

IBCC Colorado River Basin

1. March 27, 2017 CBRT Minutes

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2. **Next Meeting: May 22, 2017, Glenwood Springs Comm Ctr, 12:00 – 4:00.**
3. Upcoming Meetings
 - a. **Next Steps April 24, 2017, 12:00:** 2-hour meeting Colorado River District office, or call in.
 - b. **Next Roundtable meeting May 22, 2017:** 12:00 to 4:00
4. Reporter: These minutes were prepared by Ken Ransford, Esq., CPA, 970-927-1200, kenransford@comcast.net.
5. **CBRT Members Present:** Steve Aquafresca, Art Bowles, Paul Bruchez, Stan Cazier, Angie Fowler, Kathy Chandler Henry, Lurline Underbrink-Curran, Carlyle Currier, Mark Fuller, Russ George, Mark Hermundstad, Dan Harrison, Bruce Hutchins, Diane Johnson, April Long, Ken Neubecker, Chuck Ogilby, Ken Ransford, Dave Rienertson, Steve Ryken, Mike Samson, Karn Stieglemeier, Mike Wageck, Layne Wyatt, Greg Lanning.
6. **Guests:** Oni Butterfly, Don Chaplin, Matt Currey, Mays Construction, Dennis Davidson, Mt. Sopris Conservation District, Peter Fleming, Esq., Colorado River District, Brent Gardner Smith, Morgan Hill, Garfield County, Megan Holcomb, CWCB, Mike Holmes, Grand County Irrigated Land Company, Greg Johnson, CWCB, Eric Kuhn, Heather Lewin Roaring Fork Conservancy, Bailey Leppek, SGM, Ed Moyer, Jim Pearce, Canyon Water Resources, Laurie Rink, Nicole Seltzer, Linda Spencer, Garfield County, Felix Tornare, Richard Vangytenbeek, Annie Whetel Middle Colorado Watershed; Brooke Ranney Eagle River Watershed Council.
7. **River Forecast.** The Colorado River at Dotsero is flowing 1,550 cfs, significantly higher than the median flow of 1,070 on this date. The Colorado River is flowing 2,800 cfs at Cameo, again significantly higher than the median flow of 1,940 cfs on this date.
8. **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 for every watt of power produced.
9. **Megan Holcomb is the new CWCB liaison to the Colorado River Basin Roundtable.** She is a hydrologist who formerly worked for the EPA in Washington D.C. When a show of hands was asked from everyone under 30 in the room later during the meeting, she was the only person to raise her hand.

10. **Karn Stieglemeier is the Summit County rep to the Colorado River District, and Steve Aquafresca is the Mesa County rep to the Colorado River District.**
11. **Brent Gardner-Smith**, head of independent reporting service Aspen Journalism, **is now reporting for** the Aspen Times, Glenwood Springs Independent, Vail Daily, and the Summit Daily **newspapers at Colorado basin roundtable meetings.**
12. Mark Hermundstad motioned, and Stan Cazier seconded, to have **Jim Pokrandt appointed to serve as chair, Karn Stieglemeier as Vice-chair, and Ken Ransford as Secretary.** The motion passed unanimously.
13. **Colorado River Risk Study, Eric Kuhn. The CWCB approved the West slope's grant request to conduct Phase II of the Colorado River Risk Study.** Each West slope roundtable is contributing at least \$10,000 to this study, with the Colorado and Southwestern roundtables contributing about \$30,000 each. The **Front Range roundtables will not contribute funding**, but they can have input into the process through two Technical Advisory Committees, one more than Phase I and at the same level of participation as everybody else. Eric said the purpose of the study is to educate users, and not to make decisions. Eric hoped for more Front Range roundtable participation but he is happy where we are now. The CWCB board motion the approving the grant contained **a specific disclaimer that Phase II does not represent the views or interests of the State of Colorado.**
 - a. **Russ George helped assure funding.** He commented that Phase I was set up just right; we are likely to see continued drawdowns from reservoirs all the way down to Lake Mead, and every water user is as edgy as ever. The East slope feared this would bind the state, and that the West slope had motives that were not articulated. Even though we've made enormous progress, and have a water plan that everyone participated in, **there is still touchiness between the West and East slopes.** We have resolved the most recent misunderstandings. Phase II is a way of moving forward and positioning the situation with facts instead of fears. John McClow was instrumental in obtaining consensus.
 - b. **"All hydrological models are wrong, but some are more useful than others,"** Kuhn said, commenting on the difficulty forecasters have in predicting future water flows. Hydrology, like the weather, is just too random to lead to accurate predictions. Because of this inherent unreliability, **it is important to know where water use will be cut back if there is a Compact Call.**
 - c. Eric will be scheduling updates of Phase II progress and inform the roundtable of the meetings; they are open to everyone, and Eric encourages members to call in.
14. **The CWCB approved all CBRT roundtable grant requests.** Severance tax funding is down, but the annual projects bill is still in committee, and has not yet been approved. For 2017, the CWCB plans to take \$10 million that has accrued in the severance tax fund

