

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable
MINUTES
November 10, 2015

Attending - Those who signed in are as follows: *Rio de la Vista, Ron Brink, Susan Wolfram, Emma Regier, Dale Wiescamp, Rob Phillips, Andréa Bachman, Stan Mower, Keith Holland, Mario Curto, Kevin Terry, Dwight Martin, May Engquist, Nancy Butler, Allen Law, Ralph Curtis, Wayne Schwab, Brenda Felmlee, Eugene Jacquez, Bea Ferregio, Nathan Coombs, Charlie Spielman, Suzanne Beauchaine, Travis Smith, Greg Higel, Heather Dutton, Pete Striffler, Judy Lopez, Jim Ehrlich, Anna Lee Vargas, Ruth Heide, Cindy Medina, Craig Gadabout, Lawrence Gallegos, Mike Collins, Lindsay George, Laura McCarthy, Erin Minks, Rick Basagoitia, James Henderson, Gene Farish, Pat McDermott, Jeremy Wells.*

Welcome and Introduction: Vice Chair Rio de la Vista called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm at the offices of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, in Alamosa, CO. A quorum was established, those in attendance were introduced, and all were welcomed.

Approval of Minutes of October 13, 2015: Greg Higel moved that the amended minutes be approved, Dwight Martin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Administrative Matters - Executive Committee report and nomination for Roundtable Officers 2016:

Rio asked Judy Lopez to report on the Administrative issues discussed by the Executive Committee at their latest meeting. Judy reminded the Roundtable that Mike Gibson is stepping down as Chair of the Roundtable. The Executive Committee has put together the following slate of new officers:

- Chairman: Nathan Coombs
- Vice-chair: Heather Dutton
- Secretary: Cindy Medina

These appointments will take over in the new year as Roundtable officers unless there are other nominations from the Roundtable. Travis Smith added that the Rio Grande Roundtable has been meeting for 10 years now and this is time of leadership change. There will not be a meeting in December and I invite everyone to the next meeting in January reenergized and ready to continue to do great work. At

our next meeting in January, we will celebrate the past 10 years and this time of leadership transition.

Update on the Rio Grande Initiative Projects and Preliminary Project for WSRA:

Nancy Butler and Allen Law from the RiGHT presented an update on the Rio Grande Initiative and a proposal for a new conservation easement on Nash Ranch. Nancy began with background on RiGHT and their work to conserve land through conservation easements in the Valley. The Rio Grande Initiative focuses on conserving land along the Rio Grande to protect the river corridors. These easements support working ranches and habitat.

Allen and Nancy together presented on RiGHT's request for WSRA funds to be used for the Nash Ranch Conservation Easement. The property under consideration has approximately 200 acres on both sides of the river just east of Del Norte. RiGHT is asking for a total of \$100,000 from the WSRA for this project, making up 20% of the total project cost. This project would contribute both to the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable and Statewide goals.

Nancy and Allen answered questions from the Roundtable on the Nash Ranch Conservation Easement. The Roundtable will vote on the project in January.

Colorado Water Conservation Board Update - Craig Godbout, CWCB: Craig reported that the Rio Grande Basin's WSRA balance is currently just over \$318,000 and the state fund's balance is at \$1.9 million. CWCB staff just finished up the annual report on WSRA and this report is available on CWCB's website.

Presentation on "Water Source Protection and Wildlife: Innovative Funding Concepts and a New Mexico Example": Laura McCarthy, Director of Conservation Programs with the Nature Conservancy of New Mexico presented on Water Source Protection and the Rio Grande Water Fund. Laura began by highlighting and providing background on the Las Conchas Fire in 2011 that burned at a very high

severity. In the aftermath, several rain storms led to massive flash flooding and debris flows at the base of Cochiti Canyon. This event highlighted the following concerns facing Northern New Mexico:

1. Increasing areas of high-severity burn
2. Post-fire flooding and debris flow
3. Impacts to water quality
4. The high cost of these events (The cost of Las Conchas Fire was estimated at \$246 million)

Proactive management, including tree thinning, stream restoration, flood mitigation, and prescribed burns, can help prevent the severity and impact of these events. These are large-scale concerns reaching across forest and state boundaries and they require a large-scale solution, but how do you fund such a solution? The Rio Grande Water Fund is a wildfire and water source protection project that seeks to address these concerns through large-scale proactive management. Investment from downstream municipalities can help fund the implementation of projects up stream to protect water resources. The Rio Grande Water Fund has a diverse group of stakeholders involved.

