

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable
MINUTES
February 9, 2016

Attending - Those who signed in are as follows: *Sam Scavo, Cindy Medina, Dan Dallas, Junita Martinez, Dale Wiescamp, Keith Holland, Heather Dutton, Steve Vandiver, Craig Gadabout, Wayne Schwab, Blake Osborn, Wanda Patterson, Joel Humphries, Jeremy Wells, Andr a Bachman, Emma Regier, Dwight Martin, Stan Moyer, Ron Brink, Cary Aloia, Rio de la Vista, Kevin Terry, Gene Farish, Guinevere Nelson Freer, Robert Getz, Anna Lee Vargas, Judy Lopez, Charles Spielman, Travis Smith, Dale Pizel, Tyler Thompson, Pete Clark, Mac McFadden, Anne Steinhoge, Suzan Wolfrey, Tony Aloia, Jonathan Hernandez, Nathan Coombs.*

Welcome and Introduction: Chair Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:02 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 January 12, 2016:

Cindy Medina moved that the minutes be approved, Judy Lopez seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Emma Regier with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project announced two upcoming events. First, the Rio Grande Water Leaders Course, a partnership between the RGHRP, SLVWCD, RGWCD, and RGWCEI, will take place March 28-April 1. Applications are currently available for those interested. Second, the RGHRP and partners are organizing a fundraiser and open house for the Del Norte Riverfront Project. The event will be March 4th from 6:00-9:00pm at the Windsor Hotel in Del Norte. All are welcome to attend.

Funding Request: Rio Grande Basin Public Outreach and Education - Judy Lopez -

Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education: Judy Lopez, RGWCEI and Basin Public Outreach and Education Representative, presented a request for funding for Education and Public Outreach in the Rio Grande River Basin. It was recognized in the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan that education must take a bigger role in the future of the Roundtable. Currently, a large majority of the public is unaware of the issues facing the basin related to water. This funding request will go towards the implementation of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable's Education and Public Outreach efforts in all six

counties. The purpose of this project is to establish a long-term education and outreach effort for water use and needs in the San Luis Valley. Specifically, this project will build upon ongoing efforts by the Roundtable by creating a facilitator position that will work collaboratively with grantees to showcase projects approved by the Basin. Another emphasis of the project would be mentoring young adults to increase their understanding of the water issues and increase involvement in the water community. This directly aligns with the Basin Implementation Plan Goal #8. Judy requested \$90,000 from WSRA over 3 years for this project. Additional match will be \$49,000 for a total project cost of \$139,500. The project tasks will include mentoring, public engagement and coordinator costs.

Judy answered questions from the Roundtable relating to the project. Concerns were raised by members of the Roundtable regarding the overall cost of the project and the most effective ways to reach the public. Other members of the Roundtable emphasized that education and public outreach relating to water issues is crucial to the Roundtable and water community as we move forward. Rio de la Vista moved to support the funding request and Dale Pizel seconded the motion. The Roundtable discussed the project further. Travis Smith thanked Judy for her efforts and mentioned that Judy has been a leader Statewide in regards to education and outreach. Charlie Spielman expressed concerns about the effectiveness of this education program and proposed a substitute motion to fund half of the requested amount of the project. Chair Nathan Coombs reminded the Roundtable that the original the motion on the table must be voted on first before any new motions are made. The Roundtable voted on the original motion to support the funding request. The motion passed with two members opposed, Keith Holland and Charlie Spielman.

