

NPBRT Meeting Minutes 6-22-10

**NFS Conf. Room (7-9PM)
100 Main Street, Walden, CO**

Members Present

*Mike Allnutt
Deb Alpe
Mike Alpe
*Jim Baller
Paula Belcher
*James Carothers
Pete Conovitz
*Kent Crowder
*Tom Hackleman
*Hal Hagan
*Kay Meyring
*John Rich
*Barbara Vasquez
*Ty Wattenberg
*Rick Wyatt

Guests Present

Marti Aitken-MBRNF
Laurie Gilligan-CNHP
Deb Heeney-NRCS
Greg Johnson-CWCB
Joanna Lemly-CNHP
Shanna Schalnus
Jeff Streeter-TU
Carl Trick II
Curran Trick
Kincaid Waldron

Members Absent

Ann Timberman
*Mike Honholz
*Sandy Knox
Michael Wright
(* Voting members, total 13)

I. Agenda Review: The agenda was accepted with the correction that Kristin Maharg will not be in attendance. A new representative for the Domestic Water Supplier, Walden Town mayor James Carothers, was introduced. A motion was made to accept the appointment by Rick Wyatt, seconded by Ty Wattenberg and approved unanimously by the NPBRT voting members.

II. Approval of NPBRT Minutes: May 25, 2010 Meetings

The meeting minutes from the meeting was approved.

III. Joanna Lemly, CNHP:

CDOW/EPA-Funded North Platte Basin Wetlands Profile & Condition Assessment

(Joanna spoke from a powerpoint that will be sent out separately.)

Joanna explained that CNHP is focusing on the North Platte Basin due to the extensive wetland waterfowl habitat. This is the second basin to be assessed, the first being the Rio Grande. There are plans to assess all the basins in Colorado with a similar protocol in the next 10 years. In addition, the 2011 National Wetlands Assessment by the EPA will include 10 points in Colorado. Joanna described the current CNHP Wetlands Profile and Condition Assessment (referred to as the "Assessment"), and highlighted how it differed from last year's CNHP wetlands inventory in the North Platte. First task was to digitize the existing National

Wetland Inventory Survey (taken in the '70's and 80's) without any reinterpretation of the data. So what existed previously only as paper maps is now all available digitally. This was accomplished last year.

Joanna introduced Laurie Gilligan, one of the members of her team this season. Laurie and Joanna will be in the Basin for close to 2 months along with other team members. They can be reached by email or by cell phone (Joanna: 970/481-3335; Laurie: 413/687-1031).

Joanna's presentation is being distributed with these minutes. This program is a cooperation between CNHP, CDOW & CSU with funding from the CDOW Wetland program and the EPA Reg. 8 Wetlands funding. It covers the HUC 6, North Platte Basin. There are 4 primary objectives: 1) compile existing spatial data for wetlands (CNHP & CDOW), 2) conduct a statistically valid survey of wetland condition (CNHP), 3) model the distribution of wetland condition throughout the basin (CNHP and CSU Statistics Dept) and 4) determine optimal metrics for measuring key habitat features for wildlife (CDOW).

The first objective, completed in 2009, was to digitize the NWIS maps for the North Platte Basin. It's based on aerial surveys taken in the 70's (B&W images E of the 106 parallel that runs N/S near the MedBow range) and 80's (color images taken W of the 106 parallel). There has been no reinterpretation of the original data, so what's on the old paper maps is now available digitally.

The second objective will include surveys of ~100 wetland locations across the basin selected for a spatially balanced random design, quantification of the proportion of wetlands of different types (playa, marshes, riparian areas, wet meadows & fens) and quantification of the proportion of wetlands in 4 major conditions (excellent, good, fair, poor) using both rapid and intensive data collection methods. The survey differs from the 2009 Inventory conducted by CNHP in the sampling plan. The 2010 Profile will be based on ~100 locations selected using a spatially balanced, random sample design. Joanna and Laurie have been refining this design over the winter. They overlaid the current irrigated acreage map available from the DSS and eliminated those areas for potential sampling, then generated the ~100 random sample sites with 'backup' sample of sites to use when/if a primary site cannot be used. The primary sample sites are also chosen to be evenly distributed in the various ecoregions and wetland types.

The on-the-ground work by CNHP this summer will involve three primary tools: floristic quality assessment, vegetative index of biotic integrity and 3) ecological integrity assessment. All three are multi-metric indices primarily based on vegetation composition. Although they will capture soil descriptions and attempt to define water sources, no samples will be taken or analyzed. The scoring criteria for wetland condition are in reference to 'minimally disturbed sites'.

