

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable
MINUTES
April 12, 2016

Attending - Those who signed in are as follows: *Ron Brink, Rio de la Vista, Brian Sullivan, Cary Aloia, Jenny Nehring, Dale Wiescamp, Ed Nielsen, Dwight Martin, Tony Aloia, Mike Gibson, Steve Massey, Luke Hoffman, Junita Martinez, Ralph Curtis, Adam Moore, Stan Moyer, Ruth Heide, Travis Smith, Judy Lopez, Craig Godbout, Suzan Wolfrey, Black Osborn, Gene Farish, Nathan Coombs, Kevin Terry, Larry Sveum, Keith Holland, Allen Law, Robbie Andrus, Eugene Jacquez, Mac McFadden, Anne Steinhage, Sharon Vaughn, Jim Ehrlich, Robert Getz, Matthew G., Heather Dutton, Matt Hildner, Anna Lea Vargas, Ann Bunting, Brenda Felmler, Dale Pizel, Randy Wright, Andrew Archuleta, Andréa Bachman, Emma Regier.*

Welcome and Introduction: Chair Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:04 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.

Approve Agenda: Nathan announced that Wayne Schwab was out of town so his agenda item would be removed from the agenda. Ron Brink motioned to approve the amended agenda, Judy Lopez seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Approve March Minutes: Ed Nielsen made a correction to the March meeting minutes under the Upper Rio Grande Assessment section. He added the word “riparian” to the sentence “Ed feels the tasks are suited for the National Forest Service *Riparian* team.” Ed motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Judy Lopez seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

- Suzan Wolfrey shared a prayer for the environment with the Roundtable.
- Junita Martinez shared that there are rumors going around within the Acequia Association about the ownership Sanchez Reservoir changing and she wanted to ask the Roundtable if anyone had information about that. Nathan Coombs explained that Sanchez Reservoir is owned by the Sanchez Reservoir Company and is run by a board. There has been a change in the leadership on the board, which may have started these rumors. Junita asked the Roundtable to let her know if they hear anything more about this.

Roundtable Membership:

The Executive Committee has recommended adding more voting members to the Roundtable, which would represent additional water user groups and interests. The Executive Committee requested that if anyone has knows of people that want to participate in the Roundtable process, let the Roundtable and the Executive Committee know. We want and need active, participating members.

Funding Preview: SLV Watershed and Wildlife Conservation Assessment - Cary

Aloia, Wetland Dynamics: Cary Aloia and Jenny Nehring presented their funding preview request for the SLV WWCA. This project is an assessment that will look at the history of changes in wetland and agriculture to guide cooperative conservation goals for monitoring, management and land conservation. Drought, climate change, and changes in land use practices are complicating management and understanding of wetland complexes and water resources. There will be two components of the project. First, the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) will provide a GIS model utilizing satellite imagery from 1984 to 2016, along with surveys from the 1870s to determine changes in wetlands and agriculture over time. Second, an assessment will be developed to incorporate the GIS analysis to provide. Jenny and Cary explained the scope and activities that will be included in the assessment. The result will be a tool that will help prioritize future wetland efforts and conservation goals for the Valley. The project meets 10 or the 14 RGBRT goals. Brian Sullivan, with CPW, explained that the assessment would provide information on the quantity and quality of wetlands, which will help allocate investments across the state and in the Basin. Kevin Terry, with TU, added that this project would result in a centralized database that we can use to prioritize projects.

