

**Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables  
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable**

***MINUTES***

**September 18, 2012 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.**

**Attending:** JB Alexander, Larry Sveum, Cindy Medina, Stan Moyer, Steven Smith, Nathan Coombs, Trevor Klein, Wayne Schwab, Marty Asplin, Andy J. Manzanares, Mike Willett, Al Brown, Ralph Curtis, Charlotte Bobicki, Peter Clerk, Steve Vandiver, Charles Spielman, Mario Curto, Dale Wiescamp, Brenda Felmlee, Greg Higel, Heather Dutton, Mac McFadden, Edward Vigil, Jenny Stricker, Don Thompson, Matt Hildner, Ruth Heide, Leah Opitz, Ed Nielsen, Erin Minks, Paul Tigan, Lawrence D. Gallegos, Don Martinez, Kristin Maharg, Jayla Poppleton, Virginia Simmons, Eugene Jacquez, Rose Vanderpool, Larry Crowder, Nicole Langley, Mike Gibson

**Welcome and Introductions:** Mike especially thanked Colorado State Representative Ed Vigil for coming and welcomed Virginia Simmons, author and distinguished historian of the San Luis Valley. Good news: Mike reported he had received a clean-bill-of-health. He thanked everyone for support and good wishes over the past many months.

- **Approval of the Minutes of July 10, 2012:** Ed Nielsen moved that the Minutes be accepted as written. Dale Wiescamp seconded. Unanimous approval.
- **Report from Colorado Division of Water Resources - Craig Cotten, Division 3 Engineer** – Craig reviewed the Valley's hydrographs as compared to 2002.

The Rio Grande showed more stream runoff from April to today as compared to 2002, but late summer and early fall flows are below those of 2002. We're low in all rivers and streams. Readings on the Conejos near Mogote, which can be skewed due to releases from Platoro reservoir, show runoff levels lower than they were in 2002.

The Rio Grande Compact preliminary annual flow forecast at Del Norte of 415,000 AF was a decrease of 5,000 AF from two or three weeks ago. Our annual forecast for the year continues to go down, standing now at about 64% of average. Of that we owe 102,200 AF to downstream states, with current delivery obligation at 3%. We are sending very little water downstream now because we have just about met our obligation.

On the Conejos portion of the Compact, annual index flow of 185,000AF is 56% of the long term normal, with an obligation of 37,500 AF, which we've pretty much met. There is no curtailment on the Conejos system right now.

Aquifer report: Craig reviewed Allen Davey's unconfined aquifer storage figures, showing even further declines this year. The Davis Engineering chart shows a big drop in 2002 and 2003 when we got to 1 Million AF below 1976 levels. We are now 1.1 Million AF below where we were then. Steve said we'll be at 1.2 Million AF below 2002 for the year.

**Discussion:** JB asked about the pumping rate. Craig said about 500,000 AF Valley wide. Steve said subdistrict # 1 is pumping about 300,000 AF, and about 9,000 acres have been fallowed this year, with another 15,000 to 18,000 acres with either reduced planting or voluntary fallowing. How to charge the aquifer? Best to get some snow. The worse it gets, the worse it gets. No water in the ditches = none in the river so people rely more on wells.

Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs: Craig reported total water in storage now is 116,000 AF of which 6,300 AF is Rio Grande Compact usable water. Colorado and New Mexico believe usable water is currently about 7,400 AF. Rio Grande Compact “usable water” means water that can be used by downstream irrigators.

Lawsuit against Bureau of Reclamation: The BOR has started releasing water from the reservoirs with the aim to go down to zero. Colorado and New Mexico believe the usable water supply in the reservoir is already negative, possibly indicating the BOR is taking some of Colorado and New Mexico’s water and saying it is usable water. BOR did this last year, causing NM to file a lawsuit, and now BOR is doing it again. New Mexico is asking for a summary judgment against the BOR stating that what they’re doing is not a legal process. Although Colorado has not joined in that lawsuit, there is some talk of it. Colorado might file an amicus brief saying that we agree with New Mexico’s position. This is an ongoing issue in Southern NM. “We think the Bureau is not operating legally,” Craig stated.

