Here's an opportunity to be involved in making decisions about dealing with water quality issues in the Lower South Platte River watershed. The meeting is open to the public and is scheduled for July 8 from 3-5 p.m. at Morgan Community College, Founders Room, 920 Barlow Road in Fort Morgan.

Landowners, organizations, agencies and businesses are invited to discuss water quality concerns and priorities for managing natural and agricultural resources in the Lower South Platte basin. State Representative Jerry Sonnenberg will speak on the importance of water quality to the economic viability of the entire watershed, particularly agriculture. Commissioner of Agriculture John Stulp and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Water Quality Control Division, Watershed Program Manager, Dick Parachini, will also be in attendance.

"This is the first of several public input meetings to be held in different locations in the Lower South Platte Watershed over the next six months as we work to write the Lower South Platte Watershed Plan," stated Mark Cronquist, conservation specialist with the Colorado State Conservation Board and the Colorado Department of Agriculture. "Ultimately, the goal is to protect and improve water quality despite increased demands for water throughout the area,"

The watershed planning project, funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Water Quality Control Division through the Colorado Nonpoint Source Program, will encompass an estimated 3.45 million acres from the Town of Platteville north and northeast to the Colorado-Nebraska state line and all or portions of nine smaller tributary watersheds within the planning area.

The goal of this planning process, scheduled for completion in November 2010 with the publication of the Lower South Platte Watershed Plan, is to empower a group of landowners, managers, conservation professionals and residents to implement and oversee the plan in their watershed and review the plan on a regular basis to determine if changes are needed to keep the plan functional.

"The plan will assemble all currently available knowledge and resources to better understand the overall water quality flowing through this watershed. The plan that is developed will be a dynamic tool for those living in the basin to use in addressing current and future water quality

issues," Cronquist said.