

# Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables

## Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

January 10, 2012 -- 2:00 to 5:00 P.M.

### MINUTES

**Attending:** *Nathan Coombs, Judy Lopez, Terry Freeman, Leah Opitz, Mike Willett, Larry Martinez, Rodney Smith, Norman Maestas, JB Alexander, Mario Curto, Ralph Curtis, Adam Green, Dale Pizel, Rio de la Vista, Jeanna Paluzzi, Paul Robertson, Vaughn Thacker, Sylvia Rains Dennis, Jeramy McDaniel, Eugene E. Jacquez, Eugene L. Farish, Ruth Heide, Karla Shriver, Travis Smith, Nicole Langley, Allen Brown, Andrew Archuleta, Peter Black, Delmer Vialpando, Greg Higel, Terri Harre, Jim Kuehn, Cindy Medina, Larry Sveum, Charlotte Bobicki, Jose Martinez, Matt Hildner, Erin Minks, Kyli Kehler, Heather Dutton, Mike Gibson, Mike Collins, Dale Wiescamp, Aaron Mohammadi, Matt Hardesty.*

**Chairman Mike Gibson** introduced himself to many newcomers and guests – a standing-room only crowd – and especially welcomed John Stulp, Chair of IBCC and Special Advisor to Governor Hickenlooper on water issues.

- **Correction and Approval of Minutes of November 8, 2011** – Correction on page 2 under Computer Modeling Portfolio Tool: eliminate the word “Watershed” in the title. It should be *Flow Evaluation Tool*. JB moved to approve as corrected. Travis seconded. Unanimous approval.
- **Vacancies / Members’ Terms** – We have a vacancy on the RT for a Recreational Representative. Rio nominated Heather Dutton for that position. Judy and Dale seconded. Unanimous approval. Welcome to the Board, Heather!
- **Election of Officers** - Each year this has to be done. Mike is Chair, Rio is Vice Chair, and Cindy is Secretary. These positions are wide open – Pete moved that all current officers be retained. Charlie seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor of keeping current officers. Travis expressed appreciation for those who serve, especially the Chairman, Mike Gibson. “His hard work is greatly responsible for our many grant proposals being accepted”. Mike thanked Karla Shriver and the Board of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District “for allowing me to do this.”
- **Resolution on Location of Posting of Public Notices** – A posting of the Meeting Agendas is made before each meeting. JB moved to keep the same location at 415 San Juan in Alamosa. Judy seconded. Unanimous approval. Mike suggested they also be posted on the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District’s & the Rio Grande Water Conservation District’s websites.
- **Ballot Initiatives #3 and # 45 – Mike Gibson** – These two ballot proposals would turn the way Colorado handles water upside-down, ending the doctrine of prior appropriation. John

Stulp addressed the Roundtable, saying that if these initiatives passed "It would be the most devastating thing that could happen to water in Colorado." Many efforts are underway to keep these proposals from making the ballot. Water would fall under the public trust doctrine, eliminating virtually every water right in the state. Anyone could travel through private property. Unfettered recreation would be placed ahead of senior water rights. The Colorado Water Congress is taking this to the Colorado Supreme Court, at a cost of about \$30,000. Contributions by users and municipalities would be appreciated. Karla explained that non-profits can support an issue or not, but we cannot give money. Mike urged Roundtable members to communicate clearly about this.

➤ **Formal Request for WSRA Funding: Conejos River System Gauging Stations Project – Nathan Coombs, Manager, Conejos Water Conservancy District (CWCD)**