Temperature outlook: National Weather Service temperature predictions for the winter indicate equal chances for above/below normal temperatures. It’s not below average for precipitation. The southern US will see wetter times as we enter an El Niño period.

- **Request for Funding – Culebra Watershed Vallejos Ditch Headgate Replacement, Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association (SCAA), Joe Gallegos, Vice President and Delmer Vialpando, President; accompanied by Juan Ramon and Andy Manzanares from Vallejos Ditch Association (VDA) --**

The SCAA requested \$10,000 from the WSRA Basin Account and \$90,000 from the Statewide account to replace the headgate on Vallejos Creek in the Culebra Watershed. The NRCS has determined that the existing headgate is beyond repair and must be replaced, as it has lost 70% of its carrying capacity, resulting in frequent flooding during high flows. Matching funds include \$10,600 from NRCS, \$2,400 from the Costilla Conservancy District, \$1,200 from SCAA, and \$1,900 matching and in-kind from the VDA.

**VOTE:** Lawrence Gallegos moved to approve funding. Rio de la Vista seconded. Unanimous approval.

- **Preview of Request for Funding by Colorado Foundation for Water Education for Future “Headwaters” Publication on the Rio Grande Basin, Kristin Maharg; and Jayla Poppleton, Editor of Headwaters Magazine --** At next RT meeting members will vote on a request for funding for a new Headwaters Magazine issue featuring the Rio Grande Basin. Please submit concept papers to Kristin or Jayla. This issue will be a tool for area water entities to teach SLV residents and readers statewide about the challenges facing each region and how they are successfully adapting to them. CFWE sponsors many tours, workshops, and conferences. Their Board includes Steve Vandiver and Travis Smith. Judy Lopez helps with educational outreach. They will convene a group of content experts and freelance writers to serve on a working group and a think tank for this issue, the 14<sup>th</sup> issue in ten years. CFWE maintains final editorial authority. About 7,000 copies will be made, of which the RGBRT will get 1,000. Formal request for funding at next RGBRT meeting.

**Discussion:** Pete asked who paid for the last Rio Grande issue. CWCB paid for it last time. Charlie asked whether the magazine gets out to audiences other than the water communities, to which many responded, proving that Headwaters is not just preaching to

the choir. Issues run out; people order more; lots of downloads from the web site; Judy and many other teachers use them in classrooms and for workshops in schools; Mike and Heather use them with the RG Restoration Project; international visitors through CSU get them. With many stories to tell, this magazine is an important public resource. Steve: in the past seven years our Basin has seen many changes. It's time to do another RG issue. Cost to publish about 5,000 copies of the 40 page magazine would be about \$33,000.

- **Preview of Request for Funding, Plaza Project Phase III, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP) Coordinator, Heather Dutton** – The Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation is the fiscal agent for the RGHRP. Next month Heather will request \$370,000 with \$70,000 from the Basin WSRA fund and \$300,000 from the Statewide account for Phase III of the Plaza Project. Total cost of Phase III will be \$875,000 and will include replacement of the structure and headgates on the Prairie Ditch diversion, and associated riparian restoration. The Plaza Project is at Sevenmile Plaza, between Monte Vista and Del Norte. **Review:** Phase I, Plaza Planning Project; Phase II, design/engineering and completion of the McDonald Ditch portion of the project. It is anticipated site work for Phase II will begin later this Fall or early Spring.

Charlie questioned the \$90,000 in-kind estimate for design. “That sounds like an awful lot of money for design work.” Heather said she would bring back details at next month’s meeting. Mike said that about 10% of a project’s cost was appropriate for design work. Heather explained that complications at the McDonald diversion, including potential effects upon the bridge, required more engineering and design work.

