

**Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Inter Basin Roundtable**

MINUTES

**June 9, 2009 @ 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.
Adams State College Student Center, Alamosa**

Attending: Mike Gibson, Shawn Martini, Ron Brink, JB Alexander, Nicole Langley, Ronald Peterson, Lewis H. Entz, Doug Shriver, Greg Higel, Mike Willett, Adam Lauer, Ken Beck, Travis Smith, Kelly Smith, Robert Mathis, Peggy Godfrey, Bill Yohey, Rio de la Vista, J. Ehrlich, Steve Vandiver, May Engquist, Kitty Broadbent, Ed Nielsen, Greg Johnson, Ralph Curtis, Cindy Medina, Craig Cotten, Charles Spielman, Gene Farish, Charlotte Bobicki, Lawrence Gallegos

- **Introductions** – Chairman Mike Gibson welcomed Senator Schwartz; Charlotte Bobicki, representing Senator Bennet; and Adam Lauer representing Congressman Salazar.
- **Approval of Minutes May 12, 2009** – Travis Smith offered a comment on page 5: It should have referred to “a raid” on severance tax funds. Cindy Medina moved the minutes be accepted with the correction made, Lewis Entz seconded, unanimous approval.
- **Senator Schwartz** reminded the Roundtable of the Rio Grande Basin Tour June 18-19 sponsored by the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, the purpose being to learn of watershed restoration and planning on the Rio Grande (www.cfwc.org); Senator Entz will be hosting participants at his farm. Senator Schwartz spoke of cuts of up to 15% of Colorado’s budget and predicted more cuts next year, with the report on projections for next quarter due out on June 22nd. Colorado is starting to stabilize, with Colorado leading the nation in renewable energy and with rebates and incentives for businesses to come to Colorado.
- **Terms of Roundtable Members** – Mike stated the Roundtable still needs a person to represent Hinsdale County municipalities. Alan Brown has been representing the County. There is an opening for a representative from Rio Grande County. Gene Farris has assumed responsibility for Monte Vista. In addition there is a position for someone for Saguache County municipalities, and the position of Recreation Representative is open as Joel Conrad has not been attending the meetings. Of the existing members there are no renewals this year. No renewals for this year.
- **Greg Johnson – Intrastate Water Management & Development, CWCB -- Financial and Legislative Report on Water Supply Reserve Account (May 26, 2009 update emailed to Mike Gibson, requesting to be included in June Roundtable Minutes)**

In a nutshell, things look surprisingly good (perhaps one of the only silver linings after the \$107M cash raid that the CWCB suffered). The bill to shuffle funding in the operational account of the Severance Tax Trust Fund (SB293) passed and is awaiting the Governor’s signature. As amended the bill still provides \$5.775M to the WSRA program for FY09/10. For perspective, we had \$7M this fiscal year. The basin/statewide split will be determined by the WSRA subcommittee, probably in June. However, this good news should be tempered by the realities of fund distribution timing and existing requests. Severance Tax Tier 2 programs, such as the WSRA, are funded 40% in July, 30% in January, and 30% in April. This year, due to budgetary problems, we never received the last installment, a problem that could certainly happen again. In addition, we already have almost \$5M in statewide fund requests that are awaiting the September meeting. With a current balance of less than \$1M and a 40% distribution of WSRA funds that are split hypothetically 50/50 between basin and statewide funds, the statewide balance in September would be slightly under \$2M. I have communicated your request to consider the statewide applications by priority of when they were submitted, but have not yet received information on how this will be addressed.

We were fortunate to receive the funds, the WSRA program must still make some tough funding decisions and is certainly not immune from future budgetary shortfalls. It is also important to note that the State used over \$500M in cash funds this year to prop up the budget shortfall. In other words, much tougher decisions to cut programs, etc. may be necessary next year if the economy does not recover significantly.

