

NPBRT Minutes: 7-23-13
USFS Conf. Room (7-9 PM) 100 Main Street, Walden, CO

Members/Liaisons Present

*Mike Allnutt
Deb Alpe
Mike Alpe
*Jimmer Baller
Paula Belcher
Jason Brey
Pete Conovitz
*Kent Crowder
*Blaine Evans
*Scott Fischer
*Tom Hackleman
*Randy Miller
*John Rich
*Carl Trick II
*Ty Wattenberg
*Rick Wyatt

Members Absent

*James Carothers
*Mike Honholz
*Barbara Vasquez

Others Present

Pepper Canterbury
Kurt Davies
Greg Johnson
Ken Kehmeier
Matt Kondratieff
Erin Light
Rebecca Mitchell
Eric Richer
Matt Shuler
Cade Waldron
Kara Sobieski

I. Agenda Review

The agenda was accepted as published

II. Approval of Roundtable Minutes: June 4, 2013 Meeting

Minutes of the June 4 meeting were approved with minor amendments. Jimmer Baller moved to approve the minutes. Tom Hackleman seconded the motion. Motion passed.

III. Discussion and vote on Colorado Parks and Wildlife WSRA Application *North Platte River Stream Restoration: Verner State Wildlife Area.*
(\$200,000 for Basin Account and \$200,000 from Statewide Account)

Kurt Davies reviewed project goals, objectives and potential benefits to the North Platte Basin and entertained questions from the NP Roundtable Board members. A lengthy discussion ensued with key points noted as follows.

Jimmer Baller inquired whether Kurt Davies had worked with his peers to develop a more final design than that presented at the June 4, 2013 NPBRT meeting. Kurt explained that their agency has invested significant staff time and resources to the project thus far and are unable to offer more until funding is secured to proceed.

Rick Wyatt asked why Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) doesn't utilize Wildlife Habitat Stamp funds to support the proposed Verner project. In addition he is not comfortable with the level of project match proposed and is not convinced the proposed stream bank stabilization methods will work on this stretch of the North Platte River. He expressed concerns about whether the high water events will simply wash away this costly restoration work.

Regarding Rick's lack of confidence in the proposed methodology, Kurt and additional CPW staff present including Eric Richer, Matt Kondratieff and Ken Kehmeier, described in detail why they are confident the project includes many elements that will result in stream bank stabilization, restore riparian vegetation along banks, reduce channel sedimentation and likely increase in-stream habitat for fish, which CPW intends to monitor closely.

Rick, as well as Kent Crowder noted that the proposal is somewhat experimental because CPW plans to compare multiple treatment methods. Kurt Davies explained that the project location offers a great place to compare results regarding which treatments will be most effective in meeting project goals. CPW does have examples where all these types of treatments have worked very well, even in high water years, but they do not have data to compare multiple treatment types along the same stretch of river. Kent inquired when monitoring indicates the most effective treatment method will CPW then go back and upgrade less effective to more effective treatments. Eric Richer noted that CPW already knows "wood toe" is the best treatment but it is expensive due to high wood transportation costs making it impractical to use for the entire project.

CPW staff informed the board that since submitting their proposal, in an effort to access wood product needed as well as cut transportation costs, they have been working with Colorado State Forest State (CSFS) staff to discuss the feasibility of securing more in-kind match for the project by utilizing CSFS logging slash material which would greatly reduce transportation costs of moving large roots and slash to the restoration construction site. CSFS may even be willing to cover some or all of the transportation costs in order to contend with reducing the amount of logging slash on the forest.

Blaine Evans commented that he would be more comfortable with the application if CPW would have proposed the project in stages and moved forward with the project when the best treatments were determined and the NPBRT board could gain more confidence the methods

would work. Eric noted that doing the project in phases becomes more expensive each time you have to go back into construction to add or amend treatments.

John Rich inquired whether putting logs into the river to decay would cause problems with water quality since lodgepole pine do not typically grow along that stretch of river.

Matt Kondratieff responded that the river already has water quality issues with sedimentation in the stream channel. The project treatments will stabilize the bank and allow willows and other riparian vegetation to re-establish as well as provide fish habitat and that using the tree roots and other bioengineered materials works much better than riff-raff made of concrete. CPW staff noted several locations in Colorado where similar projects have been completed that met the goal of enhancing fisheries.

