

2026-09-04 Woodruff - Q2 Remarks

I have the honor of setting the context for the environment in which we're operating and looking ahead to what we will all face together in 2027 with four primary areas of focus: water, wildfire, transportation, and our lands.

First up, as it should be, is water. How do we manage in an exceptional drought that has persisted year over year over year? You will see us prioritize a portfolio of water assets for beneficial use and for the species that depend on our water. And we will partner with the Colorado River District and with our Pitkin County and Healthy Rivers and Streams water portfolio to make sure we are keeping water on the Western Slope and minimizing any harm to the Roaring Fork River.

Second is wildfire. Many of us who have been here for decades used to think of wildfire as a season, and now we are all watching as wildfire risks take place year round. You will see us increasing our use of technology to detect and put out wildfires before they become catastrophic - we are doing this locally, and we are working on statewide legislation to ensure benefits accrue to all Coloradans. We also know affordability is critically important, and we're working with the state and the fire chiefs to make sure insurance companies are recognizing the hard work we're all doing to mitigate wildfire in their pricing models.

On transportation, we are so lucky to have an incredible partner in RFTA to find solutions that alleviate pressures on our corridor. From expanded bus service programs like the Flyer, changes to how we manage our county-owned parking lots to keep cars from entering into our towns, and electrification - both of our own fleets and high-speed chargers to support individual EV ownership.

Finally, the most beautiful valley in the state and the west - the land we live on and get to call home. Just yesterday, our Board finalized the sale of the largest addition to the Maroon Bells Wilderness in history, continuing the rewilding of our most precious landscapes. In addition to preserving land, we're also ensuring our community can thrive. We're working locally to ensure resident ownership of the last vestige of affordable housing in the valley, and statewide with the legislature to maximize the amount of time we have to negotiate for the critically important preservation of our mobile home communities. And, as we begin to implement our new comprehensive plan, also adopted yesterday, we will encourage land use applications that demonstrate how development can navigate the hotter and drier climate we are all facing.

These are just a taste of the issues we will face in 2027. My fellow community members, the context in which we are operating is challenging to say the least. And the pace of change is faster than many of us have experienced in our lifetimes.

In 2027, the next Governor of Colorado has the chance to set a new tone. He is committed to our sustainability goals and just visited our microgrid and renewable field this past weekend. He understands we have tension in funding K-12, higher education and healthcare. He also is well

poised to fight the attacks from the federal administration that are directly impacting our most vulnerable community members and putting every one of us at risk with two wars that are influencing the prices we pay at the grocery stores and our interest rates that impact what our community can achieve.

We must stay nimble. We must stay engaged. We are a community who rolls up our sleeves, and we have community members who challenge us, have difficult conversations, and together, we chart a path forward.

My fellow Board members, county elected officers and I stand at the ready to have those conversations. And for you, to continue to challenge us and demand exceptional leadership in protecting what we value most. Our community deserves it. This land deserves it. Our children and grandchildren deserve it.