

# **NPBRT Meeting Minutes 3-9-10**

**NFS Conf. Room (3-5PM)  
100 Main Street, Walden, CO**

## **Members Present**

\*Mike Allnutt  
Deb Alpe  
Mike Alpe  
\*Jim Baller  
\*Pete Conovitz  
\*Kent Crowder  
\*Hal Hagan  
\*Kay Meyring  
\*John Rich  
\*Barbara Vasquez  
\*Ty Wattenberg  
\*Rick Wyatt

## **Guests Present**

David Anderson  
Marti Aitken  
Denise Culver  
Deb Heeney  
Matt Hoobler  
Erin Light  
Matt Reddy  
Shanna Schalnus  
John Sanderson  
Jeff Streeter  
Bob Timberman  
Carl Trick II  
Kincaid Waldron

## **Members Absent**

Ann Timberman  
Paula Belcher  
Greg Johnson  
\*Tom Hackleman  
\*Mike Honholz  
\*Sandy Knox  
\*Dirk Ramsey  
(\* Voting members, total 13)

**I. Agenda Review:** The agenda was accepted with one change – CNHP requested that their topic be moved to the top of the agenda to facilitate their travel plans.

**II. 2-16-10 Meeting Minutes:** The following corrections were offered to the minutes previously published for the 2-16 meeting: a) Page 4- 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph under “Update on Transducer data and acceptance of North Platte Basin water availability study modeling scenario completed by Leonard Rice Engineering” – Carl wanted to clarify that the ‘1 year of transducer data on the North Fork’ is really ‘no data’ because of interference by a beaver dam. b) Page 4-1<sup>st</sup> paragraph – The recorder attributed the word ‘bandwidth’ to comments by Carl Trick. The word used was ‘funding’. c) Kay Meyring was shown as absent but was indeed present! Ty Wattenberg motioned and Jim Baller seconded the motion to accept the minutes as modified. The minutes were approved with modification. The corrected version of the 2-16-10 minutes has already been distributed.

Erin Light requested a few minutes to clarify her comments made at the 2-16 meeting regarding on when a river or tributary is on call or under administration. She explained that there is no discrimination as to how many times the reach has been ‘on call’ or to what extent

the reach is over appropriated. The designation of a reach or region of the basin as ‘over appropriated’ affects well permitting.

### **III. Denise Culver, CNHP– Response to comments from RT members on CNHP’s North Platte Basin Wetlands Inventory report**

The final report for the WSRA-funded wetlands inventory in North Platte Basin (*Identification and Assessment of Important Wetlands within the North Platte Watershed*) was presented by Denise Culver of CNHP at our January meeting. In the language of the application for WSRA funding for this project, there was no NPBRT review stipulated before publication. However, several members of the RT expressed concerns in the February NPBRT meeting about some of the content of the report. The comments/concerns of the RT were relayed to CNHP for review and response.

Denise explained that the PCA (Proposed Conservation Areas) are a tool that has been used for as long as CNHP has been doing studies. They are an interpretation of satellite and aerial photos, digital ortho-quads plus results from on-the-ground surveys. CNHP’s goal is provide data and interpretation that will help residents of North Park keep the water in the North Platte watershed under future challenges. In addition, it is not permissible for CNHP to highlight individual landowners in the PCAs that participated in the 2009 study, as that is precluded by the contract entered into with those landowners.

There is not sufficient funds remaining for the project to reprint the 20 hardcopies of the report nor to redo the PCA maps. The compromise response has been the generation of an errata page which would be inserted at the front of all hardcopy reports and in the electronic version as well as labels for all PCA maps that include private properties that did not participate in the CNHP field season in 2009.

Jim Baller said he understood why individual landowners couldn’t be identified in the report, but was still concerned that anyone glancing through the report could leap to the conclusion that all the landowners in the boundary of the PCA has participated.

Denise moved on to discuss language in other parts of the report that had raised some concerns by the NPBRT members. An errata will be generated to address the majority of these concerns.

The comments on p130 attributing “mushroom shaped willows” and “trailing” to “improper grazing” will include potential impact of wildlife (elk, moose, deer). The comments on p.17 regarding historic trapping of beaver & river otter will be modified to remove otter because of the absence of local historical records. The comments on p.24 regarding icefields will not be addressed in the errata, but Denise explained that they make up about 1-2% of the basin area and can be seen on satellite images. They occur at the border with Rocky Mountain National Park in the Never Summer Mountains, including Mount Richthofen, Mount Cumulus and Mount Nimbus. Comments on p.36 regarding closing date of fluorspar mine, the errata will reference Rex Shaw, previous manager of the mine, as closing permanently in ’73. There was considerable discussion on the error in irrigated acreage shown on p.57. The errata will refer to the official published acreage by the State Engineers Office as required by the North Platte Decree. There were remaining concerns that ultimately fell under an ‘agree to disagree’ umbrella, including comments on potential future impacts of climate change.

It was agreed that CNHP will work with Barbara and Kent to finalize the proposed errata sheet and PCA labels. These will be sent out to the membership of NPBRT in advance of the April meeting, where they will be reviewed. Once completed, the errata and PCA labels will

be generated by CNHP. Barbara will help CNHP get them inserted into the local hard-copies of the report. CNHP will take of the other copies as well as modification of the electronic version available on the CNHP website.