Objective 3 will be conducted by CSU Statistics Department. The model will be based on the field data and potential stressors, and will predict areas of low and high wetland condition across the North Platte Basin.

Objective 4 will be conducted by the CDOW. It is an extension of the work begun by John Runge over the past two years looking at waterfowl populations & production. John, in cooperation with Joanna's team, will determine key habitat features that can be easily and repeatedly measured in the field and attempt to determine how hydrologic regimes and vegetation structure influence water fowl populations.

There were a number of questions during and at the end of the presentation. Deb Alpe asked if private property owners decline access, what happens to the study design. Joanna and Laurie replied that they have multiple backup sites identified for each primary site, so a backup

would be pulled. The approximately 100 - 1.2-acre sites will be the extent of the 'ground truthing' accomplished in this season. The potential wetlands for assessment were reduced by focusin on naturally occurring wetlands. Carl Trick asked how 'naturally occurring' was defined in North Platte basin, since it may be difficult to determine whether a wetlands was formed as a result of longstanding irrigation practices. Joanna said they were specifically eliminating irrigated meadows that were managed for hay production from the study. Joanna presented some hypothetical results to show the NPBRT the type of charts and graphs that might be included in the final report. Carl asked what characteristics were used to determine the quality or condition of a naturally occurring wetland. Joanna pointed to several attributes including water diversion potentially affecting wetland condition, fire, various types of surface disturbance, beetle kill in forests, etc. Several questions ensued regarding what data would go to the EPA and how it might be used in the future in a regulatory way. Joanna stated that there are no regulations at the state or federal level about quality of wetlands and that paired data (location/condition) would not be going to the EPA. DOW may use the summary data for recommendations for a resource. Curran asked about the funding for the project. 75% is from EPA, the remaining 25% from CDOW. Several NPBRT members expressed nonspecific concerns, in spite of reassurances, that the information could result in future EPA regulatory action.

A preliminary report should be ready early spring 2011, with final report ready by end of 2011.

Kent and Mike Allnutt both asked who would do the assessment, and whether there would be any review of the report conclusions. Joanna replied that the first level of review would be by scientific peers. Although the RT has not provided funding to this study, Carl commented that a review by the RT could be valuable. Joanna agreed to provide a draft report and welcomed the NPBRT input.

IV. Deb Alpe, NPBRT Education Liaison:

Education and Outreach Report : Subcommittee Meeting planned for 6/30

The Education Outreach Committee (EOC) for the NPBRT was been formed last month with Deb Alpe as Chair. The Committee includes Deb, Ann Timberman, Kent Crowder, Deb Heeney, John Rich, Kay Meyring & Barbara Vasquez. The first Committee meeting will be June 30, 4PM, FS Conf Rm. Deb will distribute new member binders & handbooks, which are provided by Colorado Foundation for Water Education (CFWE), to committee members. Deb was unable to attend the first PEPO due to travel, but Dennis Wright attended for her. Kent also attended.

The EOC needs to work out a basin education action plan (EAP), with an emphasis on public education & outreach. Deb handed out two-page draft of the Arkansas Basin RT EAP as an example of how simple such a plan can be. It may serve as a useful template for us. If we complete the plan, the RT will receive \$1800 to fund implementation.

There will be no IBCC website, so the Basin RT website will be hosted on the CWCB website. There will be a meeting in August regarding Basin RT website construction. Think about what info you want on the website. The Rio Grande is a good example, as they have a well-developed website.

There will be a \$5000 2010 budget for everything, including partial tuition. Due to budget issues, there will be no funding for 2011. Refunding of this budget is expected in 2012.

Scholarships will be available to the Water Congress.

The Education Liaison and the Chair will provide mentoring.

There will be a statewide forum in Jan or Feb, 2011. Each Basin will present their EAP. There may be funding to cover costs for travel and/or hotel for RT members attending. There may also be a half-day orientation for new members. Finally, Deb handed out copies of the flyer for the “Colorado Water Law 101” offered (free) by the Colorado Water Trust in Granby on June 25.

