

business

Denver scholar applies Nobel winner's theories

By Jordan Steffen
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An associate professor at the University of Colorado Denver is applying the theories of Elinor Ostrom to Western water policy.

Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics Monday.

Tanya Heikkila holds a doctorate in public affairs from the University of Arizona. As part of her postdoctoral work, Heikkila studied under Ostrom during a year-long workshop at Indiana University.

Ostrom challenges the notion that users of natural resources can not successfully manage them. "Her award is an important recognition of self-governance and the capacity of human beings to take collective action on this problem," Heikkila said.

As a home-rule state, Colorado presents the

perfect place to apply Ostrom's theories because local governments often have the ability to dictate how they manage water rights, Heikkila said.

This provides an opportunity for local and state institutions to coordinate in managing and protecting the surface water and groundwater in the Western United States.

Ostrom's work forces people to examine how to collectively manage the world's natural resources, Heikkila said. This is the biggest challenge facing the future of the planet, Heikkila said.

She said she hopes more people become aware of Ostrom's work and how it can be applied to resource management.

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