

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

MINUTES

July 9, 2013 @ 2:00 – 5:00 P.M.

Attending: *JB Alexander, Charles Spielman, Ron Brink, Connie Pleasant, Keith Holland, Amos Mace, Charlotte Bobicki, Stan Moyer, Rodney Smith, Dwight Martin, Dale Wiescamp, Jay Yeager, Nathan Coombs, Joe Busto, Dave Gochis, Zeke Ward, Michael Blenden, Bob Getz, Jim Ehrlich, Karla Shriver, Eugene Jacquez, Mike Gibson, Rebecca Mitchell, Kate McIntire, Nicole Langley, Robert Mathis, Matt Hildner, Rio de la Vista, Bea Ferrigno, Don Thompson, Gene Farrish, Ruth Heide, Joseph Old Elk, Cindy Medina, Brenda Felmler, Pete Clark, Travis Smith, Craig Cotten, Marty Asplin, Lawrence D. Gallegos, Dale Pizel, Mac McFadden, Blake Bussa, Steve Vandiver, Mario Curto.*

- **Introductions** – Chairman Mike Gibson welcomed all.
- **Approval of Minutes of June 11, 2013** - Cindy Medina moved they be accepted as written. Judy Lopez Seconded. Unanimous approval.
- **Administrative Matters** – Representatives appointed last time are now reappointed. Headwaters Magazine will be out in August, with a good supply at Mike's office.
- **CWCB will hold its next meeting in Alamosa** next Tuesday and Wednesday, July 16 & 17, 2013, with a reception organized by Members of the Roundtable for them on the evening of July 16 at Mulligan's On the Green Restaurant at Cattails Golf Course, Alamosa. RSVP to Amy at (719) 754-2254 or at slvid@centurytel.net. More than \$8 Million has come to this Valley from CWCB. All those who have received funding are especially invited to attend and contribute to the costs of the event as sponsors.
- **West Fork Complex Fire – Status Report and Organizing Response, Tom Spezze of DiNatale Water Consultants, Coordinator of the Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Team (RWACT):** Emergency coordinators, sheriffs, county commissioners and other governmental agencies have set up the **Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team (RWEACT)** to follow up on potential negative impacts from this fire. Tom reported on the condition of the fire, the fire control effort, and anticipated the federal process for restoration and the importance of local organizing. Members of RWEACT include individuals involved with public safety. With tens of thousands of acres having burned, this is going to cause mud and ash flows and possible flooding. RWEACT will be welcoming the arrival on Monday of the USFS Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team to work on post-fire efforts taking place on primarily on public lands but similar actions can be applied to private lands. Tom and Mike described the severity of the fires and their devastating effects. Mike reported a horrific scene. "We are now faced with big questions we've never had to address before." The Office of Emergency Management is there, working with Rio Grande County, NRCS and with staff from the Division of Water Resources. Hydrography experts are working with Steve Belz (third party hydrologist) to determine where to place early flood detection systems and equipment. The Forest Service is offering meteorological services. A big rainfall event is expected this weekend.

The area needs to have an early detection and warning systems. CWCB is willing to provide funds for some immediate technical and equipment needs and initial emergency restoration work on the watershed below RG reservoir. Emphasis on communication. Spezze said the Governor has issued an executive order to get radar into the San Luis Valley as quickly as possible for that purpose. Rio Grande National Forest Supervisor Dan Dallas described efforts to prepare for the aftermath of the West Fork Complex Fire, especially flash flooding.

The USFS team will request funding from the Secretary of Agriculture to deal with this emergency. Spezze asked for volunteers to be trained as weather event spotters. Travis explained that this fire is all on National Forest land, (only 40 acres burned on private land of the some 120,000 acres) whereas most other fires occur on a mix of private, BLM, and forest land. The impacts will disproportionately affect private lands downstream and there is high likelihood they may affect water in the San Luis Valley. The BAER reports that the Million Fire was 1/10th the size of this one. Lots of people were evacuated but no lives were lost. People don't realize how serious the after-effects are – that with so many acres bare, a 650 cfs stream could suddenly become a wall of water with potentially 12,000 cfs. "We hope that doesn't happen, but we want to be prepared for it, and be able to warn people should that come to pass." Rio Grande County Commissioner Karla Shriver thanked Dan, Travis, and Tom for their work. Applause for Dan Dallas and thanks expressed for the work and bravery of the fire fighters.

