

IBCC Colorado River Basin

1. January 9, 2017 CBRT Minutes

1. January 9, 2017 **CBRT Minutes** –.
2. **Next Meeting: March 27, 2017, Glenwood Springs Comm Ctr, 12:00 – 4:00.**
3. Upcoming Meetings
 - a. **CAWA agricultural workshop Jan 31, 2017** 1-day program to discuss agricultural water issues at the Glenwood Springs Community Center.
 - b. **Next Steps February 27, 2017, 12:00:** 2-hour meeting Colorado River District office, or can call in
4. Reporter: These minutes were prepared by Ken Ransford, Esq., CPA, 970-927-1200, kenransford@comcast.net.
5. **CBRT Members Present:** Art Bowles, April Long City of Aspen, Chuck Ogilby, Jim Pokrandt, Ken Ransford, Dan Harrison, representing Bob Zanella of the West Divide
6. **Guests:** Don Chaplin, Nate Higginson, Middle Colorado River Watershed Council. Morgan Hill, Garfield County, Heather Lewin Roaring Fork Conservancy, Bailey Leppek, SGM, Dave Merritt, Colorado River District board, Linda Vida, former water librarian at UC Berkeley Water Center
7. **River Forecast.** The Colorado River at Dotsero is flowing 849 cfs, slightly higher than the median flow of 869 on this date. The Colorado River is flowing 1,550 cfs at Cameo, slightly higher than the median flow of 1,540 cfs on this date.
8. **Mike Samson will represent Garfield County at roundtable meetings.** Samson, a Garfield County Commissioner, will take Louis Meyer's place as the Garfield County representative. Each county can appoint a member to the roundtable; county commissioners represent Pitkin (Rachel Richards), Eagle (Kathy Chandler-Henry), Summit (Karn Stieglemeier), Grand (Meritt Linke), and now Garfield County. Mesa County is not represented by a county commissioner at the roundtable.
9. **Colorado River Risk Study.** Maintaining sufficient water in Lake Powell to assure continued hydroelectric power revenue is driving much of the concern regarding Lake Powell operations. If power is cut at Lake Powell, programs such as the salinity control program and endangered species recovery programs will not be funded; these are covered by a mill levy charged on every watt of power produced.
 - a. **A webinar is set for Wed. Jan. 11,** including the roundtable chairs, Eric Kuhn, Jim Lochhead, and CWCB executive director James Eklund **to discuss the next steps in the water risk study.** Jim Pokrandt said the recent letter written by the

Front Range Water Council (FRWC) contained pointed language suggesting the river risk study was biased to show there is insufficient water for additional development of the Colorado River and delivery to the Front Range. **If the Front Range declines to fund this study, the West slope roundtables and the Colorado and Southwest River Districts will fund it.**

- b. The Front Range Water Council is **critical that 3,525' was arbitrarily chosen as the minimum level Lake Powell would be permitted to reach.** In a letter dated Nov. 9, 2016, Kerry Sundeen of Grand River Consulting Corporation states that this level is reached 6% of the time (once every 16 years on average). Even with demand management—cutting back use by the Upper Basin Division states—this elevation would be reached 4% of the time, once every 25 years.
- c. In a letter also dated Nov. 9, 2016, to FRWC members, Jim Lochhead says, “We are also concerned that the assumptions used in the Phase I modeling study may be **creating biased impressions regarding the amount of the remaining developable water** under the compacts.”
- d. Dave Merritt reported that the middle elevation of the penstocks at Lake Powell is 3,470' above elevation. The dam was built in 1963, and **no one knows at what level the penstock would start sucking air into the turbines;** that is unacceptable since it damages them. That is why 3,525' is selected as the bottom level below which operators do not want Lake Powell to fall.
- e. In a letter dated November 15, 2016, to the West Slope Caucus, the 4 West slope roundtables, Eric Kuhn states, “The 3525' target was selected by the Bureau of Reclamation and seven basin state principals as a part of the development of the contingency plans in both the Upper and Lower basins.” He states that **“It is regretful that the East Slope has referred to this study in the press as a “slap-dash” water availability study** to show there is no water available on the west slope.”
- a. Chuck Ogilby asked **what Denver Water’s concern was;** Jim Pokrandt said their concern is that **this is a water availability supply study; in fact, it is a demand study to determine when a compact call is likely** if a drought like 2002-04 repeats when Lake Powell is only 50% full.
- b. Point 4 is an insurance plan to protect current water users. A new TMD must be able to absorb low water years.
- c. The bypass tubes were used in 1983, thanks to a big El Nino year. The reservoir reached to full pool at 3,700.' The water at Glen Canal is very clear, but **the water pouring out of the dam below was brick-red, indicating that the sides of the dam were being worn away where the bypass tubes were.** The bypass tubes are bored into the canyon walls on each side of the dam, dropping nearly

