

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

**MEETING AGENDA**

Tuesday February 12, 2019 at 2:00pm  
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District  
623 Fourth Street,  
Alamosa, CO 81101

Chairman Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:08 pm.

Those in attendance/signed in: David Marquez, Stan Moyer, Robert Getz, Ann Bunting, Mike Gibson, Adam Moore, Cindy Medina, Karla Shriver, Rio de la Vista, Kevin Terry, Helen Smith, Bethany Howell, Maryanne Talbot, Judy Lopez, Dave Marquez, Jim Ehrlich, Larry Sveum, Nicole Langley, JoAnn Slivka, Patrick Moran, Eugene Jacquez, Emma Reesor, Ronda Lobato, Hannah Thill, Cleave Simpson, Heather Dutton, Sharon Vaughn, Matthew Gallegos, Erin Minks, Steven Romero, Wayne Schwab, Daniel Boyes, and Leah Weaver.

Virginia Christensen, Brenda Anderson, Ron Brink, Charles Spielman, Keith Holland, Travis Smith, Peter Clark, and Mario Curto had excused absences. Quorum was not met, so agreements were made by acclimation.

The agenda was approved by acclimation.

The January 8, 2019 minutes were amended so that Dwight Martin was listed as the person who motioned to close the floor to further nominations for Chair of the Roundtable. The amended minutes were approved by acclimation.

Chairman Coombs announced that a Roundtable Summit is planned for September 25 and 26 in Winter Park. September 25 will consist of tours, and September 26 will be the meeting. Registration is now open on the Colorado Water Plan website, and a link will be sent out.

**Public Comment:** *Please limit your comments to 3 minutes.*

Heather Dutton updated the group on the radar project, announcing that the tower is complete and construction is on track to finish by the end of March/beginning of April. There will be a training to educate community members on how to run and fix the radar should issues arise. CWCB has received funding from Hinsdale County and RWEACT for the project. There will be a ribbon cutting in September to celebrate.

Judy Lopez introduced Steven Romero, the new Costilla County commissioner, to the group; he was appointed at their last board meeting to serve as Costilla County representative to the Roundtable. Eugene Jacquez is planning to continue attending the meetings at Steven's

request, but Steven will now be the voting member. Steven ended by thanking the Roundtable for their financial support for Costilla County projects.

Bethany Howell presented a PEPO update to the group, informing everyone that a statewide water education plan is currently being formed, in conjunction with the Colorado Water Plan, to bring some cohesion across the state. It is currently in its early stages, but she will be attending a meeting regarding the plan in a couple months. PEPO is soliciting input from stakeholders through Water Education Colorado, so feel free to reach out to Bethany and share what things you think are important for community members to be educated on.

With regards to the Roundtable's media grant, Bethany has been sending out newsletters on a more regular, quarterly basis, so let her know if you haven't gotten them. She has also been continuing the radio spots and news articles that Judy started. Several videos are in the works with Christi Bode; although production has been delayed, videos on conservation easements, recreation, and the radar will be coming out soon. The new website is in progress and should be live in late April. If you have any ideas for videos or things you want included in Roundtable media, please let Bethany know.

Chairman Coombs proposed that in the future, the minutes and agenda be accessed before meetings via the new website rather than email, to which the group agreed.

Karla Shriver suggested that a model of the basin, similar to the model of the Colorado River at the Hoover Dam, would be a valuable educational tool for the basin.

Emma Reesor announced that details for the Water Leaders Course, organized by the districts, RGWCEI, and RGHRP have been finalized. The course will be held March 4-8 from 6-9pm each night, and will touch on hydrology, water administration, and in general all aspects of water with a focus on the Rio Grande. Applications are due February 18 at 5pm. There is a course fee of \$30, which includes a celebration dinner and keynote speaker that Friday. The course is capped at 20 participants.

#### **Request for RT Support letter - *Rio de la Vista***

Rio de la Vista is the Director of the Salazar Del Norte Center at ASU, which is trying to bring more water education to ASU and the surrounding community. Rio has developed a proposal for a water education initiative at ASU and has submitted a proposal for a CWCB. She asked the Roundtable for a letter of support, although the Roundtable's support is not required for the grant process. The grant would cover 45% of the cost of the program, which would look at how to build water education into all subjects at the University and provide co-curricular opportunities for students.

Jim Ehrlich suggested that it would be nice to see the proposal and budget before agreeing to support it, but because of the timeline and the fact that the Roundtable is not funding the grant, the group came to the consensus that they would be okay with giving a support letter.

#### **Project Report: Spruce Lakes Project - *Kevin Terry, Trout Unlimited***

As the Spruce Lakes Project is nearing completion and was funded by the Roundtable, Kevin Terry gave an update on the progress and results of the project. The project sought to work with private, state, and nonprofit partners to maintain the Spruce Lakes reservoirs in the Weminuche Wilderness. The lakes were converted into reservoirs many years ago, and are very remote. They must be maintained to certain standards according to the engineer's office, but modern tools can't be used in the wilderness area. The partners had struggled to maintain the reservoirs, attempting to clear dead, waterlogged trees with handsaws, swimming and horses, but made little progress. There were also many beetle-killed trees along the banks, ready to fall in. Working with the Forest Service, the partners determined that explosives were the best option to remove the woody debris. They used 500 pounds of staged, nitrogen-based explosives to clear over 400 trees. A helicopter was used to fly everything in. This method was cheaper than using chainsaw crews and mules, and generally quieter and less impactful to the wilderness as well. Kevin showed several videos of the explosions as well. Next year, the project will involve cleaning up the exploded chunks, which are small enough to not be of much concern and will probably flush with the spring runoff. The CWCB grant was for \$65,000, and the project came in under budget. The final report will be submitted to CWCB and made available for the Roundtable. Kevin finished his presentation by thanking everyone involved and providing his contact information for questions – terrykev@gmail.com.

