

Arkansas Basin Roundtable
April 13, 2011
Meeting Notes

Roundtable Business

Chairman Barber called the meeting to order at 12:40 pm. Members and visitors introduced themselves. Twenty nine (29) members were present. There are 38 active roundtable members at this time - 18 is a quorum.

March Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the March meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Review agenda

John Stulp will be sending out a memo that will ask Roundtables to continue to identify projects that the Roundtables want to support.

Public comment – Perry Cabot

Perry announced the Arkansas River Basin Water Forum, to be held April 27th-28th, in Colorado Springs, at the Norris-Penrose Event Center. The 2011 Forum will be hosted by the Fountain Creek Watershed, Flood Control and Greenway District. The theme is “Retaining, Rethinking, Restoring”, and the keynote speaker will be John Stulp. Please attend this forum.

Public comment – John Weiner

Proposal to Bureau of Reclamation: Collaborative Climate-Response Analysis in Colorado's Arkansas River Basin With a Planning-Purposed Decision Support Tool.

This project would use BOR grant funding to develop a common platform for practical, low cost, fast evaluation of Arkansas Basin water management alternatives, and would allow for a greater level of detail in modeling. Please email or call John for more information.

DSS Update – Gary Barber

The draft DSS feasibility scope of work is complete. Lindsay Griffith and Andy Moore will be here next month to present the scope of work for Roundtable approval.

Subcommittee Reports

IBCC Report – Alan Hamel, Jay Winner

A meeting is coming up on the 29th. The committees of the IBCC are firing up again. Wayne heads up the Conservation Committee. He's also on the IPP Committee. They are seeking input. They're moving from concept to work plan.

Jay: CFWE – Water 2012. This organization will be bringing water issues into the library, K-12 schools. Please get your ideas to Jay.

Todd: There has not been a board meeting since our last RT meeting. We did receive a new round of funding April 1st. A total of \$1,800,000 will be distributed throughout basins. The first \$52,000 will be available to each basin on April 1.

The IBCC and CWCB are continuing to look at Criteria and Guidelines.

WSRA Grant Application: Rotational Agricultural Following Public Policy Working Group

This application was discussed in February and in March. It asks for \$5,000 from the Arkansas RT Basin funds, \$5,000 from Metro RT, \$5,000 from two other RTs; \$20,000 total. This project, initiated by John Stulp and Alex Davis, will be a three pronged approach.

1. Technical platform
2. Pilot Project
3. Public Policy Workshop

The third “explores existing statutes with an eye toward changes/modifications that might be beneficial to implementation, and to convene stakeholders in a multi-basin, facilitate dialogue to determine if common

areas of interest might be identified. At a minimum, the research and dialogue will inform the decision making within each basin and perhaps identify a basis for action on a collaborative approach.

Comments and concerns that were raised include the following:

- What's to prevent expansion of use, if we determine that occasionally there is extra water?
- Is this just a way to get around 10-68?
- Each basin operates under different compacts, and will reach different conclusions to this issue. This method addresses the issue from the bottom up rather than from the top down.
- There's a risk of recommending legislation, and then having that legislation change significantly as it moves through the approval process.

This application moves forward by consensus.

Presentation: Non-Consumptive Needs Committee

John Martin Wetlands and Nee Noshe Reservoir Habitat - Qualification

Purpose of Presentation

- Review Study Objectives
- Review Water Budgets and site characterizations
- Provide update on quantification efforts

Study objectives

- Develop understanding of environmental and recreational resources of both sites
- Any identification of water needs associated with either site will be reviewed with consideration of existing flows within the basin and of existing water rights
- Identify multipurpose opportunities with planned projects in the basin

John Martin Reservoir – wetlands to the west

Identify relationship between reservoir levels and wetlands

Identify relationship between water management upstream of reservoir and wetlands

Quantification of existing condition is ~ 6,300 acres of wetlands

Water Budget

Estimated Annual water budget subsurface hydrology
~ 32,000 AFY flow in and out of the wetlands annually

Results

- Irrigation return flows and ET are the main inputs and outputs of the system
- Monthly water budget indicates seasonal fluctuations in river gains/losses
- Large river losses (recharging water table) during spring high flow, but overall net annual gain
- Implied fluctuations in subsurface water table: peak levels during wetlands growing season.