Carl Trick commented that he has personally seen similar projects where the treatments have washed out in high water years and echoed Blaine Evans' suggestion to try this project in phases regardless of the increased costs to do so. Kurt Davies noted that the project will lose the element of comparison if all the treatments are not in place simultaneously. Eric Richer asked if only two types of treatments were implemented would the board be more comfortable. Carl responded that he is more in favor of smaller projects done over time to prove the treatment methods will work before investing such a large sum of money. Kurt perceives the Verner segment as a small segment of the big North Platte picture.

Matt Kondratieff emphasized that CPW wants more fish habitat and Ken Kehmeier noted that there are two miles accessible to the public on this stream and this project has the potential to produce about 1,000 more recreation days per year if it were successful in producing more fish. He doesn't think the North Platte is producing the number of fish it is capable of producing. Enhance fishing opportunities could have a positive impact on the North Park economy.

More discussion ensued regarding why Wildlife Habitat Funds couldn't be accessed for this project, particularly since we have a species of concern (leopard frog) in the basin, why more match wasn't secured by partners and why more statewide account funds weren't used to lower the level of funds requested through the North Platte Basin funds account.

Ty Wattenberg reminded the board that through the Non-Consumptive Needs Assessment process the NPBRT has identified fishing as our top priority. He believes CPW would do a top notch job on the proposed North Platte project and would provide the RT an opportunity to address our number one non-consumptive priority.

Kent Crowder asked about the project monitoring and maintenance plan. Eric Richer responded that CPW will monitor every year for the first five years, then again in year seven and year ten. Ken Kehmeier added that CPW will bear the cost of maintenance and will mobilize their resources in an efficient and timely manner to avoid emerging structure problems. This prompted discussion about lack of maintenance on this site being an issue in the past. CPW staff admitted there were a number of problems with maintenance on the site in the past but that they have recently worked to fix the corner braces and fence and that the maintenance costs will likely go down if stream banks are stabilized.

Tom Hackleman inquired whether any of the potential donors noted in the application (Tointon Ranches, Trout Unlimited, Fishing is Fun Grant, U.S. Forest Service) have committed funds yet. Kurt responded that Tointon Ranches indicate support for the project but has not committed funds and that Trout Unlimited might help with in-kind support with the labor costs. Potential partnership with CSFS could yield significant reduction in transportation costs to the project.

Randy Miller inquired and CPW staff assured that cost estimates developed by CPW engineers for development of the final design and securing bids accurately reflect anticipated costs.

Kent Crowder reiterated and agreed with Ty Wattenberg's reasons for supporting the application emphasizing stream and lake fishing being the NPBRT top non-consumptive needs priorities. Ty explained that he understands the voting members' reasons for hesitation but thinks the board should have a little faith that CPW will succeed in doing a good job with this restoration project.

Ty Wattenberg moved to approve the CPW application. Jimmer Baller seconded the motion. Board members voted as follows:

Rick Wyatt-No

Believes Wildlife Habitat Stamp funds should be used and that the project costs are too high.

Blaine Evans-No

Would rather see the project be done in phases with proven success indicated after first phase completed before moving forward to complete the project in subsequent phases.

Ty Wattenberg-Yes

Carl Trick II-No

Has personally seen similar projects fail and is not convinced that the proposed river restoration treatments will work.

John Rich-No

Thinks cost is too high (might have been willing to support \$100,000) and doesn't like the idea of putting so much lodgepole pine into the river.

Randy Miller-Yes

As the recreation representative to the NPBRT board, feels CWPS will succeed and will provide enhanced recreation and tourism opportunities to Walden.

Tom Hackleman-No

Has seen similar projects fail. Might be more in favor if he had the opportunity to actually see places where such work was completed.

Jimmer Baller-Yes

Kent Crowder-Yes

Scott Fischer-Yes

Mike Allnutt-No

Thinks it is a good project but does not want to fund it with NP Basin funds.

Vote Tally: 6 No, 5 Yes

IV. Discussion and vote on Jackson County Water Conservancy District's WSRA Application *North Platte Basin Implementation Plan* (\$107,500 from Basin Account)

Kara Sobieski and Greg Johnson with Wilson Water Group (WWG) were present to discuss this application as they will be contracted to do the NPB Implementation Plan if this project is funded by the RT.

