

# INTERBASIN COMPACT COMMITTEE BASIN ROUNDTABLES

## Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable

June 14, 2011

### MINUTES

**Attending:** JB Alexander, Lewis H. Entz, Dale Wiescamp, Rio de la Vista, Mike Gibson, Nicole Langley, Rose Vanderpool, Theresa Corless, Matt Feier, John Halvorson, Charles Spielman, Rodney Smith, Greg Higel, Gene Farish, Heather Messick, Ruth Heide, Ralph Curtis, MaryBeth Miles, Erin Minks, Paul Robertson, Craig Cotten, Allen Brown, Don Thompson, Andrea Rue, Brian Rue, Mike Willett, Cindy Medina, Greg Johnson, Travis Smith, Brenda Felmlee, Perry Cabot, Leah Opitz, Jim Ehrlich

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- **Welcome** - Chairman Mike Gibson welcomed all and determined a quorum is present.
  - **Approval of Minutes** – Charlie Spielman moved to approve the Minutes of May 10, 2011. Cindy Medina seconded. Unanimous approval of Minutes as written.
  - **Report from Colorado Division of Water Resources - Craig Cotten Division 3** – Reports are included at the end of these minutes. The water keeps coming on the Rio Grande and Conejos systems, which is a good thing for water users. However, along with the very dry conditions on the Valley floor it also means that CDWR need to increase curtailments to get that water through the system.

CDWR increased the projected annual flow on the Rio Grande by 10,000 acre-feet. This in turn increased the delivery obligation to 15% and the curtailment to 14%. We are still hopeful that we can get at least 1% return flows throughout the system, but we will be re-evaluating that on a weekly basis.

CDWR kept the projected annual flow on the Conejos system the same as previous. However, the dry conditions have caused us to increase the curtailment and delivery percentages. We are now going to have a 16% curtailment and delivery percentage on the Conejos.

These projected flow estimates are assuming that both river systems will drop hard in the near future. If the flows keep staying up, we may have to increase curtailments again.

Craig said the State Engineer might have the groundwater model for use by the Groundwater Management Subdistricts ready by August.

**A question re spruce bark beetle** – whether trees should be left standing or be cut down. Mike G. suggested having someone from the Rio Grande Forest Service come talk to us. Theresa, as rep from the SLVPLC, said she would ask and report back at our next meeting, as they have people working on this issue.

Travis mentioned the USFS did lots of studies on the effects of beetle kill in the 80's. Maybe Pete Clark Could advise us. Charlie also suggested JR Ford and said he would ask him. Perry suggested CSU has data as well.

- **Initial Review of Funding Request - “Plaza Project Phase 2 – McDonald Ditch”**

Heather Messick, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project. Nicole, as Coordinator for Phase 1, gave a brief introduction on the Plaza Planning Project, the Plaza Stakeholders, and introduced Heather, who presented their Preview slide show. The request for funding is scheduled for July's Roundtable.

Travis spoke highly of this project. The project demonstrates how State money is used for excellent effect. Collaborative project brings together landowners, gets ditch companies working together, involves CDOW, US Corps of Engineers, County, with wetlands and restoration skills assisting the County.

Cindy reminded the RT of the Manassa Land & Irrigation project and the BBQ celebration they put on to celebrate and thank the RGBRT and everyone involved in bringing their major diversion project to completion. “We dish out the money, but we don't often get to experience how a project affects a whole community. Everyone was so happy and appreciative.” Mike spoke about the bronze plaque they put on the diversion honoring those who made the project possible.

In the Plaza Project, Rio pointed out that the property on the south side of the river is under a conservation easement with the Land Trust, and that NRCS is a major player, doing most of the engineering and bringing actual value to conservation efforts through their funding programs.

- **Initial Review of Funding Request - “2012 Water Celebration” – Mike Gibson.**

The Foundation for Water Education has formed the “Water 2012” statewide celebration of water, lending a shared “brand” to promote water issues around the State. Judy is on the Managing Board and Nicole has been Coordinator for the Rio Grande Basin and will call a task force together. Our basin has much to celebrate – Travis celebrates the Rio Grande Reservoir, the Plaza Plan is emerging, efforts on the Conejos, 100 years of reservoirs, and much more. Perry explained that an education action plan is on file with CWCB. Judy applied for that and it is about to be renewed, at a suggested \$1,500. Next month we will request funding for a part time position to assist Judy. Also lots of volunteer time is needed.

