

# THE SOUND OF WATER

## THE MOUNTAIN WEST

### SOUTHWESTERN COLORADO

### WESTERN SLOPE

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Daniel Reade *Data Analyst LOR Foundation*

*Analyzing the Water Related Issues of Farmers/Ranchers in the Mountain West & Telling the Stories of the Faces Behind the Statistics.*

## Introduction

This partnership between the CSU Extension Internship Program and the LOR foundation's Field Work initiative sought to develop a deeper understanding of water related issues facing farmers and ranchers, how this community perceives the problems, and innovates solutions.

My role as a researcher was assisting LOR's Field Work initiative. This program has invested more than \$535,000 dollars to 61 farmers and ranchers for the purpose of research led by individual farmers and ranchers that investigate innovative approaches to using water in agricultural and ranching practices.

This initiative combined with CSU Extension's support in providing the facilitated site visits and access to a network of extension agents created an unparalleled snapshot of the water related challenges facing this community.

## Field Work



## Research Questions

### Question 1:

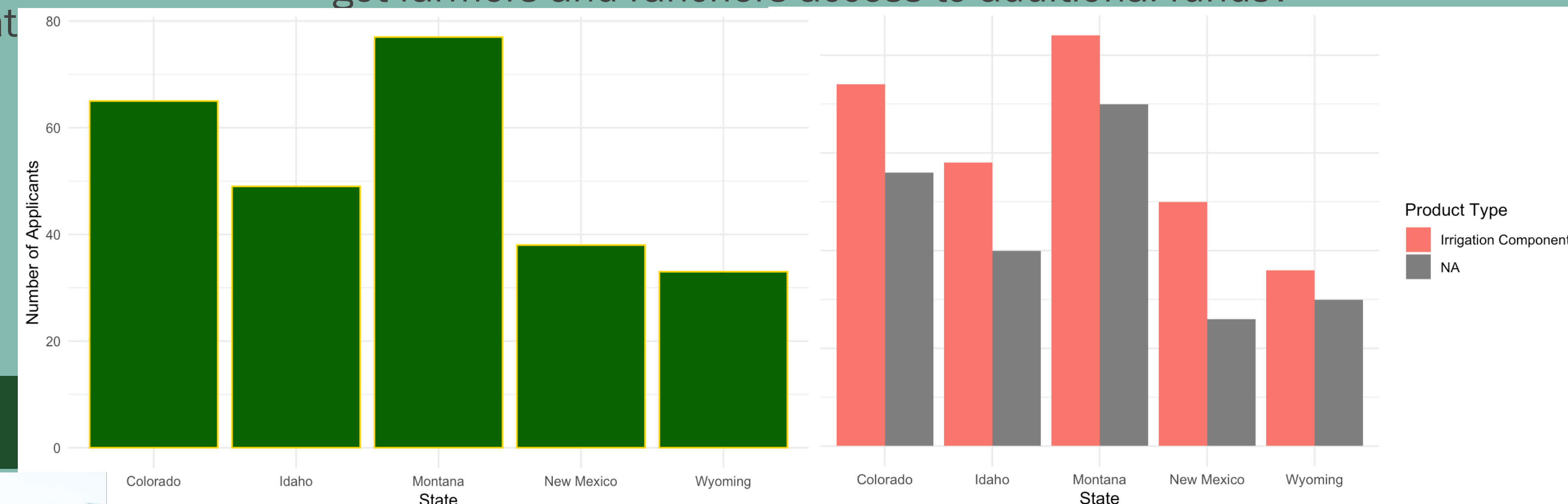
What products, and technical assistance are farmers and ranchers requesting?

### Question 2:

How do farmers and ranchers describe their problems/solutions, and what does innovation look like to them?

### Question 3:

How can we use our gained knowledge and the Field Work initiative to get farmers and ranchers access to additional funds?