- **“Telecommunications and Control: Saving water, energy, effort, and mileage” – Annette Aring and Bruce Bacon, AMCi; Jim Butler & George Downs, Dynotek** Annette reviewed the capabilities of the two companies, AMCi and Dynotek, combining remote sensing and water monitoring solutions with automated gates as well as automation systems for existing gates. In addition to monitoring and sending data from sensors, satellite-based communication terminals can be used to remotely control equipment such as pumps, valves, or gates. Nathan Coombs commented on the progress in the WSRA-funded Conejos Water Conservancy District telemetry project, where the lower reaches of the river are already well served. “We can now see our system, making our water commissioner’s job a lot easier – results show that we’re headed in the right direction.” Craig Cotten said he’s working with the District, with very positive results. Contact Annette at 303-279-2002 or 303-588-7504 or [www.amci-wireless.com](http://www.amci-wireless.com). Charlie asked if their system could monitor the levels of two remote lakes owned by a friend. Yes.
- **The CNH (National Science Foundation) Snowmelt Project, Steven M. Smith, Colorado University** -- Steven M. Smith, research assistant from CU, is doing a three year study funded by the National Science Foundation, examining how people and institutions deal with global climate changes and diminishing snowmelt. He and fellow students may be contacting people in the Valley to get their story, so be sure to welcome Steven.
- **Updates on Project Implementation Efforts and Scenario Planning, Greg Johnson, CWCB** – Greg summarized the Rio Grande Basin’s input to IBCC, along with that of other RT’s, on the implementation of consumptive and nonconsumptive projects and methods. He gave an overview of the technical assistance available to RT’s for short-term and long-term implementation of projects and methods (handout available). Contact Greg directly, 303-866-3441 X3249 or [gregory.johnson@state.co.us](mailto:gregory.johnson@state.co.us). This information will be utilized to

develop SWSI 2016, culminating a six-year planning cycle for assessing Colorado's long-term needs. Governor Hickenlooper has asked for a State Water Plan based on scenario/portfolio work, SWSI, and other efforts related to short and long term projects and methods. A partnership between CWCB, the IBCC, the Department of Natural Resources, the Basin Roundtables, and other stakeholders will create this State Water Plan. Emphasis is on implementation.

IBCC is developing metrics to use in evaluating basin portfolios and developing future scenarios. The basin RT's developed 34 portfolios to address Colorado's water future. IBCC will narrow this down to ten or twelve portfolios, creating an adaptive management plan with "no or low regrets" implementation options. Evaluation metrics could include agricultural water transfers, cost, environmental/recreational issues, and M&I supply reliability. The point is to identify "no regrets" actions, projects, and methods and to identify projects that are most feasible as we develop the adaptive management plan.

Revenue Situation with CWCB: Greg reported that, due to a drop in severance tax revenues, as a result of reduced natural gas prices, funds for project funding from CWCB will be greatly diminished this fiscal year. Projections had been that CWCB would receive \$10 Million this year, but it only received \$3.2 to \$3.3 Million. The WSRA funds still have a healthy balance of \$7.2 Million. This month the CWCB Board will review 21 applications totaling \$4.8 Million. Grants are becoming more competitive due to reduced funds and also a tightening of evaluation criteria.

WSRA Grant Proposal Effects: As the July IBCC report states, basin roundtables are encouraged to utilize the Water Supply Reserve Account (WSRA) funding cycle in September of 2012 and March of 2013 to move projects forward. The time to submit grant proposals for water projects or studies is now. [Contact Mike Gibson at (719) 589-2230 for assistance in preparing your proposal.] To help encourage this, the grant application deadline has been shortened to the first of the month prior to a CWCB Board meeting month, or approximately 45 days.

Charlie asked for an explanation of the reduction in severance tax revenues. Greg said the fund is not being raided, but that severance tax projections were off, partially due to falling prices and lower production, but primarily because the legislature passed a bill reducing the amount of funds for CWCB in the event that severance tax projections were off. We used to get 40%, but in July we got only 1/3 of 40%. Projections could change and we might get more than expected in January and April. Charlie asked Greg and Mike to get this information out on the internet.

- **Flaming Gorge Committee Update, Mike Gibson** -- The committee is considering 2 projects to take water out of Flaming Gorge and pipe it across southern Wyoming to Colorado to meet water demands. We'll have a report by end of year analyzing the role of the state in such a development, seeking commonalities with other similar projects.
- **Update on Sub-District # 1 Issues – Steve Vandiver** -- An Annual Replacement Plan has been implemented. We're delivering water to the river to make up for depletions that the model has shown on three different regions. We've put all pumping numbers in, from past pumping to an estimate of pumping for this year. With a little over 5,000 AF annually, we are over half way to replacing those depletions for the year, which goes through April 2013. We're working closely with Craig to ensure that we've met the requirements and standards, each and every day. We've purchased additional water and the plan is operating.