Under this Water Fund effort, a watershed assessment was completed and looked at a wide range of water source protection topics including: treatable forest, debris flow risk, debris flow volume, burn probability, cost of watershed projects, avoided costs from watershed projects, watershed response to thinning, uses of wood from forest treatments, and more. Focal areas for this treatment include the East Mountains, Jemez Mountains, West slope of the Sangre De Cristo, and San Juan Chama. Some funds have been raised for this project already through federal funds, state funding, and more. Through the process of restoring these forests, we can protect our water resources.

Laura thanked the roundtable for allowing her to share this project as well as invited questions and collaboration to extend this project into Colorado and the Rio Grande

Headwaters. Travis Smith added that RWEACT is interested in partnerships. Adam Moore explained the Good Neighbor Authority, which allows State Forest Services to partner and work with the Federal Forest Service to complete projects across forest boundaries.

Erin Minks with the Rio Grande National Forest added that the RGNF as well as several National Forests downstream of us (Carson, etc) are in the process of Forest Plan Revision. During the revision process, the USFS can incorporate and encourage these sorts of partnership that benefit watershed health into each Forest's revised Plan. The more information the RGNF and other forests have from 3rd party assessments and entities, the better the forests can make strides to incorporate and implement these collaborative efforts. This week the RGNF is hosting several public meetings to report to the public the work that the Forest Service has been compiling throughout the revision process thus far. There are executive summaries available that review this information.

Rio suggested that the Roundtable draft a letter to the RGNF in support of these partnerships. Dwight Martin made the motion that the Roundtable drafts this letter and Ron Brink seconded the motion.

Colorado Division of Water Resources: Well Rules and Regulations - Pat

McDermott, Engineer: Pat was present to provide an update from the Division of Water Resources. State Engineer Dick Wolf filed the Well Rules and Regulations on September 23. These do not take immediate effect. First there is a statement of opposition period. At this point there has been one statement of opposition of support. Comments can be made on the Division of Water Resource's website: www.water.state.co.us. Once the Rules are signed, there will be one year for well owners to join a Sub-District. Those that do not join a Sub-District will have two years to figure out an augmentation plan and come into compliance with the Rules. Well owners that don't do either of these things in the time frame provided will have their well turned off. These Rules and Regulations have been in the works since 1995, so it is exciting to finally be at this point.

The irrigation season formally ended for most of the Rio Grande system on midnight on November 1st. We should be in good shape to meet the Rio Grande Compact obligations this year with out going much over. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is projecting a wet winter in the South/Southwest.

Update on the Sub-Districts - Rio Grande Water Conservation District: Rob Phillips was present to provide the following update on the Sub-Districts. Rob explained that there are lots of complicated numbers and issues related to the Sub-Districts. The District has been working with filmmaker, Christi Bode to make a video vignette about the Sub-Districts and groundwater issues in the valley to tell this story and make it more accessible to the public. Rob presented this video vignette to the Roundtable.

Since formed, pumping has been reduced about 30% in Sub-District No. 1. Those in Sub-District No. 1 have worked hard and continue to work hard to reduce pumping. Per year, Sub-District No. 1 has replaced around 10,000 AF of injurious depletions to surface water users. In the past year a total of 119,000 AF has been recovered.

Report from IBCC Representatives: Travis Smith reported that this is a historic time for CWCB with the completion and signing of Colorado's Water Plan. The Rio Grande Basin is an important player in all of this. After all the hard work, the State Water Plan will finally be submitted. The test will come in the future as we began to use the document.

Charlie Spielman presented on a program for the electronic geophysical logging of wells. A group has formed to work on this program to develop a consensus on the types of logs needed for wells across the valley to better understand the hydrology. So far the group includes Charlie, Greg Bauer of COLOG, Peter Harmon, Bob Kirkham, Peter Barkmann of CO Geological Survey, and Clinton Self. Others are welcome to join. The group will proceed over the next few months to develop a consensus regarding the types of logs to be required under various well condition

and data requirements. Hopefully the group will have recommendations to provide for the Roundtable in the New Year.

Nathan Coombs gave a brief overview of the work that the Conejos Water Conservancy District has done with well logging.

Adjourn

After the meeting adjourned, The Great Divide Film was shown for those interested.

Next Meeting: January 12, 2015
Conference Room, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, CO