in order to pay for 2016 and 2017 grants. There is not as much new money from severance tax collections, but **the CWCB has requisitioned old money** left over from repaid loans. The Grand Junction Sentinel reported today that **oil and gas activity is on the upswing, and this could increase severance tax revenue in the future.**

- a. **The 2017 funding bill includes the following:**
 - i. **\$5 million for stream restoration.**
 - ii. **\$1 million for agricultural transfer grants.**
 - iii. **\$10 million for WSRA (Water Supply Reserve Account) funding**
 - b. **The grants that the CBRT roundtable previously approved and which the CWCB approved were:**
 - i. **Abrams Creek - \$45,000 from the basin account, and \$319,711 from the statewide account.** Abrams Creek flows into Brush Creek in Eagle, an unlined dirt ditch with rights dating to the 1800s that **loses an estimated 40% of the ditch flows to seepage.** The green strain of the Colorado River cutthroat trout, a very rare species, inhabits the stream. There are **13 partners on this project.**
 - ii. **Grand Valley Water User's Association (GVWUA) \$50,000** for upgrades to the roller dam in Debeque Canyon upstream of Cameo.
 - iii. **John McConnell Math and Science Center - \$25,000**
15. **Carlyle Currier asked about the replacement of the CWCB director James Eklund.** Mike King, chairperson of the Department of Natural Resources, was replaced by Bob Randall on February 1, 2016; King is now director of planning at Denver Water. Russ George reported that a search team has been selected and will likely interview 2-4 finalists. The field **may be limited because it's likely to be a 2-year position since Governor Hickenlooper's term expires in 2018.** George expects the new CWCB director will be appointed within 1-2 months.
16. **Nicole Seltzer is the Colorado program officer in for River Network,** a national organization whose mission is to support community watershed networks. The organization **has received funds from the Gates Foundation, CWCB, and The Nature Conservancy to initiate stream restoration projects.** Nicole, who was most recently the executive director of the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, said the Colorado Basin roundtable is out in front of stream restoration projects (it was the first of six basin themes articulated in the Colorado River roundtable Basin Implementation Plan). **To date, the CWCB has not received applications for all the funds available.**

17. **Vail Ditch water flow improvement.** Mike Holmes, President of the Grand County Irrigated Land Company that operates a small ditch east of Granby irrigating the Granby Mesa, is asking for \$23,000 to replace a flume and install a telemetric discharge recording system with a stage discharge recorder. **The Vail Ditch earlier received one of the very first Water Supply Reserve Account grants from the Colorado Basin Roundtable** shortly after the WSRA fund was established in 2007 in order to purchase ditch shares and to keep water in Grand County.
- a. The purpose of the grant is to **replace a ditch flume that was blown out** and to provide data regarding water in the ditch. The ditch company also applied for a grant from the Colorado River District for \$8,400, but was turned down.
 - b. There are **50 shareholders and 10 miles of ditch**. **One-fourth** of the Vail Ditch shares were recently sold to the Grand County Ditch and Reservoir Company, and it **may transfer water off the mesa**.
 - c. **Meadow Creek Reservoir, largely owned by Englewood**, is operated by Denver Water. Generally the ditch is watered with shares in this reservoir; **the irrigation company owns 850 acre-feet** in the reservoir. The 1911 ditch takes water from Meadow Creek to Strawberry Creek, and over to the Granby Mesa. The Mesa, near the Granby Airport, encompasses about 1,000 acres, but only **300-400 acres are irrigated, mostly to grow hay**. One ditch user has been growing produce. The ditch was established when Granby was platted out; it watered farms that grew head lettuce from 1911-1920 which was shipped by rail to New York; it was promoted as **“lettuce from Granby, Colorado” on the Waldorf Astoria menu**.
 - d. **The ditch is on USFS land, with a 30’ easement on each side**, in existence since **before the USFS was created**. Access to both the upper and lower flumes on the Vail Ditch is difficult; it generally requires mini-excavators or off road vehicles. Maintaining stability is a problem. **The water right for the Upper Vail Ditch is for 65 cfs; after the lower flume blew out, they could only take 40 cfs** in 2016—that was as much as it could likely handle due to sedimentation (that is a lot of water **to irrigate 300-400 acres**, where the rule of thumb is that **1 cfs is needed to irrigate 40 acres**—ed.) The ditch company plans to remove sediment from the ditch, although Holmes said the sediment buildup keeps the ditch from losing a lot of water. There is a lot of beetle kill in Grand County, and the ditch company has to pull out dead timber every spring; there’s a lot this year after high winds last fall.
 - e. They want to put in **a stage discharge recorder to continuously record diversion data**. **This is voluntary, but not required**.
 - f. Ken Ransford asked if the ditch had any trout barriers to keep fish from being entrained, or stranded, in the ditch. **Meadow and Strawberry Creeks don’t have any fish barriers**. Except for high runoff from mid June through early