- Nathan Coombs presented the CWCD request for \$407,280 in Water Supply Reserve Account funds, with \$387,280 from the Statewide fund and \$20,000 from the Basin Fund, and with matching funds from the District and from water users of \$92,500, or 22.7% of the WSRA funds requested. Funds will be used to install 72 new electronic gauging stations and to automate four existing control gates on the Conejos River system. Flow data from the remote gauges will be transmitted by a SCADA system every 15 minutes and made available to the District and to DWR by a web-based program. In collaboration with water users, four control gates will be upgraded for remote operation through telemetry and integrated into the Gauging Stations project.
- **Discussion:** Lawrence questioned why some were being included and some excluded. Would not want to come back in 4-5 years and have to pay to add them to the system. Nathan explained the District has no authority to go outside the District's system. All recognized need to better account for water. Charlie, who had expressed doubts at last meeting about the cost/benefit of the project said "you satisfied me on that – it's clearly a bargain." Larry Martinez, from the Los Sauces Ditch, said "We're one of the last users on the Conejos. I feel this will make the whole system more efficient. Everyone down the line will get more water. This project is long overdue. I wish we'd had it for the past 40-60 years." Matt Hardesty, Assistant Engineer, Division 3, said "This will give us better data to go into the water class codes and help us improve the water balance model. It will be very positive. Charlie and Lawrence had some installation and budget questions. Lawrence would like to see a mechanism to add other sites onto this system. Lots of discussion.
- **Vote:** Karla Shriver complimented Nathan on the quality of the proposal and the project and she moved to approve. Mario Curto seconded. Unanimous vote to approve funding, as requested.

➤ **Remarks – John Stulp – Special Policy Advisor (Water) to Governor Hickenlooper –** Dr. Stulp extended the Governor's compliments to the RGBRT for high levels of collaboration and cooperative spirit and updated members on recent issues before IBCC. He said that we're starting to see a new way of doing business concerning water. The Conejos

Gauging Stations Project is an example -- a very innovative and transparent process, important for how we comply with the Rio Grande Compact and improve water management for multiple beneficiaries. "With an agriculture background I have a passion for recreation. It's water that brings us together, so we have to learn to use it smarter." John invited all to attend the Roundtable Summit on March 1<sup>st</sup> and an IBCC meeting the day before. "Mike is not a bashful person, and you can be sure that Travis and Steve are representing you well at the state level." He spoke of how the cross pollination between IBCC and the different Roundtables is improving communication. With tough times ahead, the Governor is confident in the IBCC's ground-up process, bringing vital issues to CWCB, the Governor, and the legislature. "You guys are really good." On Oct 31 the IBCC issued its report to the Governor, an 8-page summary of SWSI, bringing together the results of the best minds of the state as we look into the future. Use it. Read it. Give it to your non-water friends. This year's Roundtable summit will put RTs together with each other, as many have issues in common. We'll talk about the portfolio tool, how it gives a statewide perspective, and how to get the word out to the citizenry about ways to address statewide needs. Come to the Summit!

- **To Attend the Annual 2012 Roundtable Summit - Contact Mike!** There is a fund of \$600 to help with travel costs. **March 1st, 2012 from 8 am to 5 pm** at the Omni Interlocken Resort, 500 Interlocken Boulevard, Broomfield, CO. In addition, the IBCC is meeting during the afternoon of **February 29th** and a **reception** will follow. Conference attendees are encouraged to attend both events.
- **Report from Colorado Division of Water Resources – Assistant Division Engineer Matt Hardesty** -- Good early snow in November and December brought snowpack to near 100% of normal in December but that trend flatlined after December, so today the Rio Grande Basin is at 80% of normal snowpack. Matt projected that for the next 90 days we're in a weak La Niña, so there will probably be little change. Both the Rio Grande and the Conejos River Colorado finished the year with a slight over delivery to downstream states, which is where we want to be. Special thanks go to water users on the Conejos, whose cooperation helped meet Compact obligations.

The Colorado Supreme Court upheld the local judicial approval of the Valley's first Subdistrict Groundwater Management Plan. The subdistrict will submit its management plan to the state water division engineer by April 15, and by May 1<sup>st</sup> the state will determine its effectiveness to start paying depletions by this summer. This Supreme Court decision opens the door for other subdistricts in the Valley. The groundwater model is still being run, with calibrations continuing to move forward, but there is not a date on finalizing the model, so no date has been set for the next meeting on the pending groundwater rules and regulations.