- **Division of Water Resources – Rio Grande Basin Roundtable Report – Craig W. Cotten, Division Engineer, Division III** -- The San Luis Valley's summer rains have created a rare occurrence – zero curtailment on irrigators along the Rio Grande and Conejos River systems. This is because sufficient water is flowing downstream to meet the Rio Grande Compact obligations to New Mexico and Texas. The June forecast from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) actually rose 5,000 acre feet from May. NRCS is now predicting 590,000 acre feet on the Rio Grande this year. That is slightly below average which is about 650,000 acre feet. Of that amount, the Valley will be obligated to send downstream 158,400 acre feet of water, or 27 percent. The Rio Grande does not have to send 27 percent downstream right now, however, because the Rio Grande delivered 100 percent through the winter, sent more water downstream during the runoff period and is experiencing good return flows all the way through the system. The Rio Grande would only need to send 8 percent downstream currently to meet its Rio Grande Compact obligation. "Our current curtailment on the Rio Grande is effectively zero. We do have a curtailment on our daily sheet but we add back some water, make some adjustments, so it is effectively zero on the curtailment."

The same is true on the Conejos River system. The NRCS forecast for the Conejos system is 345,000 acre feet, up 15,000 acre feet from last month. The obligation to downstream states from that total is 143,200 acre feet or 42 percent. The current delivery target is 16 percent but because of the amount of water in the system the water division is not curtailing irrigators on the Conejos system "which is kind of an unusual situation that we don't have curtailment actually occurring on either one of the rivers right now." The Conejos system peaked the first part of May, and the Rio Grande peaked around May 8, about three weeks earlier than normal. "We are significantly lower right now at this time of year than we usually are." Saguache Creek peaked the end of May which is about normal which might indicate that the northern part of the Valley had less dust on the snow. Kerber Creek near Villa Grove peaked almost exactly on target the end of May, but we are dropping off that peak pretty hard.

Thursday July 11 the advisory committee for well rules and regs will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Inn of the Rio Grande. June 26th will be the second meeting of the Compact Committee regarding the storage accounting issues at Elephant Butte. The accounting didn't change any of the numbers for Colorado.

Mike: Craig will soon be e-mailing out his report.

- **"Consumptive Needs Assessment" – Status Report & Next Steps – Steve Vandiver and Mike Gibson**

The subcommittee will be meeting again soon and will decide how to proceed with the resources available rather than seeking third party engineering / consulting services.

- **"Framework for Evaluating Water Transfers: A Template" – Arkansas Basin Roundtable Water Transfer Guidelines Committee (the Committee)**

The Committee is presenting this report to each Roundtable. It builds on the initial SWSI study as well as on the findings of the SWSI 2 Technical Roundtable which dealt with alternatives to permanent transfer of agricultural water. They ask that this be seen as part of a statewide vision, as a piece of Colorado's water solution, and as a "next step." This study was made possible by Water Supply Reserve Account funding through the IBCC and CWCB. Basic premises of Ag-to-Urban transfers are: (1) transfer evaluation should consider not only immediate but future impacts including impacts on local water supply availability; (2) should address cumulative impacts; (3) "affected area" is a function of very specific facts associated with the transfer; (4) in some cases, factors to be addressed will be handled in the context of a water court adjudication; and (5) evaluating a change raises problems of making judgments and identifying the basis for comparison. Copies of the full report, including introduction, copies of slides, references, bibliographies and additional material are available from Mike or from Mary Lou Smith of Aqua Engineering, mlsmith@aquaengr.com.

Discussion was intense – A few highlights: Trouble with disconnect between engineering analyses of conservation and other aspects based on realities; wish to see an engineering team look at impacts of conservation and put them in the same terms as other alternatives; glad to see discussion of consumptive use v. diversion demand; many felt “the cogs don’t all fit”; could a calculable reduction of consumptive use reduce proposed need for ag transfers? Discussion of transmountain transfers to extinction; issue of return flows from Denver; global climate change; NEPA issues; conservation strategies are easy to talk about because they’re not as threatening; effects of other requirements and costs such as energy/nuclear; suburban land use issues and different kinds of water use; possibility of a water bank - Tom Eisman of The Nature Conservancy has been developing water bank concept as a risk management strategy for western slope; other strategies – Super Ditch, new supply development, lower Arkansas; no regrets planning.

