

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable

MINUTES

March 12, 2013

Attending: *Dale Wiescamp, JB Alexander, Margy Robertson, Steven Smith, Kelsey Cody, Stan Moyer, Marty Asplin, Charles Spielman, Bea Ferrigno, Nicole Langley, Vaughn Thacker, David Stiller, Mike Willett, Don Thompson, Joseph B. Old Elk, Hew Hallock, Rusty Johnson, Kip Canty, Jim Ehrlich, Eugene Jacquez, Ralph Curtis, Ruth Heide, Karla Shriver, Travis Smith, Mac McFadden, Erin Minks, Charlotte Bobicki, Gene Farrish, Leah Opitz, Robert Mathis, Brenda Felmlee, Steve Vandiver, Dr. Jose L. Cortez, Matie B. Lakish, Heather Dutton*

- **Minutes of February 12, 2013** will follow at a later time, as preparation of the rush proposal to fund the Drip Irrigation project took priority.
- **Report from Colorado Division of Water Resources** – Kip Canty gave the ten day report from Division 3. According to the NRCS Upper Rio Grande Basin time series snowpack summary, the Basin has less snow pack than last year. The three month outlook for precipitation indicates the Basin will continue to be drier than normal. For the full report, contact kip.canti@state.co.us

Kip gave an update on the Rio Grande Compact law suit: Colorado and New Mexico have disagreed with Texas over how the Bureau of Reclamation has calculated evaporation rates from a pool of credit water contributed by the upstream states that is in Elephant Butte Reservoir. Colorado and New Mexico would prefer to see the calculations done at the end of the year as opposed to a running basis. Colorado does not know if the Supreme Court will agree to hear the case today or not.

- **Update on Sub-District #1 Issues – Steve Vandiver** – The Annual Report is done, summarizing all activities in 2012. It has been posted on the web site, and is available at http://www.rgwcd.org/attachments/File/228_Annual_Report_submitted_to_the_Court_02282013.pdf
86 center pivots have contracted to be fallowed at some level for this year, and that represents a significant reduction in pumping. It appears impossible, even with 60,000 AF less pumping than last year, to keep up with the lack of recharge.

The Subdistrict hopes to have news from the CREP program later, probably in May, with an official announcement encouraging people to sign up for a voluntary 15 years or permanent dry-up. Steve said we still have not heard from the Water Court

Judge yet on issues relating to augmentation plans and the use of Closed Basin water to meet depletions in the Rio Grande.

Discussion: Steve explained the concept of the Closed Basin Project, the CREP program, and the economics of the subdistrict program. Mike: Will farmers have to decide to plant or not plant while we wait for the federal government to decide? Steve: We are totally dependent on FSA and their allocating the money, and so far the Department of Agriculture has not released the funds. With the Rio Grande at 60% of normal snow pack, maybe that's the new normal. The Subdistrict is doing all it can with the money they have and the CREP program will hopefully help, once it's in place. Karla spoke of the CREP program's 20%-80% cost share per acre, which could provide a significant amount of revenue.

- **Rio Grande Leadership Class – Heather Dutton** – Over 35 people applied. The Class will have 24 people plus two auditing the course. High Interest in the program indicates it will be done again. Mike thanked Heather and Judy for their efforts on this project.
- **Request for WSRA Funding – “Drip Irrigation Field Trial for Sustainable Potato Cropping in the San Luis Valley” – Jim Ehrlich, Colorado Potato Administrative Committee.** The request was for \$40,000 from the WSRA Basin Account. Travis Smith moved to approve, Charlie Spielman seconded. The request for funds was unanimously approved.
- **CWCB will hold its March meeting** at the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center, 1300 Broadway in Denver, March 19 and 20, 2013. Check the web site for specific times and agenda items.
- **Adam Green gave a presentation on the Solar Reserve Project.** They gave a presentation to the RT a year ago and have now obtained a special use permit from Saguache County. After the RT meeting folks are invited to come to the room next door for a full presentation of this project. Once they have a Power Purchase Agreement the plan is to proceed to construction. Adam asked the RT for support and offered to come back with details. With 6,200 acres under their control, this facility will generate 100 megawatts on the existing transmission system. The solar plant will take up 1,500 acres and the permit covers 4,000 plus acres. The project would occupy the space of 39 center pivots, so no wells would operate on their site, reducing that much groundwater use by some 6,000 acre-feet of consumptive use. Adam hoped he could get a letter of support from the RGBRT. Mike – We will get back to you on that.
- **IBCC – Travis provided a handout copy of a memorandum from John Stulp, IBCC Director, and Jennifer Gimbel, CWCB Director, regarding the “2013 Roadmap.”** Travis stated that the letter is for you to review and give feedback to Mike. We need to act on this next month. The memorandum sets forth where we are now with regard to past SWSI issues such as groundwater sustainability,

management of surface and underground water supplies, and how all of that ties into the Rio Grande Compact. The Basin has aging reservoirs, some privately held, which need rehabilitation. Many can't store their designed capacity. What should we do about that? Where will funds come from to fix those reservoirs? We've made progress at Platoro, Santa Maria, Continental, Terrace, Sanchez, Rio Grande, and Beaver Creek. Governor Hickenlooper wants a statewide water plan. We need to state that we have a water plan for this Basin.

The letter included a summation of accomplishments and suggests seven items for planned future work. Item #5 is the Basin Implementation Plan. As the Governor moves to establish a Statewide Water Plan, the Basin has another opportunity at telling its story. Rather than re-do the Needs Assessment on Consumptive and Nonconsumptive Use, Travis said the Roundtable can identify what local actions are needed. Projects which identified in 2006 have now moved forward with reservoirs being rehabilitated and subdistricts coming online, so now the Basin has the opportunity to get out in front and do a Rio Grande Basin Plan. Travis and Mike challenge the Roundtable Members to put forward what the Basin Plan would look like.

Discussion: Mike will send out this letter. Travis explained "Water for the 21st Century." The Governor has tasked CWCB and IBCC to have each basin create its own plan, so it's an opportunity for the re-timing and re-distribution of Water Supply Reserve Account projects to be funded such as new projects as alternatives to agricultural transfers and dry-up programs. Now that the Basin has identified its needs, it can come up with the Plan. IBCC will probably start meeting more often to respond to the Governor's request for a water plan. Karla encouraged this: "It's a bottom-up piece of the puzzle, a way for us to control our Basin."

- **Update on Oil and Gas drilling – Karla** -- First Liberty started drilling last week. She heard they're down to 9,600 feet and someone said they hadn't hit anything yet. Other say they found some gas. They are now starting to case the hole with cement.
- **Author, historian, and scholar of the San Luis Valley, Virginia Simmons,** commented on how some things have changed "I remember when the groundwater was way up here, not way down there." And how some things have not changed, like the return of the sand hill cranes. She is very interested in subsurface drip irrigation, "like they do in Mesopotamia."

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING April 9, 2013, 2:00 to 5:00 PM

NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION!

**Conference Room of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street in Alamosa**