Funding Request: Water, Infrastructure, and Supply Efficiency Project - Eric Hecox,

Executive Director, South Metro Water Supply Authority: Eric Hecox called in to provide a summary and answer questions from the Roundtable about the WSRA application on WISE Conjunctive Use Infrastructure submitted from the SMWA. The WISE project is a partnership between Denver, Aurora, and SMWA and it uses existing infrastructure to reuse and treat water in the metro area. The South Metro Water Supply Authority (SMWA) is seeking funds for \$10,000 from the Rio Grande Basin to support the construction of new Water Treatment facility. The budget for the project is \$6.4 million and several other Basin Roundtables have contributed financially. Eric explained that the roundtable support is a small fraction of the total cost, but it shows statewide support for a collaborative project. WISE represents the future of cooperation between water providers and has lessons applicable across basins. The WISE Project will reduce the historic reliance on non-renewable groundwater by reusing water from other supplies.

Eric answered questions from the Roundtable relating to the project. Several members of the Roundtable expressed distrust toward the Denver Metro area and the front range. The population continues to grow on the front range and there is increasing need for additional water. Concerns were raised about this project and the impact it might have on the Rio Grande Basin being seen as a potential water source. Eric responded that the project would reduce the metro areas dependence on non-renewable groundwater and take advantage of the water supplies they have available now, which will decrease their need for future additional water sources. Other members of the Roundtable emphasized that there must be more aggressive conservation measures put in place on the front range municipalities. Steve Vandiver said that he had concerns about this project and water leaving the valley, but he has met with Eric and now understands that this project is very important for helping delay the need for additional water supply and future projects that could take water from the valley.

Steve made a motion that the Roundtable support this project at \$10,000. Heather Dutton seconded the motion. Roundtable continued to discuss this project. Dale Pizel stated that there is already a lot of distrust of the Metro area, however if we don't collaborate and help them solve the problem, it will only continue to hurt the San Luis Valley. The Rio Grande Basin needs to be water leaders in the state and help Denver become sustainable. Steve acknowledged that the concerns expressed from the Roundtable are important, but also it is also in our best interest that we support conservation and water reuse efforts on the front range. Junita Martinez explained that there is distrust in the Costilla community of the front range as they have seen the dry up occurring there. In addition, the Metro area is wealthy and should be able to complete this project without pulling money away from poorer areas of the state. Nathan Coombs countered that the Metro area doesn't need the money from the Roundtable to complete the project, however the Roundtables are here to help accomplish the state's needs and goals. This project isn't about the Metro area taking our water, instead they are asking us to support them in their efforts to solve their

sustainability issues through collaboration. Nathan asked: do we as a Roundtable support these sort of collaborative, conservation minded projects? If so, we should show that support by approving this request. Times are changing within the Roundtable and there are going to be more cross basin, collaborative projects moving forward.

The Roundtable voted on the motion to approve the funding request of \$10,000 to the South Metro Water Supply Authority for the WISE project. The motion passed with 16 members voting in favor and three members opposed. The members that opposed the motion were Gene Farish, Junita Martinez, and Ron Brink.

Funding Request Preview: Upper Rio Grande Assessment – Emma Regier, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project: Emma Regier, Coordinator of the RGHRP, presented a WSRA funding preview request for the Upper Rio Grande Assessment. There are many issues facing the Rio Grande Basin, including wildfire, widespread beetle kill, water quality impairments and more. This project will result in the completion of a watershed assessment that encompasses the Upper Rio Grande Basin, from the headwaters to the town of South Fork. The goals of the URGA are to assess the ecological condition of the mainstem of the Rio Grande, major tributaries, and upland ecosystems within the project area, identify causes of concern, and develop a list of prioritized projects to that will improve the function of uplands, and aquatic and the riparian ecosystems. The RGHRP is requesting \$67,000 from the WSRA Basin Account to help fund the project. The total cost of the project will be \$200,000 with \$133,000 of matching funds already secured.

Emma answered questions from the Roundtable about the project. She will present a formal funding request at the March Roundtable meeting.