From last month’s notes, the recorder has repeated the following information for continuity:
Our Basin identified the following as our top issues:

- *M&I needs for the Town of Walden*
- *energy development - potential impacts from oil and gas development*
- *Ag Water Needs-consumptive uses and losses and high-altitude crop coefficients*
- *Forest management-impacts of bark beetle tree mortality on water quality & quantity*
- *water supply/unappropriated water (DSS system)*

It was agreed that all of these topics were appropriate for North Platte. Ground water hydrology ties in part to energy development (produced water). Under river restoration, we could definitely cover improvement of diversion structures and placement of culverts for fish passage, which has been discussed as a potential class of projects with multiple benefits. Drought planning is being addressed now at the State level.

V. Carl Trick/Barbara Vasquez

CFWE’s SW Basin Tour feedback

The Southwest Tour, put on by the CFWE, was held June 9-11 based out of Durango. Curran Trick, Carl Trick and Barbara Vasquez participated from the NPBRT. The two options for the pre-tour activity were covered as well: a tour of the Animas-LaPlata Pumped Diversion (Carl & Curran) or a tour of Mesa Verde with Paleohydrologists (Barbara). Each participant was asked to comment on what part of the tour left the most lasting impression.

Curran and Carl described the Animas-LaPlata Project, which was conceived in ’73 but just started to fill the resulting Lake Nighthorse last year. It has a capacity of 120,000AF, with no spillway and no natural drainage. The project is part of a settlement of Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute very senior tribal claims to water in the area. The Ute Mountain Utes also have used the ~\$20M received as part of the water settlement to establish an 8000 acre pivot irrigation agriculture operation on the reservation. The tribe has only about ~1000 members. Profits from the farm and other commercial enterprises are folded back into the operations and shared by tribe members. The area covered by Lake Nighthorse was subject to intensive archaeological study prior to inundation. They found a very high concentration of pit houses dating from 650-800AD.

Barbara described the recent paleohydrologists findings at Mesa Verde. Raised locations that had previously been tentatively identified as dance platforms were shown to be silted-in reservoirs. The reservoir we visited was fed by a small watershed which was determined to be prehistoric corn fields based on pollen concentrations found in excavated silt. The archeologist believe that the water was for domestic use, or if used for plant irrigation, it was carried to the fields.

In addition, she commented on the in-stream recreational diversion under finalization for a water sports park in Durango. The proposal was driven by local water sports enthusiast. A

number of compromises were hammered out (privately and in court) between the town (future water development), agricultural users (timing of use) and the water sports group.

VI. Kent Crowder:

Revised (May 21, 2010) WSRA Criteria & Guidelines& Revised North Platte Basin Roundtable WSRA Grant Evaluation Forms

Kent handed out the new Grant Evaluation Forms that we'll be using for future project decisions. The Criteria and Guidelines focus the decision process on the local basin needs assessment results.

VII. Barbara Vasquez: NCNA Attribute Prioritization

The NCNA subcommittee is working out an approach for prioritization of the non-consumptive attributes. We've run a draft version through the NCNA Committee twice, and the results stimulated very good discussions. We'll do a first run through with the full RT in August.

VIII. Old Business: Basin Needs Assessments

Carl commented that we need to compile both Non-consumptive and Consumptive needs assessments. The June 4 SWSI updates. Drafts are due out in July, with final comments due mid-October. Final reports are due in November. And Basin Reports due 1Q11. Greg commented that the new Criteria and Guidelines don't go into affect until 1Q11. It was decided that the work underway by the NCNA Committee would suffice for the NCN requirements. However, it might be valuable to consolidate the Consumptive needs. Kent asked for volunteers for a committee to create a Consumptive Needs Outlook for the Basin. The committee will include Carl Trick, Rick Wyatt, Jim Baller, Hal Hagan and Barbara Vasquez.

IX. New Business:

Carl Trick: CWCB Update

Alex Davis has hired a facilitator, Heather Burden, to move the agenda forward. She has worked in the Arkansas with Stakeholder Groups on wild and scenic issues. She is part of the Keystone Group, a nonprofit with focus on environmental issues. However, the last meeting was spent bringing her 'up to speed' and little was accomplished.

There were tributes to two key members: Chips Barry and Ray Wright.

Kent Crowder - WSRA funding updates

Kent reported that the Basin account balance is currently ~\$375,000.

X. Set Next Meeting: August 17, 2010 (7-9PM, FS Conference Room).

It was decided to skip the July meeting since the Aug meeting is earlier than usual in the month. This meeting will be mainly focused on NCNA Phase II work: a group exercise to prioritize the non-consumptive needs attributes selected in NCNA Phase I for the North Platte Basin.