- **Judy Lopez Award as Water Educator of the Year** – Matt Hardesty presented the "Water Educator of the Year" award to Judy, who is the Education Specialist for the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative. Presenting a plaque to Judy, Matt expressed appreciation for her work with young people. He recalled his son's experience with Judy on a project that ultimately won a Science Fair award. "Judy has been involved with hundreds of science fair projects in the Valley, and it's great to see her organization and teaching skills." She has educated hundreds of youth through the water

festival in Alamosa and the Beaver Creek summer camp, and she also coordinates the conservation poster contest and coordinates educational farm tours. Judy is also involved in educating and assisting adults through such events as the small landowner expo and watershed and conservation teacher curriculums that are now being used around the state. “Whether helping people statewide with policy decisions or with a fifth grader’s science project, she gives 100 percent to everything. Congratulations to Judy!

- **Proposed Solar Electrical Generating Facility, Adam Green, Project Developer with Solar Reserve** – Public hearings will be held February 1 at 5 PM and February 2 from 2 PM to 8 PM at the Center Consolidated School District Auditorium to consider the final permit request by Solar Reserve for a 200 megawatt concentrated solar energy generating facility. The project will be located on approximately 4,000 acres of a larger 6,200-acre area of privately owned land located north of Center. Adam Green’s presentation explained the technology: A large field of mirrors, or heliostats, surrounds a 656-foot tower which stores energy in the form of molten salt. Occupying about 1600 acres, the system allows for economies of scale, storing 150 megawatts of stored energy. The salts go from 100 to 1,060 degrees. “The power generation system will use dry cooling, which blows air over tubes, so the project will use significantly less water than what the project site is currently consuming.” The final 1041 permit application and interconnection studies are underway. He explained that this is not at all like exporting water to the Front Range, but more like exporting potatoes. “Taking sunlight and open space and converting them into a commodity.”

**Many questions & much discussion:** What does it do for local people? Hundreds of construction jobs. A mix of hiring, some here and some from outside. Each facility requires about 50 steady year round jobs at a range of levels. Significant tax benefits locally. Diversifying local economic base. Mike asked the RT to let Adam finish his presentation. All are encouraged to attend the Feb 1 and 2 public hearings or to call 310-315-2272.

- **Report on Portfolio and Tradeoff Tool Options Developed at Workshop, Travis Smith** - Thanks to all the more than 15 participants who attended this workshop. This tool allows us to see what the tradeoffs are for current IPPs that come out of each of the Roundtables – to assess their potential for success. The portfolio tool is a spreadsheet, and the purpose of the workshop was to develop the preliminary portfolio for the Rio Grande. Travis and Mike spoke about the results of different “what if’s” as participants examined ag transfers, new water projects, additional conservation measures, and the success rate of current projects. A mix of all these will take the pressure off the move toward ag dryup as we came up with different scenarios. We should look at this further next month.

**Discussion: John Stulp** – it helps get us into a realistic mode so we can see what the effects are of different scenarios. It gives a dose of realism to different assumptions. “I encourage you to get to know this – we’ll be going through this at Roundtable Summit in March.”

- **Update on Oil & Gas Drilling, Rio Grande County, Mike Gibson / Dale Weiscamp** -- We didn’t form a subcommittee, but Rio did send a letter. Rio, please send a copy to the Roundtable? Mr. Jim Kuehn spoke of his concern --drilling proposed 132 feet from his lot

line on San Francisco Creek; of many people meeting with local officials but with nothing being done. “People are involved for political and financial gain with this oil company.” There are major concerns out there for wildlife, air quality, surface contamination, people, elk, deer, and lots of animals, “The real concern is if there is contamination that gets into the aquifer. We’re being told it’s perfectly safe.” He was eloquent about his concern. “Water is the lifeblood of this Valley. Do we want to take this risk?”

**Discussion:** Mike said he had spoken this morning about an abandoned well on Old Woman’s Creek. There was a bond put out to clean up the site due to concern of contamination of the aquifer. He was doing this under the name of the Roundtable. Dale W. asked the Roundtable to take a stand, with hydrofracturing now becoming a hot topic in the US and even the EPA taking another look at fracking fluids. “I’m pleading right now for the Roundtable to take a stand.” Kuehn described the site, the slope of the land, how drainage funnels into San Francisco Creek, how Hubitec owns the surface rights and BLM owns the mineral rights.

