

Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MINUTES: August 11, 2015

Attending - those who signed in: *Wayne Schwab, May Engquist, Ron Brink, Keith Holland, Charlotte Bobicki, Dale Wiescamp, Adam Moore, Craig Cotten, Nathan Coombs, Rio de la Vista, Travis Smith, Eugene Jacquez, Stan Moyer, Ruth Heide, Mario Curtis, Gene Farish, Ed Nielsen, Allen Law, Bea Ferrigno, Dan Dallas, Heather Dutton, Tom Spezze, Marvin Reynolds, Mike Coombs, Brenda Felmlee, Don Thompson, Cary Aloia, Mac McFadden, Juanita Martinez, Santino Martinez, Andre Brown, Emma Regier.*

Welcome and Introduction: Vice Chair Rio de la Vista called the meeting to order at 2:05pm at the offices of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, in Alamosa, CO. Those in attendance were introduced, and all were welcomed.

Report from the Colorado Division of Water Resources: Craig Cotton, Division Engineer, gave an update. Curtailment on the Rio Grande is at 14% and has gone down because of the recent decline in rainfall. Curtailment on the Conejos is at 24%. River flows have been above average most of the summer, but now back to around average. Both Craig and Dick Wolfe, State Engineer, presented at the Interim Water Resource Review Committee meeting that was held in Alamosa on August 10th. Dick Wolfe stated that the rules for the Rio Grande Basin will be out in the next month. Now is the last chance for the public to make any comments on the rules.

Eugene Jacquez asked Craig about how the DWR is handling people diverting water to grow marijuana. Craig replied that the problem is that people are growing marijuana without any right to the water they are diverting for this use. This is both a water rights issue and a law enforcement issue that needs to be addressed and the DWR will be meeting with Costilla County to make plans to address this issue. Juanita Martinez asked if there was any legislation that could address this issue. Craig replied that he wasn't sure about any specific legislation that would help.

Approval of Minutes of June 9, 2015: Ed Neilson moved that the minutes be approved, Nathan Coombs seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Update on Colorado's Water Plan and Next Steps for the Rio Grande Water Plan: Becky Mitchell from Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) was present to discuss Colorado's Water Plan. She started by providing some background on the Plan. A lot of work has been put into it, especially from the local roundtables and involved citizens. Colorado faces many extremes such as wildfires, drought, and floods, and the 480-page Water Plan attempts to factor in these issues. The final Colorado Water Plan must be submitted to the Governor by December 10, 2015. In order to reach this deadline, public comments are due to CWCB by September 17, 2015. For those who don't have time to read the whole document, the most important sections to read and comment on are:

- Section 6.2,
- Section 6.3.4
- Section 6.5: Agricultural Viability
- Chapter 7
- Chapter 8: Conceptual Agreements
- Chapter 9.5: Outreach and Education

- Chapter 10: Critical Action Plan

The easiest way to comment on the plan is to visit Coloradowaterplan.com and leave a comment on line.

Rio announced that the Rio Grande will have three public meetings throughout the Valley in early September to help get the public aware of what's going on with the plan and encourage public comment. Travis encouraged everyone to take the time to read through the sections of the plan that are important to them, get involved and provide comments. He thanked Becky and CWCB staff for all their hard work on the Plan. Becky answered questions from attendees about Colorado's Water Plan.

Administrative Matters: Rio discussed Administrative Matters that the Roundtable's Executive Committee have worked on. The Roundtable reviewed, discussed and voted on the following:

- Revised Bylaws: Rio pointed out revisions in the bylaws, especially the duties and responsibilities of the new Executive Committee as stated in the bylaws. The Executive Committee will help with Roundtable administrative tasks, aid the new Chair (as of 2016) and get new people involved in the leadership of the Roundtable. The idea of the Executive Committee is to get more people involved in leadership and grow that involvement. Ron Brink commented that he has noticed how hard Mike has worked as the Chair and moving forward the Executive Committee is a great way to aid the Chair. Ron Brink made a motion to approve the revised bylaws. Keith Holland seconded. The motion carried unanimously.
- Guidelines for WSRA Applications: Rio went over the guidelines that the Executive Committee put together to aid those applying for WSRA funds. These are just guidelines and can be modified in the future. Craig Godbout pointed out a few edits that need to be made to the document. Nathan Coombs moved to accept the guidelines as a working document and work with Craig to make the needed edits. Heather Dutton seconded this motion. The motion carried.

Forecasting Update: David Gochis (NCAR) : Nathan Coombs provided some background on the work that the Conejos Conservancy District has been doing to improve forecasting and introduced David Gochis, the lead scientist on the model for the forecasting project, and John Macke. David presented on the Rio Grande Basin Forecasting Project, which is motivated by the fact that there is limited information on snowpack, snowmelt, and tributary streamflow conditions in this area. The Rio Grande Basin needs better water supply forecasts to meet annual Compact requirements while minimizing impacts to water use in Colorado. The goal of the project is to enhance precipitation and snowpack monitoring capabilities, evaluate new measurements, and develop new forecast methods to improve water supply forecasts. David described the methods they have been

using for hydrological monitoring and seasonal streamflow predictions. These include:

- A NSSL Radar deployed in Alamosa: This served to fill in the gaps of radar coverage as there is no quality coverage in the upper Rio Grande watershed. This radar was operated between December and April and provided a view of precipitation and snowfall that had never been provided before.
- On the ground measurements in the Conejos Basin: Six stations were installed that measured temperature, humidity, wind, solar radiation, snow depth, soil moisture/temperature. Three stations were deployed that measured precipitation. No SNOTEL stations exist in the Conejos Basin. These on the ground stations provide important data about snowpack.
- NASA Airborne Snowpack Monitoring: two flights have been conducted so far in mid April and mid May. They will go back in September for a final flight. These flights used LIDAR to measure snow depth and snow water equivalent. This will be our first look at how water is distributed throughout the upper watershed.