### **Funding Preview: Rio Grande Stream Management Plan Aquatic Habitat Data Collection**

- *Daniel Boyes, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project*

Daniel Boyes began his presentation by overviewing the Stream Management Plans (SMPs) for context. The Conejos River, Rio Grande, and Saguache Creek were prioritized for the SMPs, which are intended to identify flows and other physical conditions needed to support environmental and recreational uses and incorporate the corresponding values into the plans. A number of assessments have been designed to investigate stream condition, including an instream infrastructure inventory and riparian vegetation, water quality, aquatic life, hydrology, geomorphology, and recreation assessments. However, the current plan is missing a quantified assessment of aquatic habitat, which is what this funding request is for. There were a number of possible assessment tools; the SMP Technical Team decided on the R2-Cross method, which will collect stream channel geometry and pebble count data and then use fisheries experts' input to establish seasonal flow targets. Obtaining a cross section of the stream will help to identify pools, riffles, and other habitat features. Pairing this information with the historic flow hydrology data will help determine what habitat has historically been available. This study will improve the understanding of aquatic habitat on these streams, providing information that can be used by many agencies and partners, and will support the SMPs in general. The request is for \$28,000, \$23,000 of which is for planning and data collection and \$5,000 for data analysis. The SMPs have already been funded for \$220,190. A yet undetermined number of cross sections will be taken on all three streams.

Daniel then fielded several questions about previous aquatic habitat data and how future conditions will be taken into account. There is some existing data on the Rio Grande and Conejos River, from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and it will be taken into consideration, but it doesn't quite answer the questions Daniel is looking at. LIDAR data is also being used as well, but it only covers the valley floor, not the entire length of the streams. All of the assessments are accommodating for future conditions, including drier years, as best as is possible.

There is \$56,400 left in the basin account until July, when funds will be replenished.

**IBCC Update - Cleave Simpson**

There is not much to report on the IBCC, since the last meeting was in October. The focus for 2018 was determining potential funding sources for the Colorado Water Plan, centered around creating fees for revenue. However, all the ballot initiatives in November for increasing taxes and fees for other reasons failed. This is an eye opener for the water community, who were thinking of taking a similar approach. The next IBCC meeting is scheduled for February 28, though no one has stepped up to lay out an agenda and propose next steps for the group.

**Sub-district Update - Cleave Simpson, RGWCD**

Currently, three sub-districts are in a position to file annual replacement plans (ARPs) in April. Approval of those plans will represent about half of the irrigated acres in the Rio Grande Water Conservation District mitigating their injurious depletions. Two out of three of those sub-districts are working on creating and maintaining a sustainable aquifer system. Revenue from constituents is as follows: Sub-district 3 - \$800,000; Sub-district 2: \$400,000; Sub-district 1; over \$1 million. Next year there should be 6 ARPs submitted and 95% of acreage in the District covered.

The District has been working with ASU to see what possibilities hemp might have for the Valley. Over 5 years, the San Luis Valley Hemp Company has evaluated the water consumption of hemp, about 12 inches. Even though the federal law change removed hemp from the controlled substance list, there are many other obstacles to hemp production, including insurance, banks, and limited processing capacity across the country. Cleave and others feel a sense of urgency to get ahead of this potential crop and make it work for the Valley. ASU has put on a hemp symposium in the past, and intends to reinvigorate it this fall.

**Division of Water Resources Update - Craig Cotton**

Craig reviewed the forecasts and current snowpack for 2019 so far. The National Resources Conservation Service stream flow forecast for 2019 was surprisingly low, but will hopefully increase in March and be officially reported. So far, snowpack is at 101% of average, making the southwest the lowest in the state. The National Weather Service predicts good precipitation through the spring and into the summer, making this a decent year, hopefully. The DWR is still awaiting the judge's ruling on rules and regulations.

The Rio Grande Basin is hosting the Compact meeting this year, on April 4 at the RGWCD. There will be a reception the night before, April 3.

Mountain Home Reservoir began storage on February 1, and restoration efforts will reach completion in a week.

Erin Minks finished the meeting by alerting the group to a meeting between Renewable Water Resources and Senator Bennett's Denver office. Sean Tonner, Mary Kay Hogan, Jim Martin, and one other briefed Senator Bennett's staff on their proposed project to remove water from the Rio Grande Basin, but did not ask for Senator Bennett to weigh in. The team argued that

there are 1 billion acre feet under Baca Wildlife Refuge, recharged annually, that they could use without causing harm to the system. Erin said they made it clear that they intend to wear us down, show us that a crisis is coming, and that our way of life is coming to an end. Renewable Water Resources will go before the Saguache County Commissioners on March 12.

Chairman Coombs adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm.

The next  
Executive Committee meeting will be March 12, 2019 at 1:00pm

Next Roundtable Meeting: March 12, 2019 at 2:00pm  
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