Mike responded that a number of people have asked for a public hearing and that Rio Grande County has not yet issued a special use permit. “I realize it’s a controversial issue, but not all of us of the same opinion.” Andrew Archuleta of BLM said that BLM has not taken a stand and they are still researching the issue. Mike explained that the application and permitting process take a long time and we are at the beginning of that process, then the NEPA process begins. Mike suggested that we wait until the NEPA process begins. Mr. Archuleta explained that any Roundtable response would have most credence if we waited for the NEPA process to begin. Rio said that at the statewide nonconsumptive meeting there was discussion of private mineral properties of a stream near the North Platte which was not properly protected. Charlie said he wrote a letter to the CEO of Dan Hughes Co saying there was little or no potential for oil or gas.... He suggested a more productive pay zone might be found at a site that they might have under lease where there is not a subdivision involved, where they might have a better chance of success. Travis responded to Jim Kuehn about San Francisco Creek, “I live on that creek. It’s easy to get emotional, but this group does have a lot of influence. The efforts we make need to be strong. I’m still confident that local citizens following the process can have an impact and guide the process. If we get involved in that process, we need to get the best information we can get.” Jim Kuehn said it didn’t matter if drilling happened here or ten miles from here, “if it gets into our aquifer.... I want you people to get to know some of these facts so you’ll say no.”

Mike asked the Roundtable to consider tabling this issue for now and continuing to do our homework. Mike and Dale both thanked Andrew Archuleta for coming and encouraged him to continue to come. A round of applause.

- **Water 2012 -- Slides from Judy Lopez** – The Water 2012 Year is here, with information at [www.water2012.org](http://www.water2012.org) Many grass roots efforts connecting people to water. Listed the players, who meet monthly. Discussed each of the subcommittees. There will be a water education forum in the spring and another one in the fall. Looking for speakers. See Leah if interested in being a speaker. Libraries will have big displays. Education Action Plan Funding; library programs for kids to read about water from local sources. Could there be

some WSRA moneys available? Travis celebration of the 100 year anniversary of the Rio Grande Reservoir. Tours of our roundtable projects. Re-release of our DVD. Water stories in the Valley Courier with weekly pullouts. Radio interviews. Contact Leah Opitz at [lopitz15@gmail.com](mailto:lopitz15@gmail.com). Article criteria, 600-800 words, factual and educational. Opinion pieces – suggest we reference Roundtable on articles. Statewide and Local events.

- **Volunteers needed for the Colorado Water Congress Annual Convention** – Mike is looking for volunteers to work the convention – ushering, name badges. Contact Mike or Doug Kemper. Travis announced that Mike is the incoming President of the Water Congress.
- **IBCC – Steve Vandiver thanked John Stulp, Chairman of the IBCC, for visiting the RGBRT.** At the November 30 meeting discussion involved the portfolios, with each RT reporting on what they did and on the combining of different ideas. There was discussion from the Education Committee and the Nonconsumptive Subcommittee met and reported their activities. There was a discussion of risk management or the downside of some of the projects that were going forward. Anyone is encouraged to attend. What does risk management mean? Steve challenged the RT -- What are the risks if we do something, or don't do something? There are downsides to a lot of projects being proposed, so how should we deal with them? How should we then make decisions after we've identified these risks? There are no perfect ideas, or ideas with no impacts. With the front range getting most of their water from the western slope – do we have to shut them off? Put water into Lake Powell... etc.? Jim Ehrlich asked “And what happens if somebody puts a pipeline in?”

Special note: Mike told the Roundtable that he was diagnosed with colon cancer last October and that he has started a 6-month chemotherapy treatment program. He thanked everyone for the support he and Gigi have been getting which was very much appreciated and was a reflection of living and working in a community such as the San Luis Valley.

**Next Meeting**  
**February 14, 2012**  
**Inn of the Rio Grande**  
**Hwy 160 – East end of Alamosa**  
**2:00 to 5:00 PM**