## Problems & Innovations

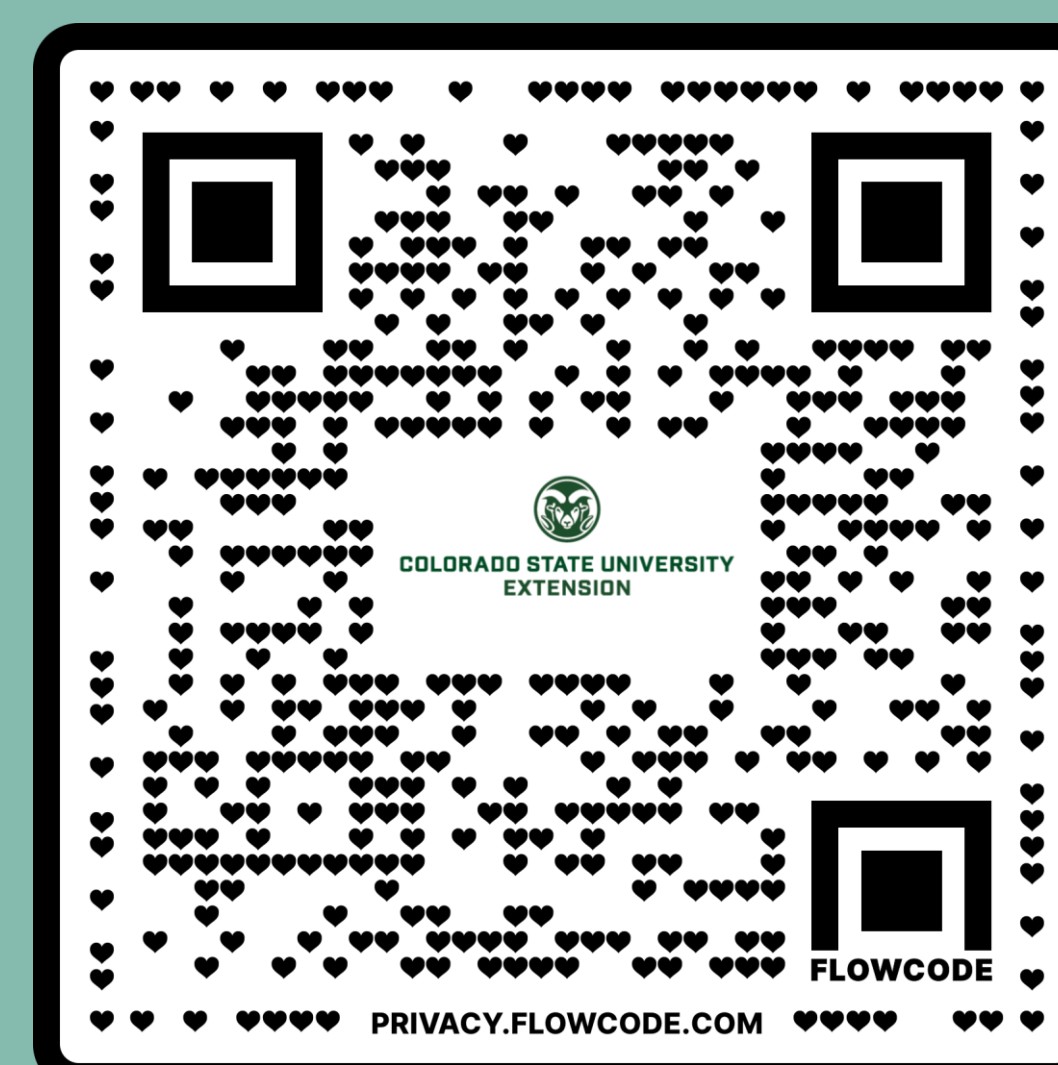
1 in 5 Fieldwork applicants saw *poor soil health* as one of the main contributing factors of their water related issues.

Half of all applicants shared that they had *inefficient irrigation infrastructure and strategies*.

Nearly 1 in 5 farmers and ranchers framed that *restorative farming practices* were essential to their water management issues.

The most notable statistic in my analysis was that **90%** of farmers and ranchers ranked *gaining knowledge and collaboration* as the key to a successful solution.

## Scan Me!



## Gratitude

Bill Jaegar Strategic Initiatives Officer at the LOR Foundation and Emily Lockard Montezuma County Director CSU Extension played invaluable roles in facilitating wonderful and informative site visits. This field season funding, additional mentorship, and generous support was provided by Dawn Thilmany PhD Ag. Resource Econ and Rebecca Hill PhD Extension. Without their guidance and generosity none of this would have been possible. *Thank You.*

## Methodology

I combed through all 262 applications. With invaluable support from Daniel Read (LOR's lead research analyst) I created a classification protocol for the key components of both question one & two.

I recorded all the products applicants requested and categorizing them by individual products and product type. These groups themselves were classified into two broad categories, either *Products* or *Technical Assistance*.

I took a 50 applicant sample and looked for common keywords used to describe the different problems and solutions farmers and ranchers are facing and categorized those into thematic groups (applications could be classified into more than one group)



## Career & Life Lessons

This field season impacted me in many powerful ways, most importantly it helped highlight the context these water related challenges are occurring in. This work is important, should be done in the spirit of collaboration, honest communication, and reverence for the greater world around us. Beyond the veils of hope and fear there are good people everywhere doing their best to leave the world better than they found it. It is not our job to fix the broken systems in this country, or the world.

It is our job to embody Robert Andrews "Position improvement is continuous" approach and make our situation 1% better. That means putting down the phone, going outside, talking to real people with respect, and find where your community is already trying (there are opportunities everywhere). Do your small, small, part to make a 1% improvement.

## The Colorado School of Public Health