Well Logging Project – James Henderson, Conejos River System Water Users Association: James presented preliminary data completed by the Conejos Water Users Well Logging Project to the Roundtable. James explained that we need to know the accurate number of our aquifer depletions, but currently the data doesn't exist to support a model in the Conejos system. Before this project started there were only two wells collecting data on a large area in the Conejos system. James went through the data that the Conejos Water Users have collected from this project. The Well Logging Project has added 8 more wells that collect data every hour of every day. This has added significantly more data across a wider geographic area. Data collected through the well logging provides information about geophysical formations. Colloidal Borescope data shows the direction and velocity of the water movement in the wells. Wells log water level and can show the recovery or depletion of aquifers. On active wells, logs can show how long it

takes to recover water levels after pumping events. General observations from the raw data collected so far show that recovery from pump down is more rapid than originally anticipated. The next steps for this project will be data evaluation and analysis as well as the start of Phase 2, which will complete similar work in the Alamosa-La Jara area.

James answered questions from the Roundtable about the project. Rio de la Vista asked how this data will impact the Sub-Districts response function. Cleve Simpson, RGWCD, replied that the data from these wells are not going to have a direct impact on the Sub-Districts because the Sub-Districts are obligated by rule to use the states response functions. The state may use this data in the future to update response functions, but right now that isn't the case. Nathan Coombs mentioned that the Conejos Water Users have worked with the state to identify the wells that will best fill in data gaps on the State's model. James emphasized that they are not trying to overthrow the model through this project, but instead provide more data where there are gaps. Right now the Conejos Water Users plan to add an additional 8 wells in the future to make up a total of 16 wells logging data.

USFS Update - Dan Dallas: Dan emphasized that what we do on the forest is very important to the Roundtable and the SLV. The USFS is working on the Forest Plan Revision, which will be our guiding document for the next few decades. The Assessment Phase is complete and now the USFS has started the next phase of meetings. These meetings will be throughout the Basin on the following dates:

- Tuesday, March 8, at the Conejos Peak Ranger District office, County Road 15571 Rd T., La Jara
- Wednesday, March 9, at the South Fork Community Building, 254 State Highway 149, South Fork
- Monday, March 14, at San Luis Valley Conservancy District Office, 623 Fourth Street, Alamosa
- Tuesday, March 15, Saguache County Road and Bridge Building, 305 3rd Street, Saguache

There is also need for a follow up meeting with the San Juan Forest to discuss maintenance of trans-mountain ditches in the Weminuche Wilderness.

Report from IBCC Representatives: Travis Smith reported that there will be an IBCC meeting on Feb 23rd.

Rio de la Vista, RiGHT: Rio announced the new San Luis Valley Conservation and Connection Initiative, which is a re-granting program in partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC), Colorado Open Lands (COL) and Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT), with support from the LOR Foundation. More

information about the program will be given at a workshop on Thursday, March 17th from 10 am to 2 pm.

Colorado Water Conservation Board Update - Craig Godbout, CWCB: Craig reported that the Rio Grande Basin's WSRA balance is currently just over \$402,000. The Statewide balance is \$3.3 million, which includes January awards. The normal installments for Basin WSRA funds are projected to decrease. There will be as much as a 50% reduction in funds added to the Basin account this year. The same is true for the Statewide account.

Update on the Sub-Districts - Rio Grande Water Conservation District: Steve Vandiver reported that the Annual Report will be due March 1st. They are waiting for final numbers from the state on pumping to finish up annual report.

Cleve Simpson, RGWCD, provide an update on the Sub-Districts. Sub-District No. 2 will have a hearing in Del Norte in February. The Alamosa-La Jara Sub-District will present their petitions next week. Saguache has finished up their formation documents and September 1st is their deadline for petitions. The San Luis Creek Subdistrict's deadline for petitions will be July 1st. This has been a good effort by all and now we have all the data needed to complete the formation of the remaining subdistricts. Now the focus will be on the outreach efforts to let well-owners know what their options are moving forward.

Travis Smith congratulated Cleave on being hired as the new manager of the RGWCD.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: March 15, 2016 @ 2:00pm
Conference Room, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, CO