583', the height of the dam. They have not used the bypass tubes since. There are 8 turbines producing power. The Bureau of Reclamation designs spillways to protect the dam; the Army Corps of Engineers design spillways to regularly use them. These are different objectives.

- d. Any dam has seepage; the objective is to collect it and send it downstream through safe passageways.
 - e. **Bank storage**—water stored in the sandstone surrounding the dam—is estimated to be **millions of acre-feet**. **Whenever Lake Powell drops**, the amount of water in bank storage drops accordingly, **adding water back to Lake Powell**.
 - f. Lake Powell would extend from Debeque Canyon to Kremmling if it were in Colorado.
 - g. The spillway crest is 3,700; the dam crest is 3,711. If the water poured over the dam, it would have damaged the turbines.
 - h. **The Yampa White Basin wants special dispensation to develop additional water**, and to not have to absorb a Compact Call like the other West slope roundtables. The Gunnison Basin disagrees. The Southwest Roundtable wants to develop 20-30,000 additional acre-feet, but Dave Merritt said they are constrained due to New Mexico delivery obligations. The Yampa and Gunnison Basins are directly opposed to each other. April Long asked what the Colorado River basin roundtable thinks about this, and **Jim Pokrandt said that he doubted any senior water users would be willing to forego diverting in order to grant a preference to the Yampa basin**.
 - i. The Supreme Court in *Nebraska v. Wyoming* ruled that in the absence of a compact, a downstream state could call out an upstream state. The Lower Basin is not questioning what our uses are. If we got into litigation, it would likely be a multi-year dispute and cost tens of millions of dollars. We have an obligation to deliver 75 million acre feet; as long as we do, the Lower Basin states do not care how we use the water.
 - j. West slope agriculture calls water down the river to the Cameo roller dam. If there is a Compact Call, West slope agriculture will likely meet it.
 - k. Rifle just spent \$30 million to upgrade their water treatment facility.
2. **Eagle City Manager John Stavney raised concerns that the Abrams Creek ditch improvement project will be a boon for Gypsum developers**. Kathy Chandler-Henry still believes it is a legitimate project.