Judy asked the Roundtable for permission to contribute a portion of funds from the WSRA \$2,000 educational fund to assist with communication, distributing flyers to residents on the actions they should take in the event of flash flood warnings. Permission granted.

➤ **Request for WSRA Funding - Santa Maria & Continental Reservoirs Rehabilitation – Phase 2 -- Keith Holland, Chairman of Board, Santa Maria Reservoir Company (SMRC):** Total request for funds: \$1,013,750. Basin funds: \$51,000; Statewide funds \$962,750. "Continental Spillway Rehabilitation & Dam Seepage Mitigation." Nicole Lanley worked with SMRC to prepare the request. Keith Holland described the Phase 2 Project with a slide presentation of the Proposal and discussion of details of the project, which included rehabilitating Continental's spillway, due to wear and erosion of the concrete, and also the methods planned to reduce seepage through the actual dam of the reservoir. Keith reference Phase 1, (Support of the siphon system and rehabilitation of the surface channel conveyance ditch) and said they had hoped to begin this work having bid the work in May. However, work had not started due to the West Fork Complex wildfires. They will plan to re-bid the Phase 1 and Phase 2 together, hoping this will reduce overall costs by reducing mobilization and possible using only one prime contractor. It is intended actual field work will started next spring depending on winter runoff and conditions. **VOTE:** Rio de la Vista moved to approve the funding request. Dale Weiscamp seconded. Unanimous approval.

➤ **Request for WSRA Funding – Plaza Project – Phase 2 –** Heather Dutton updated members on the Plaza Plan's January request for supplemental funding that was approved in the January 2013 Roundtable Meeting. For a variety of reasons CWCB was requested by the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project not to consider the funding request in March, 2023. Additional design work has been completed since that time in an attempt to address a property owner's concerns and to reduce the costs. The design is nearing completion and preliminary cost estimates by contractors indicate the Phase 2 can be completed for the prior approved Roundtable request of \$22,000 from the Rio Grande Basin Account and \$409,000 from the Statewide Account. The CWCB will now be requested by the Project's proponents and the Roundtable Chair to move the WSRA request to the September CWCB meeting.

➤ **Request for WSRA Funding – Conejos Water Conservancy District – Nathan Coombs, Manager; and Joe Busto, CWCB Watershed Protection & Flood Mitigation Program: "Radar Monitoring & Hydrologic Modeling in the Upper Rio Grande Basin to Develop Accurate Streamflow Forecasting":** Nicole Lanley assisted in preparation of the WSRA request. Joe explained that this project puts the entire stream flow forecasting process under the microscope, as there is currently insufficient observational data to provide the better forecasts of precipitation and stream flow. This Project brings in radar, in an attempt to better determine actual precipitation events. The Project includes NRCS, NCAR, NOAA, National Weather Service, and CDWR Division 3. The Conejos Water Conservancy District is administering and sponsoring the project. The Project's Objectives Are: To more accurately measure and predict snowfall and snowpack in the Conejos Basin of the Upper Rio

Grande Basin by assessing new experimental precipitation and snowpack estimation products and comparing them against currently operational products; to significantly improve the accuracy of streamflow forecasts, assisting the CDWR in its efforts to reduce or eliminate the high error rate in the annual April 1 steam forecasts; to develop and evaluate experimental streamflow forecasts, comparing them with currently operational forecasts, providing real-time assessment of the demonstration radar and existing operational products during the project; and to share these assessments with the full project team, with water managers in the Upper Rio Grande Basin and throughout the San Luis Valley.

Radar discussion: Joe Busto explained that the pilot project will focus on the watershed in Conejos and integrate radar data with other forms of snowfall measurements and modeling systems. Complete coverage for the basin would require radar on the top of Bristol Head and in Center, Busto explained, but that would be complicated to install, so it could be a long term goal. The Conejos Watershed is simpler and a good place for the seven month test. Radar will be installed in November, 2013. David Gochis, National Center for Atmospheric Research, said additional measurements are needed to “ground truth” how well the radar is working. If the radar is validated, it would prompt more confidence in applying the radar precipitation estimates elsewhere. He said a SNOTEL site is currently located at Lily Pond, and the state has survey sites at Platoro and a couple more sites further west, but additional measurement instruments are needed to verify that the information the radar is providing is correct. The Wilderness presents an obstacle to installing more measurement instruments, so they will need to be located in other places.

