

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable
MINUTES
November 8, 2016

Attending - Those who signed in are as follows: *Judy Lopez, Rio de la Vista, Ron Brink, Kevin Terry, Nathan Coombs, Helen Smith, Guinevere Freer, Ed Nielsen, Stan Moyer, Emma Reesor, Andrea Jones, Ralph Curtis, Zeke Ward, Bethany Howell, Larry Sveum, Jim Ehrlich, Adam Moore, Gene Farish, Ruth Heide, Charlotte Bobicki, Don Thompson, Cary Aloia, Cleave Simpson, Travis Smith, Anne Steinhage, Mac McFadden, Eugene Jacquez, Erin Minks, Rick Basagoitia, Heather Dutton, and Andréa Bachman.*

Welcome and Introduction: Chair Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:05 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: Two last minute items were added to the agenda. Helen Smith will provide an update on Roundtable outreach efforts and the new Acequia association vignette will be viewed. With those additions, Ron Brink moved approve agenda, Judy Lopez seconded, and the motion carried. The amended agenda was approved.

Approve October 11, 2016 Minutes: Bob Getz sent an email with a correction to the public comment section of the minutes. In the first sentence "Jeff Straub" needed to be corrected to "Phil Straub". Ed Neilson motioned to approve the corrected October minutes. Cleave Simpson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

- Cary Aloia thanked the Roundtable for their support of the SLV Wetlands Wildlife Conservation Assessment. Wetland Dynamics attended the CWCB meeting and the funding was approved for their project.
- Rio de la Vista announced that the SLVCCI grant funding initiative will hold a workshop on January 12, 2017 and grant application will be due in February.

Helen Smith gave a brief report on the Roundtable Tour to the Prairie Ditch Project on October 19. Helen thanked those who attended and encouraged Roundtable members to contact her or Andréa Bachman if they have suggestions for RGBRT Newsletter.

Judy Lopez announced that the workshop for Rio Grande Basin Ag Producers will take place on February 28, 2017. This event is a partnership between the RGBRT and the Colorado Ag Water Alliance. Please help spread the word about this important event.

Willow Creek Floodplain Project Update – Guinevere Freer, Willow Creek Reclamation Committee: In 2013, the RGBRT approved a \$55,000 WSRA Grant to the Lower Willow Creek Restoration Company (LWCRCo) to complete Phase II of the

project. Gwen presented project highlights and updates to the RGBRT. In 2016, the LWCRCO acquired an additional \$365,500 in funding needed to complete the project. Gwen showed a historic aerial photo of the Willow Creek Floodplain from 1939 and contrasted it with a current photo to show how far they have come with the project. The project was a voluntary clean-up of the Lower Willow Creek Floodplain with the goals of capping 36 of the most highly contaminated acres on the floodplain, revegetating the site with native vegetation, and receiving a No Action Determination letter from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to demonstrate improved lead surface concentrations. The main source of capping topsoil came from Airport Road in Creede. Gwen explained the major hurdles and accomplishments, including meeting all requirements for stormwater controls throughout project construction and stabilization. The project included 14,000 cubic yards of dirt excavated, hauled, and graded on the project site, which resulted in 28 acres capped at a minimum depth of 6 inches.

Remaining work includes hydromulching of 16 acres along Willow Creek, hauling 1,760 cubic yards to cover the remaining project acreage, sampling to demonstrate improvement in surface soil concentrations, grant reporting, and continuing revegetation efforts. Future project phases include the expansion of the trails system and revegetation of the floodplain. Gwen thanked the Roundtable for their support of this project.