Denise commented that North Park hosts the ‘largest, most contiguous and healthiest willow shrublands in all of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana’. John Sanderson, TNC commented that they have been working in CO with CNHP reports from 1995-2010. They have seen them used often in positive ways to the benefit of the local habitats and economies. At worst, they have been neutral. Examples of positive impacts include the awarding of a NAWCA grant to North Park with a second being applied for this spring. The CNHP studies have also supported conservation easements and DU work in the watershed. He couldn’t think of a way that the CNHP studies had been used to the detriment of local landowners.

#### **IV. Matt Reddy, DU & NPBR Membership- Final discussion & vote on WSRA**

##### **Application: Irrigated Meadows Project-Phase 1**

The Phase 1 (study/feasibility/site selection) application requests \$20,000 support from WSRA for DU’s study to define locations and specifics of the Irrigated Meadows Project in North Park. If funded, it is assumed a Phase 2 (construction) application will follow.

Kent reminded us the the Criteria and Guidelines committee of the IBCC/CWCB has determined that SWRA funding cannot be used for projects on federal or state ground. Jim Baller asked if any of the requested funds would be used for study on Fed ground. He answered that none of it would be used for study on federal or state ground. However, Matt said some of the matching money (potential funding from NAWCA and/or CDOW) might be used on state ground. Matt showed some photos of previous projects done by DU in North Park, representing work on both public (ANWR) and private (Tointon) ground.

There was considerable discussion about the project and in the final analysis, it comes down to a trust issue. Rick Wyatt repeated his comment made in the last meeting that the study should be funded by DU itself and stated that he had trust issues with any agency, including DU. The final vote is shown below, with comments made by the ‘no’ voters included. The project passed by a 5/4 margin and will be forwarded to CWCB for consideration for funding at their May meeting.

	Y	N	Reason
Kent Crowder	x		
Kay Meyring		x	Not enough information.
Barbara Vasquez	x		
Mike Allnutt		x	Think sportsman and the landowner should carry the costs.
Jim Baller	x		
John Rich		x	Want to see the Basin funds used for actual construction projects.
Ty Wattenberg	x		
Rick Wyatt		x	Lack of trust. Concerned that the study may come back to hurt landowners in some way.
Hal Hagan	x		

A letter will be written to the CWCB explaining the rationale for the RT votes.

#### **V. John Sanderson, TNC – Watershed Flow Evaluation Tool**

John Sanderson of TNC has been working with two CSU professors to develop and apply this new, basin-wide water flow evaluation tool. It is being piloted in Roaring Fork and Fountain Creek. Moving from Phase 1 to Phase 2 NCNA, two basins have chosen WFET for their quantification tool. The Colorado and Yampa White are using the WFET for at least part of their quantification. The Arkansas is moving forward with site-specific quantification on the lower Arkansas, where shorebirds are of concern. The outcome of quantification is viewed as a tool to support development of strategies to protect nonconsumptive attributes.

John went on to show examples of the WFET. He showed an actual hydrograph on the Yamap near Maybelle starting in 1917, with the Colorado pikeminnow and cottonwoods as the biological response variables. The question asked with the tool is: 'What particular pieces of the hydrograph are essential for maintaining the attribute?' WFET addresses the watershed wide questions and links flows to biological attributes. The tool used for Instream Flow is R2Cross- which specifies a minimum flow, enough to cover the riffles and allow a fish to pass. WFET uses 'low flow (minimum ISF), high flow (bank full) and flood (flow once in 10 years or more, enough to disturb adjacent riparian areas) to describe flow levels. He explained that the Fountain Creek (Arkansas Basin) pilot of the WFET was not too satisfying. There wasn't a CDSS for the Basin to provide a starting point. The river system is dependent on augmentation. Considerable erosion is continuing. The pilot in the Roaring Fork was much ore positive. There was an underlying CDSS with 30 years of daily flows. The SWSI 1 indicators of hydrological alteration. Meaningful flow-ecology relationships were established. The reports are available on the CWCB website. Some of the limitations of the WFET include the fact that it only looks at one factor (i.e., flow). There can be other mitigating factors that drive the conclusion that WFET 'yellow' or even 'red' results may be OK..and conversely 'green' may not be OK.

For fish habitat as a biological outcome, low flows are usually the 'pinch point', but high flows are important as well to scour sediment from the bottom to provide healthy spawning habitat.

Barbara asked whether the cottonwood recruitment work might also apply to willow recruitment. John commented that 10d before this meeting their was a Riparian Workshop. The scientists are developing a willow response for WFET in relationship to 2-5 year flood. Kent commented that quantification may not be required in NCNA Phase 2. We need to determine locally if quantification is desired or needed. Kent asked John how he envisioned WFET used in North Platte Basin. John said he was describing the tool and its capabilities. It's up to the NPBRT whether they need/want quantification and it may not be what's needed for this basin. If the RT determines that only one stream is of interest for quantification, then a site-specific approach would be best. However, if we wanted to 'ask the question' where the Basin might best do off-channel storage, then WFET might be the best screening tool for that kind of scenario.

## **VII. New Business-**

The Education Outreach Committee has been formed with Deb Alpe as chair. Please let Kent or Deb know if you'd like to be on the committee. Carl gave us advance notice that scholarships will be offered soon for different water-related tours or workshops.

**VIII. Set Next Meeting:** April 27, (3-5PM, FS Conference Room). The tentative date for the May meeting is May 18 and will start the summer hours (7-9PM).