- a. Ken Neubecker said Mely Whiting and Trout Unlimited has been working on this for 4 years, and CPW for 20 years; Ken is not sure what Stavney's concern is.
 - b. It is a trans-basin diversion from the Eagle River drainage to the Gypsum drainage.
 - c. Chuck Ogilby said projects like Eagle Park Reservoir will permit additional real estate development.
 - d. Eagle has an agricultural irrigation water right on Abrams Creek that it has not been using, so it is reluctant to call for this water for fear it will be stuck with an abandonment challenge.
3. **The 3 grant requests below were not voted on because there was not a quorum.** They will be voted on by email.
- a. Abrams Creek
 - b. Water education center
 - c. GVVUA grant request to rehabilitate the roller dam.
4. **Windy Gap Reservoir only pumps water up to Granby Reservoir for about 30 to 60 days; the rest of the time it is a sediment trap** full of tubifex worms that is the source of **whirling disease**. The Colorado River is being re-routed around Windy Gap reservoir so that it will bypass the reservoir.
- a. Ken Neubecker commented that one reason the upper Colorado River is having problems is because **a rancher cut off a meander decades ago. It caused the river to start head-cutting**, and it has slowly worked its way upstream. That has caused many of the problems now being experienced on the river.
 - b. **Head cut** in stream geomorphology is an erosional feature of some intermittent and perennial streams where an abrupt vertical drop, also known as a knickpoint in the stream bed occurs. As water pours over it, it erodes the riverbed below, and the lowered river level migrates its way upstream
 - c. **Whirling disease** is a chronic disease that can cause high mortality among young, hatchery-raised fish. The common name is the descriptive side effect that highlights the **interaction of a parasite and a segmented worm (Tubifex tubifex)** that infects coldwater game fish, specifically salmon and trout. The parasite comes in contact with the host fish and multiplies rapidly. It then penetrates the cartilage **causing spinal deformities** and erratic swim patterns. **This makes feeding and avoiding predators difficult resulting in high mortality.** Some fish can survive until the cartilage hardens and live a normal life

span, however they will show the effects of the parasite through skeletal deformations. Reproduction is not affected by whirling disease and the parasite is not passed to the offspring.¹

5. Education – **should the CBRT create a website?** The Gunnison and Arkansas roundtables have done this. It's relatively cheap to do this, but how do we keep it updated.
 - a. **Ken Ransford recommended that we put the minutes on the website.**
 - b. Ken Neubecker said **the Arkansas roundtable's BIP drafter is responsible for keeping its website up to date.**
6. The **officer slate has been unanimously recommended to be renewed:**
 - a. Jim Pokrandt, Chair
 - b. Karn Stiegelmeier, Vice Chair
 - c. Ken Ransford, Secretary
7. **Linda Vida, librarian, was the head of the water library archives at the University of California water library for 20 years.** It has 70 years of paper information, but **when Linda left, the University of California failed to keep up the archive.**
 - a. In the 1990's, everything was in print.
 - b. In the 2000's, information began to be published digitally on the web. Tools were developed to go out and grab reports in digital form with permanent links.
 - c. **Linda recently moved to Carbondale and wants to create a digital library of the Roaring Fork Valley.** It must be long-standing. Linda has spoken about this with **Ken Neubecker, Ken Ransford, and Mark Fuller, and they support it.**
 - d. Public libraries use the Marmot system, a digital "card catalog" system. Linda would like to use this as a pilot and then expand to the West slope. It would slowly build a large repository of current as well as historic material.
 - e. Linda's experience is that **digital material was used far more often than print material** because you don't have to check out the book – you can access it digitally.

¹ "Whirling Disease," April 2005, Whirling Disease Foundation,
http://www.in.gov/dnr/files/WHIRLING_DISEASE.pdf.

- f. **The digital library at the University of California** has 6,000 to 10,000 items, and it is **accessed 4,000 times per year**. It is not being kept up because **the University of California transferred the water resources library of paper materials from the Berkeley to the Riverside campus**, and the new person in charge of the library does not support it, likely due to budgetary reasons.
- g. Ken Neubecker said this would be **very useful for the integrated water management plans**, the stream management plans that Richard Vangytenbeek and the Colorado basin roundtable is promoting. Bringing this information into a centralized library makes good sense.
 - i. **April Long said this would have been very useful** for her, since she is **creating a stream management plan for the City of Aspen**.
- h. Dave Merritt asked how this compares with Colorado Mesa University's project. If a pilot project works in the Roaring Fork Valley, this collection would be turned over to CMU.
- i. April asked Linda to provide a budget.
- j. **Dave Merritt said he was afraid this would not be kept up**. He said you **must provide for perpetual care**, or it becomes an orphan site that goes out of date.