August when 40 to 65 cfs is flowing, about 3-4 cfs flows through the ditch during the irrigation season until it is shut off in the fall.

- g. Carlyle Currier asked if they applied for NRCS funding, and they said there was **no NRCS money available**. The applicant must **make a 25% match**. Bruce Hutchins, who is on the board, said that the match would likely be forthcoming.
18. Dennis Davidson Mt. Sopris Water Conservancy District, and Felix Tornare, president of the Spring Park Ditch Company, **requested \$40,000** from the Colorado basin roundtable **to improve the Mountain Meadow Ditch in Missouri Heights north of Carbondale**.
- a. They start filling the Spring Creek Reservoir each year on March 1. Missouri Heights was **historically known for growing potatoes**, with good soil but the water was snowpack-dependent until the ditch was built.
 - b. A 2015 grant from the Colorado Basin Roundtable and the CWCB helped pay for 3,500' of ditch lining. **By installing a plastic ditch liner, they now save 3 cfs** that formerly was leaking into the ditch. **It cost \$500,000 to line 3,500 feet, a cost of \$142 per foot or \$754,000 per mile**. For the current grant request, the ditch company **plans to lay 5,800' of pipe** in a very rocky and steep section. HDPP high density polyethylene pipe is very durable. It has the number "2" as its resin identification code. HDPP is made from petroleum products and is used in water bottles, geomembranes that serve as impermeable liners to contain water in gas drilling waste pits, and corrosion-resistant piping. This should **save another 2 feet of water**. The ditch must **divert 17 acre-feet to get 10 acre-feet of water**.
 - c. They hope to install a hydro plant on the ditch to produce power in the future. The ditch traverses through basalt rock, and ditch losses are significant. About 2,000 acres are irrigated by the ditch, some organic farms, and grass-fed cattle and sheep.
 - d. There are 50 shareholders, and mostly they only show up at ditch meetings when they've lost water. The **ditch company is over 100 years old**. When reservoir is full, they get 15 days of water (which they can extend to 30 days by sharing). The previous lining project saved about 5 more days of water. That translates into 40 days of water, a significant improvement.
 - e. **They can double the delivery by not transporting it through very rocky ditches.**
 - f. **The budget is for \$296,980, of which \$270,000 is to purchase pipe**. The ditch company has to put up \$70,000, and is requesting \$40,000 from the Colorado basin roundtable.