Rio Grande and Conejos River Winter Flow Programs – Kevin Terry, Trout Unlimited

Unlimited: Kevin began by explaining the organizational structure of Trout Unlimited (TU), which includes three levels: grassroots membership, state councils, and national TU. Kevin works for the Western Water and Habitat Program of National TU. Through this program, Kevin seeks partnerships to improve habitat and conditions for native trout. When Kevin started working in the Rio Grande, one of his first priorities was to improve winter flows on the Conejos River. Kevin worked with Nathan Coombs, taking into account the history, watershed, reservoir operations, water user needs, non-consumptive goals, etc. to discover opportunities to work together to find water to establish a winter flow program. Winter flows are important in this area because the high altitude, long winters, and limited over-wintering habitat in the upper reaches of the river result in fish overcrowding and competing for resources. Kevin worked with partners to develop a plan to increase winter flow by a target of 3 cfs (42% increase). By using a voluntary platform (partners can opt-in or opt-out at any time based on their own needs), the Conejos Winter Flow Program (CWFP) provides a way for entities to participate without being restricted. The program improves fish habitat as well as provides services to partners including water, cost sharing opportunities, money, administration, and coordination. The program is a mechanism that meets both consumptive and non-consumptive needs. Basin wide, the CWFP compliments and supports other work, such as the Rio Grande Cooperative Project. The Rio Grande Cooperative Project includes the repair of two reservoirs, and the analysis and coordination of the timing of water deliveries. This occurs through water transfers and exchanges with multiple flow benefits such as summer ramp downs using water that will be exchanged to Platoro Reservoir for the winter flow program. Kevin continues to look for opportunities for sourcing leased water through a basin wide approach. Current

partners include CPW, DWR, CWCD, SLVWCD, SLVID, Rio Grande Water Users, and TU. Kevin explained some example partnerships and water transactions that have occurred and that are planned in the future. This is a great program because it is flexible, collaborative, and meets multiple goals. In addition, it has economic benefit for the basin as fishing draws many people to the area.

Travis Smith recognized Kevin for his ability to build trust and partnerships across the valley. Nathan Coombs also acknowledged the successes of this program through partnerships.

Education and Outreach: The latest RGBRT funded video vignette was shown to the Roundtable. This film was about Acequias and was made by Christi Bode. All video vignettes are available to be viewed on the Roundtable's website – www.rgbtr.org. These videos are for everyone to use for educational purposes, so please take advantage of that.

CWCB Update, Craig Godbout: The Rio Grande Basin WSRA account balance is currently at \$304,000 and the State balance is at \$533,000. The future of severance tax funding is looking grim, so CWCB is seeking additional funding. New WSRF Criteria and Guidelines went into effect September 2nd and are available on CWCB's website. Changes include new documentation requirements for the application, changes in matching requirements, and 6-month progress reports requirements. If you have any questions, ask Craig. He is happy to help.

Craig provided an update on the Colorado Water Plan. CWCB is tracking implementation of the Water Plan. Staff have started to draft and distribute CWCB Confluence Newsletters and are looking for articles. Contact Mara, CWCB's Education and Outreach Coordinator, to submit an article.

Consultants are making progress on the update to the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI). This update will have a technical focus and the result will be a technical document. Because of this, there won't be the same public input component as the Basin Plan. Each area will have a technical advisory group of experts to assist in the process. Scheduled completion date is December 2017.

Division of Water Resources Update, Craig Cotten:

Craig was present to provide an update from DWR. Temperature forecasts show above average temperatures for the rest of the winter and precipitation forecasts are right on the edge of below average for the winter. Currently, we are ahead of normal precipitation for the year. Irrigation season ended November 8th. We are a little over on Compact delivery this year, so we will be running winter recharge after irrigation season. The DWR is still meeting with objectors to work out stipulated agreements for the Rules and Regulations process. These are going well, but it is a slow process. The trial is scheduled for January or February of 2018. The US Supreme Court Case between Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado is still ongoing. Colorado is meeting monthly with the other states to work out an agreement.

A radar truck will be at the airport again this winter. They are looking for volunteers to help man the radar. If anyone is interested in volunteering, contact Nathan Coombs. This is an important project to the Basin and Nathan thanked all those that have been involved. Joe Busto has been working on the possibility of getting permanent radar for the Rio Grande Basin.

IBCC Update: Cleave Simpson reported that the next IBCC meeting is scheduled for November 29th and will be cohosted with the Colorado Ag Water Alliance. Travis reported that CWCB will meet next week to review funding.

SubDistricts Update, RGWCD: Cleave gave an update on the Subdistricts to the Roundtable. He highlighted the success of the organization of Subdistrict No. 3 (Conejos response area), which was approved at the District's board meeting in October. The hearing date is set for January 13th and there will be a publication in the Valley Courier soon. Subdistrict No. 4 (San Luis response area) and Subdistrict No. 5 (Saguache response area) are getting close to being formed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:34pm

Next Roundtable Meeting: January 10, 2017 @ 2:00pm

Next Executive Committee Meeting: January 10, 2017 @ 1:00pm
Conference Room, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, CO 81101