

NPBRT Minutes: 9-24-13
USFS Conf. Room (7-9 PM) 100 Main Street, Walden, CO

Members/Liaisons Present

*Mike Allnutt
Deb Alpe
Mike Alpe
*Jimmer Baller
*Kent Crowder
*Blaine Evans
*Tom Hackleman
*John Rich
*Carl Trick II
*Barbara Vasquez
*Rick Wyatt

Members/Liaisons Absent

*James Carothers
Pete Conovitz
*Mike Honholz
*Scott Fischer
*Randy Miller
Paula Belcher
Jason Brey
Ann Timberman
Hunter Townsend
*Ty Wattenberg

Others Present

Greg Johnson
Elizabeth Koebele

I. Agenda Review

The agenda was accepted as published.

II. Approval of Roundtable Minutes: Aug. 27, 2013 Meeting

Minutes of the August 27 meeting were approved as amended.

III. Preliminary discussion of the North Platte Basin Implementation Plan scope of work and proposed schedules – Greg Johnson, Wilson Water Group

Kent introduced the topic by advising the RT members that the Basin Implementation Plan WSRA Grant was approved by CWCB.

Greg Said that consultants (like he is to the NPBRT) and RTs must work from a 'common

technical platform” defined by the CWCB staff. Greg is here tonight unofficially as he is not yet under contract. He will contact the CWCB to ensure they have everything they need to put the contract in place in 2-3 weeks. The CWCB guidance document is only 8 pages. It gives each Basin quite a bit of flexibility to meet their individual needs.

Scope:

Should be a bottoms-up process. Each basin has it's own consultant. Greg asked how the NPBRT wants to organize: either a subcommittee or engage the full RT. Kent prefers to start with the full RT. If it becomes too burdensome, may break out a subcommittee. Greg will provide summaries at each meeting to keep the RT involved. He's not funded to come every month. The focus for the Implementation plan is only on water quantity, but there has been some discussion about quality. Not yet inserted into the framework. Barbara wondered whether NP had spent the smallest fraction of WSRA funds on NCN projects.

Goals and Measurable Outcomes

Preserve the 145K irrigated acres defined in the Supreme Court decree. The NP Decision Support System will be a useful tool for the Implementation Plan. The 3-State agreement based the first 13 year depletion plan on the highest recorded consumptive use. Kent commented that Jackson County Water Conservancy District (JCWCD) wants to maintain and maximize the irrigated acreage year to year. The following two paragraphs explain the details of the depletion plan for the North Platte Basin.

The North Platte Baseline is the total depletion amount associated with the irrigation of up to 134,467 acres and a county population of 2,022, and the decreed and permitted uses, as of July 1, 1997 for industrial uses, and piscatorial, wildlife, and environmental uses that are not incidental to agricultural uses. The overall consumptive use associated with the total covered levels of existing water related activities identified above is an appropriate overall baseline measure.

If a non-federal water user is going to exceed the baseline for a particular type of use but the North Platte Baseline for the entire North Platte River Basin within Colorado will not be exceeded, that water user shall file a request to the Jackson County Water Conservancy District for approval of this exceedence. The Jackson County Water Conservancy District will review the request in order to assure that the total North Platte Baseline will not be exceeded and will make an official determination of whether to approve or not approve the request to be covered under the North Platte Baseline. The Jackson County Water Conservancy District will report to the State of Colorado and SPWRAP all approved requests for depletion coverage from the North Platte Baseline, and the state will keep an accounting of all approved decreed water rights

that vary from the original uses under the North Platte Baseline and Colorado will report these to the Governance Committee in the annual reporting.

The potentially available water, represented by the gap between the maximum (134,467 equivalent irrigated acres) and the actual irrigated acres varies from year to year. For 2012 the official irrigated acreage reported was ~117,000 acres. It would be helpful to have a system to identify where the opportunity lies in timely manner to let those water right owners/landowners know that they could apply for new rights. Carl commented that the only way to stabilize irrigated acreage it to increase storage, allowing us to smooth out variations in precipitation. But we have a limitation of 17,000 AF storage per year for irrigation purposes. It's a rarity to hit the maximum, but we did this year because of the summer/early fall rains. Total available physical storage is approximately 37,000 AF, but not all of that is owned by irrigators. The Decree limits storage for irrigation, but is 'silent' regarding storage of fish, etc. Matt Reddy's work for DU feeds into this question, as he has mapped potentially irrigable lands linked to existing water rights. One of the potential targets for his project was Independence Ditch, which has associated with a 95cfs water right held by Silver Spur Ranches to carry water from the S Fork of Big Creek to the Lake Creek sub-basin. That water right was the subject of a partial abandonment by the State Engineer and is now down to 40cfs. There's non-consumptive value to additional storage if it would mean late season flows. In reality, this means part of the storage right would have to be held by CPW or some other wildlife or environmental entity to ensure such releases. And such an entity may be a necessary partner to help pay for the associated dam.

IV. CWCB/IBCC Update – no reports due to timing of meetings.

V. Old Business

Barbara asked the RT members for feedback on the CPW proposal for stream restoration on the Verner SWA, as she was not able to attend the meeting where the vote was taken. Carl said the project was turned down for several reasons. Some RT members weren't convinced the structural approach was sound. Tom Hackleman referred to a project by a private property owner upstream from him on the Michigan that failed in high water several years ago. (Perhaps a tour of other projects they had done in similar riparian corridors might have helped sway the vote.) One member was outspoken about "trusting CPW". All of the issues raised had been discussed and reviewed by the CPW folks in advance of the vote. Finally, Kent commented that the balance of funding should have been shifted more to the State since this is public access fishing that anyone can use. The grant asked for equal Basin and State (\$200,000 each) funds.

Kent said he talked to Kurt Davies, the lead on the CPW grant application, after the vote and invited him to reapply, taking the feedback from the RT into account. Barbara said she'd been in touch with Kurt and is working with him to come back to the RT if CPW would approve the effort.

VI. New Business

Deb reported on a PEPO conference call where the topic was public engagement. CWCB wants to drive communication to local stakeholders while the RTs are engaged in creating the Basin Implementation Plans. Kate McIntire who is the Board Coordinator wants to use social media to help overcome the difficulties in navigating the CWCB website for the public. Kent commented on a poll that was taken showing that the public is pretty aware of the water planning efforts underway. Greg commented that the Colorado Water Plan Frequently Asked (17) Questions are posted on the CWCB website.

VII. Next Meeting date is November 12 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Note the transition to winter hours. The meeting will be an hour longer than usual to accommodate a working meeting for the Implementation Plan.

VIII. Meeting Adjourned