Discussion of ideas on promoting Water 2012. Nicole signed up the following task force: Leah Opitz, Perry Cabot, Travis Smith, Mary Beth Miles, & Mike. Judy will host the group at 11:00 a.m. at the USDA Service Center. To join up, contact Judy.

- **“Protect your Drinking Water – Protect the Source” – Matt Feier, Source Water**

**Specialist, Colorado Rural Water Association** -- The mission of CRWA is “to help small and rural communities provide safe, dependable and quality water at an affordable cost to their customers.” CRWA in partnership with EPA, CDPHE, and many Associate Members,

provides over 40 trainings each year. Topics include water, wastewater, collection, distribution, management and many other quality sessions throughout the state of Colorado. Matt works with communities which have “disinfection waivers,” which includes Blanca, Fort Garland, San Luis, Garcia, Romeo, Sanford, La Jara, and Saguache. Their purpose is to define the vulnerable areas, determine threats to the system, form local steering committees, define and implement BMPs and contingency plans as determined. Also, raise public awareness of watersheds, recharge zones, potential contaminants, change residential practices so as not to affect drinking water, emphasis being on protecting public health and environment. Discussion of Alamosa and salmonella outbreak. For more information contact Matt Feier, CRWA, 970-901-2888 or [crwa@comcast.net](mailto:crwa@comcast.net) Mike brought up a concern for threats from oil and gas drilling. He will send out a mailing with more information on this topic.

- **Status of Revised Rio Grande Basin Non-Consumptive Report – Rio De La Vista**

Since we always include nonconsumptive information in our grant proposals, this study (final draft report) is a valuable and accessible resource which you can find here: [Rio Grande 2010 SWSI Basin Report](#)

Rio is going to send out the report soon and advises our next phase in going forward is to figure out HOW to meet our consumptive and nonconsumptive needs. Considerations as follows:

- **Future Proposed Actions by The Roundtable:** Mike raised the issue of what actions should the Roundtable be considering to meet the Basin’s future Consumptive & Nonconsumptive Needs
  - Reservoirs – bring all our reservoirs up to design capacity; the multi-use concept; safety issues with that process.
  - Sustainability re our groundwater; use of subdistricts; bring aquifers back into balance; improve infrastructure.
  - Study to show the relation between groundwater and wetlands
  - Support non-high-water-consumption solar projects
  - Fire danger – assess efficiency to deal with public and private landscapes, watershed condition, and projects to help improve the watershed.
  - Drought mitigation planning – for example, how to deal with public land management issues in relation to providing forage.
  - Better forecasting & river administration – Going to get critical for long term economic survival as climate change continues to affect the SLV.

- Water conservation - Continue to work with our communities on improving municipal water supply – conservation, water administration.
- Confined aquifer recharge zones – we know less about recharge than we thought. More on geology/hydrology of the SLV.
- Tying our water to our land so that we maintain our water balance; and using our wet meadows as a reservoir in strategic areas, for water and land protection.

**Charlie** – Also farming methods that use less water; sustainability in irrigation and crops so we do not increase consumptive use.

**Rio** – The wetlands subcommittee is working on mapping and identifying attributes for wildlife and recreation. That's also on the web site. Pete Clark and Jim Rhett will hopefully get it approved. They need to have our approval before next meeting. Get comments to Rio.

- **Update - “Oil & Gas Drilling- Rio Grande County – Dale Wiescamp**

There is nothing happening in terms of oil and gas development in Rio Grande County. The price of natural gas is stable or lowering. Price of gas has been going up. We think there is more profit in oil right now. Mike: We've heard about the horror stories – I'm not sure we've looked adequately at the issues. Do we want to arrange to have some of these videos – stories that others have to tell ? Show “Gasline”? Let's plan to do that – whatever we hear might be biased, but we don't have to draw any conclusions. We heard the side from the oil and gas commission which was pretty optimistic. Charlie – wants to hear both sides.

- **Membership: Who will replace Jim Rhett – municipal water systems?** Greg's position, wearing two hats, maybe need someone else from Alamosa County?
- **Other Business:** We should thank Jeanna Paluzzi for her great micro-hydro presentation. There is going to be a Land Fest in Del Norte July 20-22. A series of Colorado Bar Association workshops on water law (Mike) in September.
- **Next Meeting Topics:** Two funding requests; Two presentations one from Nicole Rowan and the other from USGS fish studies
- **Adjourned:** There being no more business, the meeting adjourned.

**Next meeting July 12, 2011 @ 2:00 PM**

**Inn of the Rio Grande**

**East of Alamosa on Highway 160**