- g. Mark Fuller asked if lining the ditch would cause wells to fail in Missouri Heights (the Colorado Basin Roundtable has funded an ongoing study of Missouri Heights to determine **if declining surface irrigation is causing wells to fail; so far, this has not been borne out**). Felix said that **Spring Creek Reservoir feeds the wells** in the vicinity rather than ditch losses; since more **water will now sit in the reservoir** with the ditch improvement, he said this will likely improve well production.
 - h. **Heather Tattersall asked if there is a way to benefit Cattle Creek.** Tornare said the project would **not benefit** Cattle Creek since Spring Park can only fill when Cattle Creek is not on call. People start calling around March 1.
19. **CWCB SWSI update**, Greg Johnson and Megan Holcomb. **SWSI started in 2004, when Colorado was growing like crazy, in order to predict future water needs.** In 2007 SWSI II was done; it looked at ATMs, municipal conservation, and updated the gap. In 2010 they had a second update, and paid more attention to NCNA needs. Colorado's Water Plan and the basin implementation plans (BIPs) have added a lot of data to the process. **SWSI is the key technical document. It is not a policy document.** That means that **it is focused on predicting supplies** based on future hydrology.
- a. This document is relying on the BIPs from the Colorado River Basin and other roundtables which have generated more data on IPPs (identified projects and processes to develop additional water supplies – Ed.). **This SWSI report will focus less on an infrastructure gap and more on estimating hydrologic water availability.**
 - b. They are looking at non-consumptive gaps more now, especially environmental and recreational gaps. They formerly did a consumptive use analysis to determine shortages, and now **want to estimate agricultural consumptive use gaps.** This will be a hydrologic water availability GAP analysis.
 - c. Phase 1: Methodology and data review to determine what information they now have.
 - i. **The consulting team includes Brown and Caldwell, CDM Smith, and CH2M. There are 12 additional consultants.**
 - d. Phase 2: Technical analysis.
 - e. Phase 3: Reporting. **The final report is expected in December 2017.**
 - f. Chuck Ogilby said he was disappointed when the Phase II water availability study was scuttled, saying, "We hoped to get a picture of what the river might look like after IPPs are developed, but we never saw **what would happen if all conditional water rights were developed.** Can you try to quantify this in this

study?” Greg Johnson asked if Chuck wanted them to model all conditional water rights; Chuck said the number is monstrous, since there are so many of them, suggesting it’s likely equal in volume to all the IPPs. **Greg will take this comment back to the CWCB.**

- g. Laurie Rink was pleased that they are looking at agricultural and environmental gaps. CDSS is good for the former, but may not be adequate for environmental or recreational gaps. Johnson said the South Platte roundtable used CDSS to look at mile-by-mile increments along stream segments.
 - h. Angie Fowler said **it would be good if SWSI could develop integrated water management procedures** which were similar to ones being developed in the Colorado River basin. **A common methodology would be very useful.**
 - i. Lane Wyatt asked how they will predict demand, and Johnson said they would stick with the county-wide population projections they now have. They’re going to try to **estimate supply and demand shortages for the 5 scenarios** developed in 2010, such as the “hot and dry” scenario. Wyatt said **demographic projections are difficult in the headwater communities** where populations swell during the tourist seasons, sometimes from 5,000 persons to 25,000 persons.
 - j. Diane Johnson said that HB10-1051 data reporting, where all water utilities delivering 2,000 acre-feet or more must report water use to the state, has helped determine gpcd (daily gallon per day use figures) in the headwater communities.
20. Richard Vangytenbeek, Trout Unlimited, update on **the legacy project to promote integrated water management plans**. Ken Ransford and Louis Meyer proposed a legacy project in May 2016, and this project developed out of that. All sub-basins were integrated into this, and the CBRT approved it in November 2016. **The goal is to actually use and create integrated water management plans.** Richard’s job is to identify key stakeholders and organizations to participate in integrated water management plans. The deliverable is to end up with a plan **that can be used at the stream level in every sub-basin within the Colorado River basin roundtable.**
- a. The goal of stream management plans to **increase cooperation between the agricultural and recreation communities**. The workshops will take place next fall, 2017.
 - b. CAWA, the Colorado Agricultural Water Alliance, agreed to join Trout Unlimited in the **3 stakeholder meetings next fall planned to be held in Kremmling, Gypsum-Eagle, and Rifle-Silt**, after the irrigation season ends.
 - c. Each sub-basin will have an **execution plan—who are the stakeholders, and how will they move forward to adopt an integrated water management plan**

within the sub-basin. Richard is trying to come up with a list of players and key opinion-leaders in each sub-basin.