The objectors, who have fought the subdistrict from its inception, have filed several different motions to object to the Annual Replacement Plan, including seeking to shut off all wells in the district for the season. We have a five day trial to address a number of the objectors' issues, "90% of which could have been settled in an afternoon of reasonable discussions." Steve described the difficulties, with seven people working 4.5 months on this, and now they're preparing for another trial. Since we don't have the groundwater model results yet, the other subdistricts can't move forward.

- **Report from the Interbasin Compact Committee and Selection of Representative – Travis Smith and Mike Gibson.** Steve Vandiver has decided to stay on after all. Mike suggested that Heather Dutton could be a backup person for Steve. No objections.
- **"Water 2012" - Leah Opitz --** Thanks to Ruth Heide for weekly articles in the Valley Courier. We're gathering photos from our tours for a slide show on Colorado Water 2012. Travelling displays are going to all libraries and will be in Fort Garland for the next few weeks. Schools are participating in the River of Words contest. We all enjoyed an excellent Rio Grande Reservoir 100 anniversary celebration. Travis has handouts from the day. [www.rgwcei.org](http://www.rgwcei.org)
- **Upcoming Events --** Water Fest at Cole Park on September 20, contact Judy. On Thursday, October 4 the Northern San Luis Valley Roundtable hosts a talk by Paul Morgan on geothermal resources. October 19-21 in San Luis will be the first gathering of acequia farmers in Colorado. Contact Joe Gallegos 719-298-7278 or Delmer Vialpando 719-672-0944. Cindy invites a small group to come see the cement pour on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of October for the Terrace Spillway Replacement, to see where our RT money is going.
- **Update on Oil & Gas Drilling - Rio Grande County – Paul Tigan, BLM; Dale Wiescamp / Rose Vanderpool –** Paul, as acting BLM Field Manager for the San Luis Valley, said Andrew Archuleta will be back around November 5. Public scoping extends until this coming Friday covering the application for a well near San Francisco Creek. We're in the 3<sup>rd</sup> step of that process. Then we'll draft an environmental assessment, to be released mid October followed by a 30 day public comment period. Revisions and a final decision will be done probably by December.

Rose Vanderpool has not yet received an application from Hughes. First Liberty Energy is in the process of starting a conditional use process, even though Rio Grande County has declared a moratorium on applications. Rio Grande County sent comments back and had some discussions on those comments. Hughes has been quiet. The hydrogeology study is underway and should be done by November. Dale Wiescamp is happy to announce they've cleaned up the mess at Old Woman Creek after 25 years. Mike asked Dale if they did any testing on that casing? Dale doesn't know. Rose said they did not do an integrity test on that well. Mike asked Rose to inform us about the cleanup.

- **Agricultural Fallowing Dialog with Arkansas Basin Roundtable, Mike Gibson –** We have been asked by the Arkansas Basin Roundtable to help them consider how agricultural fallowing might be addressed in the future, with water being transferred away from farming and ranching into the M&I pipeline. We're looking for a person to serve on this group from this RT. Mike asks that someone from the agricultural community please participate, with travel expenses paid. Jim Ehrlich maybe? Yes, lots of travel. Probably five meetings over five months. Please call Mike on this!

- **Other Topics:** Rio has arranged with Costilla Water Conservancy District and they are willing to host the Roundtable Meeting in October. She will send out a bulletin on this. Charlie asked if we could bring Mr. Jenseh back if he has data on results from the use of magnetized water on crops. Mike said yes, if he has sufficient data.

**NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING!!!**

**October 9, 2012 @ 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.**

Light refreshments will be served

**At the Senior Citizens' Center**

1101 Salazar Street, San Luis,  
on the northeast side of town.

Link to a Google map to the address:

<http://goo.gl/maps/WmyFz>