The Final Report on this Project is scheduled for completion December 31, 2014. Travis thanked Nathan for sponsoring this project. The request was for \$37,000 from the Rio Grande Basin Account and \$200,000 from the Statewide Account. **VOTE:** Karla Shriver moved to approve, Charlie Spielman seconded. Unanimous approval.

➤ **Request for WSRA Funding – Willow Creek Reclamation Committee/Lower Willow Creek Restoration Company, Guinevere Nelson, Watershed Coordinator:** Phase I goals are to reclaim the Lower Willow Creek Floodplain from disturbances caused by legacy mining practices. Objectives are to reduce evaporative loss, improve aquatic and riparian habitat, restore Willow Creek to a single channel, reduce public health risks, and improve aesthetic conditions. Phase II goal is to improve riparian habitat along the newly constructed channel and to improve aesthetic qualities. Request for Basin funds only in the amount of \$55,000, with total project cost of \$90,000. Mike Gibson pointed out that the Willow Creek Restoration Project demonstrated how individuals can make a difference and thanked them for their work. **VOTE:** Heather Dutton voted to approve funding; Lawrence Gallegos seconded. Zeke Ward abstained. Unanimous approval.

➤ **R.G. Watershed Fire Restoration Team – Discussion – Goals:** Mike and Tom Spezze described the challenges and spoke of the need for broad coordination and communication.

➤ **Basin Plan Implementation - Travis Smith and Mike Gibson:** Mike introduced Rebecca Mitchell (Becky) and Kate McIntire, both of CWCB. Becky is now Chief of the Water Supply Planning Section. Becky encouraged the Basin to interact with CWCB and spoke of the need to “strategize the messaging” between Governor Hickenlooper’s office, the IBCC and the various basins, and the importance of basins planning for their own future, within the larger state framework. Mike said that the current draft of a proposal from DiNatale Water Consultants, to assist the Basin in this effort, would be reviewed again, and changes made. The Proposal would then be sent to Becky for her comments prior to it going to the Roundtable in August 2013, for approval and the corresponding request for funding.

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➤ **Report from Colorado Division of Water Resources - Craig Cotten, Division 3 Engineer:** The Rio Grande forecast went up about 24,000 AF for the year. Delivery obligation for the Rio Grande is 7% and on the Conejos it’s 0%. Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs have about 80,000 AF combined. Wild Earth is threatening to sue. The DWR is pleased to be part of

the REACT team looking at putting some additional gauging stations in the burn area. Charlie: Are you going to be part of the evaluation team on the new radar? Craig: Probably not so much on the wildfire part, but CDWR will be involved with the Conejos Conservancy District's radar project.

➤ **Update on Sub-District # 1 Issues – Steve Vandiver:** Continuing daily releases of water on Subdistrict #1 wells is going well. There is increasing interest in the CREP program so we're making a fact sheet for FAQ's. We're offering up to \$300 per acre to encourage early sign-up. We got the measurements for the District's observation wells, and only 4 out of 75 showed any gain. In bad areas there were declines of .25 ft to 4 ft, with significant declines in June.

➤ **Update on Oil & Gas Drilling - Rio Grande County - Rose Vanderpool, Rio Grande County Land Use and Paul Tigan, BLM:** Mr. Archuleta said the BLM has been asked to extend the comment area on BLM's EIS of the proposed Dan Hughes well and this has occurred. The BLM has not issued its decision yet. Karla said the public comment time has been extended another 15 days beyond July 18, due to the fires.

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➤ **Future Meetings – Topics / Locations / Site Visits:** Mike thanked Rep. Ed Vigil and Larry Crowther for coming. They have both been involved with the fire authorities and have offered support to affected counties and communities

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➤ **The Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association** is hosting the 2013 Colorado Congreso de Acequias on Saturday, October 5, 2013 in San Luis, Colorado. Agenda and registration will be available on their web site at <http://www.sangreacequias.org/>

➤ It is possible that the September meeting might be held in Manassa, with Conejos Water Conservancy District as host.

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Next Meeting: August 13, 2013
Conference Room, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, Alamosa, Colorado

Light refreshments will be served

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