- d. Laurie Rink was encouraged that CAWA is involved. Richard said that **Carlyle Currier was instrumental in encouraging CAWA to join.** Richard said that if they did not participate, this process would not be likely to be effective.
21. Ken Neubecker gave an update on the GIS map that CMU is producing. Seth Mason, an engineer with Lotic Hydrological in Carbondale, was chosen from 13 applicants to **develop a web-based GIS tool that would connect to State Mod to report on water flow levels at different stream reaches in the basin.** It should be available for a demonstration in May.
- a. Diane Johnson mentioned her concern that if wells and diversion points are public knowledge, saboteurs could use that information to damage Eagle Water and Sanitation District structures.
22. ILVK update, Paul Bruchez, and Lurline Underbrink Curran. **The ILVK is the Upper Colorado River Irrigation and Restoration Project; it is now being titled as the Colorado Headwaters Project.** The project leader is Trout Unlimited, and additional partners include American Rivers, CWCB, ILVK, the Colorado River District, and the CBRT roundtable are all partners. The Natural Resources Conservation Service NRCS provides technical and financial assistance. **\$7.8 million was allocated by RCPP.**
- a. **The RCPP Regional Conservation Partnership Program combines several grant programs in the Farm Bill.** The bypass was \$5.4 mil underfunded, and the RCPP funding has met the gap.
 - b. The habitat improvement project area encompasses **33 miles on the Colorado River below Windy Gap Reservoir**, an on-channel reservoir. The project will transform the reservoir to an off-stream reservoir by routing the Colorado River channel around it, allowing the river to function again. Since Windy Gap Reservoir was placed on the river channel, **sculpins and stoneflies have been eradicated and water temperatures were too high.** The project is a partnership with agricultural users. The CWCB grasped the intensity and importance of this. They are **improving 33 miles of river** for \$15 million, a price that Lurline said was almost unheard of today—it amounts to **\$454,000 per mile, compared to the \$754,000 cost per mile to line the Meadows Ditch in Missouri Heights** described earlier.
 - c. Pumps need to be submerged by 18” of water in order to work effectively; this no longer happened often enough. Construction resumes Monday April 3. **The goal is to restore the river to the former water table. It will create a low flow channel, plus pipeline and ditch efficiencies.**

- d. The project earlier received a CBRT roundtable basin grant for \$50,000, and \$415,000 was awarded from the statewide reserve account in 2013. The project should be 90% complete by the fall.
 - e. Steve Aquafresca said Windy Gap created a lot of unanticipated problems, and asked if Northern Water was participating. **Lurline said Northern contributed \$2 million and did all the OEM (operations, engineering and maintenance)** of the Windy Gap bypass; no one knows what this will cost. She said Northern Water is very committed.
 - f. **Nicole Seltzer said that Grand County's stream management plan jump-started this**, since it answered questions regarding what the science said would help river conditions. The stream management plan used the best available scientific information to identify what flows and temperatures to keep a river healthy, and is **the template for the integrated water management plans** that Richard Vangytenbeek was hired to promote throughout the entire Colorado River basin. Lurline said **the science is what people focus on thanks to the stream management plan, rather than personalities.**
23. Ken Neubecker. Education update. The state is promoting PEPO (Public Education, Participation and Outreach), which was mandated in the initial House Bill 05-1177. The **PEPO committee has contacted Alpine Bank**, and the bank is interested in underwriting a series of **30-second radio spots**. The Arkansas and Gunnison Roundtables have created websites, and Ken Neubecker is interested in seeing if the **CBRT can create a website to disseminate information about what we've accomplished**, such as the BIP.
- a. PEPO account funding is currently \$6,000. The Gunnison basin roundtable built its website for \$15,000 and is spending \$3,000 a year to maintain it. The CBRT would have to generate content. Hannah Holm of Colorado Mesa University is under contract to support Gunnison's website.
 - b. Members raised concerns that the website could become stale with old information, but Ken Ransford said that **old data is valuable** since it data, such as the Colorado River basin implementation plan. It is useful to reporters researching stories and captures what was being deliberated at a point in time. It would be a **good public location for the roundtable minutes** he has been keeping since 2005.
 - c. **Diane Johnson recommended** that we copy the look and feel of other websites, but that the website to have basin-specific information; a lot of websites report issues from other perspectives, such as the CWCB or the South Platte Basin. It is **important to have information specific to our basin.**
 - d. Richard Vangytenbeek could use this in his outreach.

- e. Angie Fowler suggested this could be a good forum to promote what the water quality control commission is doing, such as nutrient standards.
- f. The purpose of social media like Facebook is to direct the public back to our website. **Social media takes a lot of daily updating; this is not as true of a website.**
- g. Art Bowles mentioned that the Basalt Water Conservancy District is creating a new website; the former one is outdated.
- h. Ken Neubecker will generate some ideas for the information that would be posted on the website.