Nee Noshe Reservoir - Habitat for threatened and endangered birds

Identify relationship between lake levels and bird habitat

Quantification of current pool is ~ 300 acres or ~3500 AF

Habitat Needs

Piping Plover – Threatened

- Migrant species that arrives in early April
- Feed on invertebrates found in mudflats
- Nest April-May on sandy lakeshores, sandbars or sandy wetland pastures

Least Tern – Endangered

- Population decline in Colorado due to extreme water fluctuation during nesting season in manmade lakes, encroachment from vegetation, human disturbance, and predators
- Feed on small fish in shallow waters
- May-June breeding/nesting season

Water Budget

Estimated water budget – current conditions

~ 1,000 AFY of diverted surface water is needed to maintain current lake levels and habitat
~ 10,000 AFY would be needed in order to maintain the dead pool at Nee Noshe

Considerations

- Biology
Inundation of nesting habitat must be avoided during the nesting season (Apr – Jun)
Mud flats maintained through small reservoir level fluctuations
- Seasonal pattern of diversions/lake fluctuations can match biological needs only for current conditions
- Seasonal pattern of diversions/lake fluctuations more difficult to match biological needs for maintenance of dead pool

The final report should be prepared by the end of May 2011.

Discussion: Roundtable Summit follow-up (from draft memo by John Stulp, Special Advisor of Governor Hickenlooper)

Roundtable Goals (from Governor Hickenlooper's speech at the Summit)

- Implementation of "shovel ready" projects;
- Develop water project plans to get them "shovel ready";
- Use the roundtables to guide this process from a regional approach;
- Continue to build trust between basins and stakeholders and increase the level of engagement with the public, permitting agencies, and other stakeholders;
- Use our current resources strategically and in a prioritized manner.
- Ultimately develop a statewide water plan that brings together solutions that have come up from the basin roundtables, water providers, environment and recreation focused entities, the IBCC, and the CWCB.

Short term (Year 1) – Development of Portfolios and Begin Implementation

- Finish basin needs assessments
- Continue to identify which projects and methods meet basin Nonconsumptive and Consumptive needs and that the roundtable wants to get behind. Start to work with project proponents to determine if there are ways the roundtable can help move the project or method forward.
- Spend WSRA funds in a targeted manner to help ensure that the state and the basin will meet its needs. Have more projects that meet identified needs from an integrated resource, multi-purpose, and/or regional perspective.
- Develop one or more statewide portfolios using the portfolio tool to be sent to the IBCC for discussion.

Here's how we've processed project and study applications so far: Someone had an idea for a project or study and prepared a grant app. App went to needs assessment, and then to RT for approval. Project or Study was implemented. Sometimes a project came out of a study.

Now, we are being asked to offer help and/or endorsement of projects, in addition to simply approving a grant application.

We could form an Implementation Committee which could vary depending on the project or study. It could begin as the Needs Assessment Committee, and then grow from there depending on what expertise is needed. We could ask project proponents for their input on who might be helpful.

A different process could be used to offer help to proponents of Identified Projects, such as PSOP, that haven't asked the RT for grant funding.

Example: Rotating Ag/Fallowing Grant on Engineering Study

The Implementation Subcommittee would be the Needs Assessment Committee, plus Steve Lenhart for winter water, maybe Steve Witte, Roy Vaughn from SW, and a CWCB staff member.

Example: Silver Bullet. The RT would offer help. In this case, it might just create more bureaucracy.

There are two types of projects that have come up; projects that have a potential to meet the gap, then we have other projects that are more localized within the basin. One type may not need an advisory group, but the other kind of project is more crucial. How do we categorize projects and what they need?

We need a baseline of irrigated Ag water needs. The value of Ag has been recognized. For our own economic well-being, we ought to protect a certain quantified amount of irrigated agriculture. How can this become part of our Consumptive Needs Assessment, so that prospective projects are also measured against that need?

At IBCC four years ago, taking water from Ag was the fallback solution to water shortage issues. This has changed. But there is still a question of how to keep water in Ag without devaluing water owned by farmers.

This discussion will be continued next month.

Review of the next meeting's agenda

Next meeting May 11th.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Winner