

**Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables  
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday Dec. 11, 2018 at 1:00 pm.  
Calvillo's Upper Room

Chairman Coombs called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

Those signed in: Emma Reesor, JoAnn Slivka, Stan Moyer, Heather Dutton, Robert Getz, Larry Sveum, Daniel Boyes, Bethany Howell, Leah Weaver, Hannah Thill, Ann Bunting, Nathan Coombs, Brenda Felmlee, David Marquez, Chuck Finnegan, Ron Brink, Ed Nielsen, Judy Lopez, Erin Minks, Cindy Medina, and Virginia Christensen. Karla Shriver and Peter Clark had excused absences.

**Approve Minutes**

Ron Brink motioned to approve the meeting minutes from October 9, 2018 without any edits. Emma Reesor seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment**

Chairman Coombs began the public comment period by opening the floor to anyone who might want to say a few words about Mac McFadden and Ralph Curtis, two significant members of the water community who recently passed away. Travis Smith, Heather Dutton, Erin Minks, and Judy Lopez all shared kind words and fond memories.

Anne McFadden, Mac's daughter, shared that she appreciated the respect and kindness with which the Roundtable had always treated her father.

Stan Moyer alerted the group to the status of the Farm Bill, which was up for vote the day of the meeting. If passed, the bill would declassify hemp.

**Update on Renewable Water Resources Water Exportation Plan – *Nathan Coombs***

Chairman Coombs updated the group on a plan by Renewable Water Resources which would export water out of the valley for municipal use on the Front Range. The group intends to acquire 22,500 AF of water, retiring 35,000 AF total of a combination of surface water and groundwater rights. They would drill a well field in the north part of the Valley, then build a pipeline to the South Platte Basin. The pipeline would be guaranteed to have a maximum capacity of 22,500 AF. Valley representatives have reached out to Douglas and Arapahoe counties, and no one on that end has heard about this much water potentially being for sale. The Town of Aurora recently purchased a bunch of water from elsewhere. The District is planning to run the hydrology model to see what impact this withdrawal would have; this wouldn't be new water, but rather old water going to a new place. The company is offering to create a \$50 million community fund. They are budgeting \$60 million to buy water - \$2,000 per acre foot, which is a very low amount. The end, purchase value for communities on the other side is \$35,000 per acre foot, which includes the water and cost to build the pipeline. The group claims to have had 150 meetings with individuals in Saguache County, as well as at least one public meeting.

Discussion followed the update, with Travis suggesting that this is an opportunity for the community to learn and be called to action. Chuck Finnegan said that withdrawals from the confined aquifer affects surface water

less than 12%, so they wouldn't have to replace their withdrawals in a one-to-one ratio and thus their \$2,000/AF would be worth more. Nathan noted that this situation is different from water export schemes the Valley has faced in the past; with the formation of subdistricts, there is now an explicit monetary value attached to water, so in the end, it will be the highest bidder versus the community and its values.

#### **Update on the Colorado River – Heather Dutton**

Heather Dutton updated the roundtable on drought planning issues surrounding the Colorado River that the CWCB has been working on for some time. The Colorado River is divided into upper and lower basin states; Colorado is part of the upper basin. The upper basin states cannot cause less than 75 million AF to be delivered to the lower basin states over a ten-year period. Stakeholders on the Colorado have recognized that the hydrology is changing and they must be prepared for the potential of drier years in the future. The likelihood of compact call is low, but the risks of a call are very high. As a result, both the upper and lower basin states are working on drought planning. The upper basin is working on a drought contingency plan that would allow water to be stored in Lake Powell through demand management for use in dryer years. This stored water wouldn't be subject to equalization by the Bureau of Reclamation during the operations of Lake Powell and Lake Mead. The agreement would allow for storage of up to 500,000 AF. Water would be made available to contribute to the pool through demand management, which is a reduction in consumptive use. The storage pool would provide an important buffer for water users, including municipal waters on the Front Range, if drought continues and the risk of a compact call increases. Recently, there were in-depth conversations between the CWCB, Front Range, and West Slope water users as to the sideboards needed for a demand management program. The West Slope would like to see proportional reductions in consumptive use on the east and west slopes and would like demand management to be voluntary, temporary, and compensated. In November, the CWCB approved a policy that reiterated the need for drought contingency storage, outlined the goals for a demand management program, and acknowledged concerns that had been expressed by stakeholders throughout Colorado. In the event that the State Engineer determines curtailment is necessary to administer water rights on the Colorado, the transbasin diversions into the Rio Grande basin could be impacted. These diversions are used for augmentation by the SLVWCD, by CPW for their operations, and have been a source of replacement water for subdistricts. There is also concern that if the Colorado supplies are at risk, groups on the Front Range could look toward the Valley for additional water.

#### **Colorado Water Conservation Board Update – Megan Holcomb**

In November, CWCB reviewed the staff recommendation for the 2019 Projects Bill. The total proposed amount for FY 2019-2020 for Water Plan Implementation funding, which includes many of CWCB's grant programs, is \$20 million, with \$12 million dedicated to Colorado Water Plan Grants. The bill would contribute \$2.5 million to the WSRF accounts. Severance taxes will also fund WSRF; 60% of the WSRF funds will go into the state fund and the remaining 40% will be divided among the basin accounts. An additional \$5.5 million will go to updating Colorado's Water Plan, updating BIPs, and incorporating SWSI data into the updated reports. CWCB will also work to improve the way SWSI and the Water Plan are communicated throughout the state. These amounts are all just recommendations and haven't yet been approved. Megan also introduced Elgin Turner, who is replacing Viola Bralish in managing the Roundtables. Elgin has been at CWCB for 5 years, and worked for CPW for 20 years before that. Any questions about reimbursements, WSRF grants, etc. can be sent to him.

Chairman Coombs adjourned the meeting at 2:27 pm.

Next Roundtable Meeting: January 8, 2019, 2:00pm  
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District  
623 Fourth Street,  
Alamosa, CO 81101