Kara and Greg explained the background and proposed process for doing this project. Prompted by an Executive Order from Governor John Hickenlooper requesting completion by 2014 of a Colorado Water Plan, the CWCB has set up guidelines for the nine Colorado Basin Roundtables to complete individual basin implementation plans. The expectation is that each basin will build on the work already accomplished in the RT efforts as well as the SWSII 2010 plan. A North Platte Basin Implementation Plan Work Group will be formed from members of the NPBRT to work with WWG to complete the project.

Kara described how WWG will facilitate development of our North Platte basin goals and measurable outcomes and then identify potential projects and processes to prioritize and implement those outcomes. They will utilize the North Platte Decision Support System (NPDSS) consumptive use and surface water allocation models to assist the RT in analyzing project feasibility and potential challenges.

Carl Trick asked how non-consumptive uses could be analyzed using the NPDSS. Ty Wattenberg thinks that consumptive and non-consumptive uses can be complementary. Greg and Kara agreed and explained how use of the NPDSS will help quantify and analyze various considerations that will inform discussion and decisions made while developing the Plan.

Becky Mitchell, Section Chief for the CWCB's Water Supply Planning section, will be replacing Greg Johnson in working with the NPBRT since Greg is now employed by WWG. Becky added that the goal of the NPBIP is to give power back to each basin to identify their value system and to look at NP priorities and make decisions based on stated goals. She said that CWCB will be aligning funding availability based on basin priorities. Regarding Carl's non-consumptive question, she explained how this project will allow the RT to look at the non-consumptive work the NPBRT has completed and analyze the attributes in a creative way by using the NPDSS.

John Rich called for the question. RT voting members present unanimously voted yes to funding the application. Kent Crowder will submit a letter from the NPBRT to the CWCB to be considered during their September meeting. Becky expects the CWCB will likely fund the application and for contract processing to move quickly so WWG can get to work immediately.

V. CWCB/IBCC Update

CWCB: Ty Wattenberg reported the USFWS Director delayed the March 2014 decision whether to list the Gunnison Sage Grouse due to concerns regarding potentially unsound

science being considered that must be reviewed. In addition USFWS is now recognizing the input from local working groups.

CPW has sent a letter to USFWS recommending they not list the Gunnison Sage Grouse based on their interpretation of best available scientific evidence.

Approximately 50% of communities are in compliance with flood plain rules with 6 months left to go to come into compliance.

Colorado River inflows and releases continue to decline into and out of Lake Powell. This is causing major power generation and recreation related problems. If Colorado River flows stay on this trajectory, Las Vegas will likely experience problems with intake out of Lake Mead.

Regarding ag transfers, alternative ag transfer projects must yield 50,000 acre feet/year on East Slope in the low/no regrets scenario in order to continue to meet Eastern Slope needs.

IBCC: John Rich reported that PEPO presented their scope of work and one of their deliverables is that they plan to visit each RT once to assist in updating the Education Action Plans to address local adaptive outreach. In addition, John noted there was a great deal of discussion regarding the No Regrets Scenario. Mike Allnutt added there was much discussion about the Governors Executive Order to complete a Colorado Water Plan by 2014. He and John noted that the IBCC may begin to meet more often during the next year.

VI. Old Business

None

VII. New Business

Blaine Evans reported that during the Annual Convention of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, the Routt County Cattlemen's Association proposed a resolution for the CCA Board to seek legislation to recognize stock water decrees have the same priority as early irrigation degrees. When people filed on water in the 1800's, the use of a filed irrigation water right assumed use for stock water was included but this was not stated in writing and they wish to have this clearly documented.

Kent Crowder asked Erin Light to come to a future RT meeting to discuss methodology used for identifying and determining number of annual acres irrigated in Jackson County.

Kent mentioned to the RT that the Public Trust Doctrine discussion has emerged again and that members need to become informed and gain understanding of what is going on related to this effort. Kara Sobieski thinks there will be a presentation on this topic during the Summer Convention of the Colorado Water Congress to be held August 21-23 in Steamboat Springs.

VIII. Next Meeting date is August 27 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

IX. Meeting Adjourned