All of these methods greatly improved the accuracy of the hydrologic modeling and the forecasting research is ongoing. The plan for the Rio Grande Basin Forecasting Project in 2016 include enhanced basin instrument monitoring, spring-time radar deployment to measure mixed phase rain on snow precipitation estimation, and expanded WRF-Hydro water supply forecasting.

Joe Busto with CWCB's Watershed and Flood Protection Program gave an update on other ongoing activities related to this project. So far \$90,000 has been provided to the Conejos Water Conservancy District to fund NCAR instrument upgrade and WRF-Hydro modeling. They are in need of \$210,000 for NOAA and NASA participation, \$174,000 of this has already been raised. David and Joe answered questions about the project from the Roundtable and public.

Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team (RWEACT)

Update: Tom Spezze gave an update to the Roundtable on RWEACT's projects. RWEACT is also working to provide radar during the summer monsoon season to

protect from flash flooding in the upper Rio Grande after the West Fork Complex fire. RWEACT has developed a whole system with the focus of public safety as apposed to stream flow forecasting. There is no reason that these two radar programs couldn't work together.

Joe Busto provided background about RWEACT's radar and the difference between the radar used for the Upper Rio Grande Forecasting Project and discussed ways that both projects could benefit. Joe has been a nexus between local entities (RWEACT, CWCD) and the state (CWCB). The partnership between local entities and the state could make future radar options possible.

RWEACT is in the process of applying for a 501 C3 status. The new non-profit will be called RWEACT-WIn (Watershed Initiative) and will allow the entity to get grant funds and continue to forward the mission of public safety, protection of critical infrastructure, watershed stewardship, and economic recovery. Board Members and Executive Committee members for RWEACT-WIn will be appointed soon.

Report on August 10th WRRC Meeting:

Travis Smith reported that the members from the Interim Water Resources Review Committee visited yesterday and attended a tour and meetings with presentations on water issues in the valley and the work that is being done to address these challenges. The meeting was very positive and provided good information for the legislature. The Public Meeting in the evening included a presentation from Becky Mitchell on the Colorado's Water Plan and provided a chance for public comment.

Report from IBCC Representatives: Travis Smith reported that the IBCC is reviewing comments to the second draft of Colorado's Water Plan. The Conceptual Agreement has been changed to the Conceptual Framework, which looks at guidelines in the event of possible new future trans mountain diversions. This is a very controversial topic that the IBCC is discussing and it is a sign that we are moving in a positive direction.

Rio de la Vista announced that Charlie Spielman was originally on the schedule to present today, but sadly he is in the hospital. Charlie and Nicole Langley plan to present their own Action Plan as a proposed addition to the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan.

Update on the Sub-Districts - Rio Grande Water Conservation District: Heather Dutton provided a report for Steve Vandiver, who couldn't make the Roundtable meeting. Subdistrict No. 1 worked well this summer and met all requirements. The Board of Managers is meeting today to consider raising CREP and variable fees, but no decision has been yet. It looks like with increased diversion north of the river, the depletions for 2015 will be lower than anticipated. We received the response functions from the state recently and now have targets for new subdistricts. Subdistrict No. 2 petitions should be filed in court in the next 30 days to form the Subdistrict. Subdistrict No. 3 and 4 will be working at finalizing draft Plan of Water Management and petitions. We will be starting important petition drive in the Conejos and Alamosa-LaJara areas to sign wells and parcels up. Subdistrict No. 5 is still trying to get organized within their work group of well owners. Subdistrict No. 6 is well along and shouldn't be long to finish their documents and then start their petition drive. The RGWCD hired a new program assistant, Amanda Snow, to replace Martha Archeleta. She started today.

In response to Charlie Spielman and Nicole Langley's suggestions to Action Plan for the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan, the new ideas of action items suggested by Ed Hammon and Allen Davey are critical to modelers to update the model and get more accurate depletion calculations. Steve believes that the Roundtable needs to consider the suggestions one-by-one and incorporate the feasible ones into our Basin Implementation Plan.

Announcements:

Adam Moore announced that next Roundtable meeting will be co-hosted with the Watershed Wildfire Protection Group. There is a draft agenda for this meeting available. The meeting will be on September 8 from 1:00-5:00pm. The meeting will be very interesting, focused on Watershed health in the basin. Spread the word to those that would be interested in this meeting

Adjourn

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 8, 2015, **1 pm to 5 pm** in the Conference Room, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District at 623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, CO.