Cary and Jenny answered questions from the Roundtable and the Roundtable discussed the project. Junita Martinez asked how this project was going to help Costilla County. Cary said the project would provide Costilla County with a tool to look for how things have changed, what crops have been planted, how water has been used and how the wetland complex has changed. Rio de la Vista expressed support on behalf of RiGHT and said that the project would provide valuable information and help RiGHT get funding for priority conservation easements. Currently the wetland data is inadequate. Ed Nielsen asked if the assessment would just include the valley proper or include the headwaters. Cary said that because of the partnership with the IWJV, the assessment will only include the valley floor at this point. In the future, data could be added and the area could be expanded. Ed Nielsen expressed concern about just focusing on the valley floor. Without including the headwaters, the assessment seems incomplete. Mike Gibson asked several organizational questions. The Roundtable has never funded private entities and Mike expressed concern about that. The RGBRT bylaws do not restrict private entities from applying, however Craig Godbout mentioned that "individual and sole proprietors" are not eligible for Statewide funds. Travis Smith stated that it is a worthy project, but there are protocol questions that need to be addressed. Travis noted that there is a lot of support from resource agencies and this project has the potential to increase partnership and conversation. Luke Hoffman, CPW, said that the project is a great opportunity for agencies to use these tools as water managers. Sharon Vaughn stated that USFWS has made a commitment to this project. Wetland Dynamics have been able to bring all these agency partners together, which is significant. Dale Pizel brought up Mike's point again; the Roundtable needs to discuss how to deal with a project that is not sponsored by a non-profit. Judy Lopez said that this is a great project, but this is uncharted territory for the Roundtable; are we opening the door to have all kinds of companies apply to the Roundtable for funds and how do we provide oversight? Judy emphasized that she is confident that the project is valuable to the SLV and Wetland Dynamics will complete this project with integrity. Craig Godbout added that CWCB has very thorough reporting

requirements that will provide oversight. Nathan reminded the Roundtable that this is a funding preview and the official funding request will occur a next month's meeting.

Impacts of Spruce Die-off on Fire Severity in the San Juan Mountains - Robbie Andrus, University of Colorado:

Robbie presented on his Masters research on the impacts of spruce outbreaks on forest fire severity. There is a lot of uncertainty around fire behavior and severity related beetle-killed forest. Robbie provided the Roundtable with some background on forests of the southern Colorado Rockies and spruce beetle outbreaks and forest fire. Warm and dry conditions trigger both beetle outbreaks and fire. These disturbances are natural processes. Robbie's research question was: How do spruce beetle outbreaks influence fire severity? Robbie's research addressed fire severity (i.e. number of trees killed by fire), not fire behavior (i.e. how fast it spread, flame length, how fire burns). The research looked at the spruce forests in the San Juan Mountains where 5 different fires have occurred in the past several years, including the West Fork Complex Fire. The project assessed beetle severity and fire severity in these research areas. The conclusion of the research was that spruce beetle outbreaks are not linked to an increase in fire severity. Weather, high fuel loading, topography and tree susceptibility to fire injury have stronger influence on fire severity than beetle outbreak. Robbie discussed that it is predicted that there will be an increase in spruce beetle outbreaks in the near future due to hot, dry conditions. There is also predicted to be an increase in the number of large fires due to hot, dry conditions. Robbie answered questions about his research from the Roundtable.

CWCB Update, Craig Godbout: The Rio Grande Basin Account is at \$292,000 and the State Account will be \$198,035. The accounts are due for an installment from severance tax. The CWCB continues to work with contractors to move the SWSI (Statewide Water Supply Inventory) Update forward by working with all the consultants on one master contract. There will be a coordination meeting soon to get all team members and consultants to lay out a road map for this SWSI update. The next IBCC meeting will be Tuesday May 24th in Salida.

Division of Water Resources Update, Pat McDermott: Pat was present to provide an update from the DWR. Currently, snowpack is below average, but it is up significantly from last month. We still need some more late season snow in order to get to average or above. The preliminary annual flow forecast at Del Norte is at 645,00 AF or 104% of average. The preliminary annual flow for Conejos is 280,000 AF or 93% of average. If they don't get more snow, this will be the seventh year in a row that the Conejos system has had below average flows.

The NOAA forecast shows above average precipitation for the next three months with normal temperatures. In late summer and fall, it is projected to be hot and dry. Irrigation season is now open for the entire valley.

SubDistricts Update, RGWCD: Amber Pacheco was present to give the SubDistrict update. The RGWCD is now in their new office building. The first quarterly meeting in the

new building at 8805 Independence Way in Alamosa will be next Tuesday, April 19. The new building has a conference room that is available for meetings. SubDistrict No. 2 was approved by Judge Swift in March. They are currently accepting applications for board members and are working towards detailing their plan. Petition drives are ongoing for the remaining the Subdistricts. The RGWCD has included some language that protects water for the proposed expansion of Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument.

Keith motioned to adjourn the meeting, Kevin Terry seconded and the motion carried.

Next Meeting: May 10, 2016 @ 2:00pm
Conference Room, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, CO