Charlie – all alternatives seek to move water to where the people are. Why not do the opposite? Travis -- praise for Greg, and also to Steve and Ray for the IBCC process – appreciate what all are going through. Now we have some processes. This is the product of a lot of effort – people getting together to deal with complex issues. We started with a vision and goals, and now we’re actually starting to deal with some strategies and specific projects. There are benefits and risks. We need to move slowly. Ray – Steve can attest that we’re continuing to push the point that water is not a stand alone issue. We are talking about economies, what is driving/ pushing. Who wins and who loses. I feel IBCC is dealing with water as a stand alone issue when there are legislative, community, and economic drivers, endangered species issues. Every part of the state has an economic future. – How to identify new sustainable economies?

- **“The Closed Basin Project – What is it and Why ?” – Ken Beck, USBR & Steve Vandiver – RGWCD**

Ken presented a PowerPoint slide presentation of the background, mission, goals, and accomplishments of the Closed Basin Project.

- **WSRA – Preview of Request for Funding -- Colorado Rio Grande Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) – Steve Vandiver**

At the July 2008 meeting The Rio Grande Restoration Foundation (RGRF) will request RG Basin funds of \$31,500 for Phase II of the CREP. These funds will be used to complete the final negotiations, agreements and documentation for the following: Agreement between USDA, the Commodity Credit Corporation, and the State of Colorado; Agreement between the State of Colorado and Subdistrict #1; and negotiations and edits prior to submission of the final CREP proposal to the USDA. If approved, this funding will pay for consulting and legal services and for public education and outreach as the CREP program begins implementation, finalizing the programmatic environmental assessment, completing amendments to the CREP handbook, and promoting and implementing the CREP project in Subdistrict #1. The timeline will run through June 2010.

- **Education Liaison – IBCC – Judy Lopez**

Judy’s absence was excused as she was doing a workshop for teachers at the Trinchera Ranch. Her written report included the following: The web page is being updated and members are encouraged to send comments and recommendations to Judy at judy.lopez@rcdnet.net. Judy will be sending text for comment via email. The IBCC will be developing a newsletter to be distributed annually to municipal, county, and water-related entities as well as to libraries and press contacts. She will present the survey results next month. She says, “Mike and I will be attending a meeting in Frisco on July 9th to build the templates for the webpage and newsletter and align the roles of the chair and the education liaison.”

- **Other Business –**

- **Headwaters Magazine** -- The newest edition of *Headwaters* magazine from the Colorado Foundation for Water Education (CFWE) focuses on intrastate water supply planning. Special attention is paid to the IBCC process and the Basin Roundtables. In addition to the magazine’s print content, they have developed additional online content for this issue. This includes expanded profiles for each of the basins, pictures of many IBCC/Basin Roundtable Members and audio of top Colorado water leaders discussing the State’s water supply future. CFWE hopes for these web extras to become an integral part of the *Headwaters* experience. The voices of the IBCC audio portion can be seen and heard here:

<http://cfwe.org/headwaters/HW19IBCC/H19audio/voices.html>. IBCC photos of people:
<http://cfwe.org/headwaters/HW19IBCC/slideShow.html>

- **Western State College – Crested Butte Water Workshop** – This two day workshop on nonconsumptive needs is July 22-24. Rio said there are a couple of scholarships still available for RT members.
- **Next Meeting Topics Request for Funding “CREP – Phase 2 “ - Basin Funds**
- **Adjourn**

**Next Meeting
July 14, 2009 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.
Student Center
Adams State College
Alamosa, CO 81101**