates a sewage treatment plant, located at 100 E Stadium Drive, on the north side of town. This is a new \$6.6 million treatment facility that was completed in 2022. The Town is currently making the transition from operating under the old lagoon system permit to the new Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) discharge permit. No additional line or treatment improvement or expansion projects are planned at this time.

### Electricity

San Isabel Electric Association (SIEA) serves all of Huerfano County. It is a member of Tri-State Generation & Transmission Association. Tri-State G&T is a member-owned cooperative, comprised of 42 distribution electric cooperatives such as San Isabel Electric, across CO, NM, WY, and NV.

Tri-State G&T supplies power to SIEA, and its service contract includes a provision for purchasing a small percentage of local renewable energy. To meet this requirement, SIEA purchases from the Huerfano River Wind facility, located in Huerfano County, which accounts for approximately 3% of its purchases.

SIEA is responsible for the maintenance and installation of the Distribution system (under 100 kV) throughout Huerfano County. Tri-State G&T is responsible for the Transmission system (over 100 kV).

In Huerfano County, SIEA currently has approximately 6,280 active accounts. Five years ago, there were about 6,255 active accounts in Huerfano County, so growth is essentially flat at about 0.1% per year. Comparatively, across its service territory, SIEA has seen 1% to 2% growth each of the past 5 years.

Both San Isabel Electric and Tri-State G&T have made significant investments in capacity and transmission, and Huerfano County is adequately served by these two entities. While they both continue to invest in maintenance and system improvements, they do not have any significant projects planned. If growth requires such projects, they will be addressed as the system does have capacity to add load.

### Natural Gas

#### Huerfano County

Huerfano County government is not responsible for the installation or maintenance of any lines or other facilities that carry or store natural gas.

#### The City of Walsenburg





The City of Walsenburg Natural Gas Department provides service to domestic and commercial customers within Walsenburg. It currently has 1,500 meters for gas service. The gas is supplied through a 32-mile transmission line that delivers to Walsenburg residents and the Town of Aguilar. The city has submitted several grant applications to fund replacement of this line but has thus far not been awarded funding. It does not have sufficient funds of its own to complete the project.

### La Veta, Cuchara, and Gardner

These three communities are served entirely by above ground propane tanks that are serviced by private companies.

### Cable / Broadband

Cable and internet are available to customers throughout Huerfano County on a subscription basis. Installation and maintenance services are available through private providers.

### Waste Collection and Transfer

#### Huerfano County

The county owns and operates a Waste Transfer Station that is located just to the east of Walsenburg on Industrial Park Drive. The County Public Works Department is responsible for operating the facility. Anyone residing in the county is permitted to drop accepted materials at the transfer station. There is no landfill in the county. Waste from Huerfano County is transported to the landfill in La Junta.

#### City of Walsenburg

Waste and recycling collection in the city is provided through two vendors on a fee-basis. Residents of the city also have the option to bring accepted materials to the county's waste transfer station.

#### La Veta

Trash collection services are provided in La Veta through private companies (vendors) for a fee, but residents and business owners also have the option to transport their trash to the county's waste transfer station just to the east of Walsenburg. For recycling, the Town pays a vendor to operate a recycling center that is near the community center. Customers pay a fee for the service upon use. The center accepts cardboard, glass, paper, and aluminum. When full, the on-site bins are emptied by the contractor and materials are transported off-site.

