

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

**MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday May 14, 2019 at 2:00pm  
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District  
623 Fourth Street,  
Alamosa, CO 81101

Chairman Nathan Coombs brought the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

Those present/signed in:

Judy Lopez, Ron Brink, Daniel Boyes, Eugene Jacquez, Stan Moyer, Daryl Kohut, Robert Getz, Keith Holland, Nathan Coombs, Cleave Simpson, Chuck Finnegan, Rio de la Vista, Bethany Howell, Travis Smith, Jarrod Helmick, Cindy Medina, Larry Crowder, Larry Sveum, Bob Rice, Tim Carden, Erin Minks, Michael Stansberry, Ronda Lobato, Dwight Martin, Nicole Langley, Benton Line, Cary Aloia, Josh Vest, Max Ciaglo, Virginia Christensen, David Marquez, Dani Gronhovd, Ann Bunting, Jim Ehrlich, Charles Spielman, Wayne Schwab, Laurel Anders, Man Engquist, Chad Cochran, Matthew Gallegos, Brenda Felmlee, Emily Chavez, Craig Cotton, Megan Holcomb, Gene Farish, Cathy Morin, Emma Reesor, and Leah Weaver.

Peter Clark had an excused absence.

Ron Brink made the motion to approve the agenda and was seconded by David Marquez. The agenda was approved unanimously with no changes.

Nicole Langley motioned to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2019 meeting. Judy Lopez seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously with no changes.

**Public Comment**

Ann Bunting thanked the group, especially Nathan Coombs and Heather Dutton, for their encouragement and sponsorship of her taking the statewide Water Leaders Program.

Emily Chavez promoted a workshop for landowners to talk about conservation easements and the Habitat Conservation Plan, hosted by Colorado Cattleman's, the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. The event will take place May 30, 2019.

Max Ciaglo promoted focus groups that Colorado Open Lands will be hosting in June. The topic will be about crane habitat and is geared towards barley producers or other landowners who have cranes visit their property.

Cleave Simpson announced that Tim Gardner will be stepping in to fill the Habitat Conservation Plan coordinator role at the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, among other duties.

Rio de la Vista promoted several water-related talks sponsored by the Salazar Center that will be happening in July and October.

Emma Reesor promoted Runoff Runoff, the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project and Headwaters Alliance's annual fundraiser race, which will be taking place June 1, 2019 in Creede.

Bethany Howell updated the group on PEPO business. The PEPO representatives met in April in Keystone to work on the state water education action plan. They are working to create a framework of priorities for education that would meet the needs of every basin, and they would like to see a line item in the upcoming legislative sessions that would set aside CWCB funding specifically for this plan. So far, the themes of the plan are recognizing where water comes from, that it's limited, and that it has multiple uses.

Bob Getz announced to the group that the regional forester has given permission for chainsaw use in the wilderness for a 6-week period, restricted to certain trained and permitted groups. This will help with clearing trails and other maintenance, but it cut off more local conversations about alternative solutions that were already taking place. Several organizations are mounting a lawsuit against the decision.

Chairman Coombs announced that ideas for what should be put on the Roundtable agenda should be put to the executive committee, as the committee has a shared working document for each upcoming meeting. Going through the executive committee in this way will keep everyone on the same page and ensure that the Roundtable isn't being misrepresented. Letters to the community that detail who each member is representing are also available as a resource.

#### **RGBRT New Website Preview – Emma Reesor**

A communications grant obtained by the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation Education Initiative (RGWCEI) has allowed the Roundtable to update our website. The design company Norden41 out of Denver, was hired for the revamp. The new website is not quite live but is nearly finished. Emma walked the group through the different pages and aspects of the new site, outlining how the education committee hopes the website will improve education and outreach.

#### **Rio Grande Basin Stream Management Plan Update – Daniel Boyes, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project**

Daniel updated the group on several of the assessments that are currently underway as part of the SMPs. For the diversion structure inventory, every structure has been visited and photographed. Daniel is putting together a spreadsheet that will track statistics for the different structures, as well as an info sheet for each structure with updated locations that will be shared with the Division of Water Resources. The aquatic habitat assessment field work has been partially completed but had to stop due to runoff and will continue once runoff is done. Stakeholder surveys for each stream have been posted on the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project website ([riograndeheadwaters.org](http://riograndeheadwaters.org)), so please share and respond by early June. There will be community stakeholder meetings for each stream in the evenings in mid June.

#### **Water4 Initiative – Joy Morris, Intermountain West Joint Venture**

The Water4 Initiative is an initiative of the Intermountain West Joint Venture that is focused on the importance of wetland habitat and understanding the value of flood and other irrigation in creating this

habitat. The goal is to support local organizations on the ground, listen, and understand how the local leadership works. The initiative was formed through the recognition that public land management organizations can't always provide enough habitat, so private landowners play an important role.

Josh Vest, the science coordinator for the Venture, explained that the Venture is a broad umbrella partnership organization interested in bird habitat across the entire intermountain west (11 states). Their board of management represents a diversity of groups, including landowners, companies, and public agencies, who come together to look at bird habitat conservation.

Laurel Anders, the communications representative, explained that their goal is to amplify local messages to a more national audience. They are looking to help share locally-produced things, while also producing their own stuff that they hope will support their local partners.

Rio de la Vista said the group are incredible partners who have supported valley projects helping us receive millions of dollars in funding. Learn more about the Intermountain West Joint Venture and Water4 at [iwjv.org](http://iwjv.org).

Before the Water Export Discussion, Chairman Coombs gave Michael Stansberry, the forestry advisor on the Rio Grande National Forest, space to respond to Bob Getz's public comment about chainsaw use. Michael explained that many trees are down because of beetle kill and their funding for trail crews has been cut by 60%. They are less worried about access for recreators and more about impacts to resources from recreators going around the downed trees. The decision is specific to areas where the number of downed trees is very high, and the decision may not even be acted on in the Rio Grande National Forest. State Senator Larry Crowder responded with a warning against temporarily changing the rules in this way, as it sets a precedent for the future.

#### **Water Export Discussion – *Nathan Coombs***

At the March Roundtable meeting, a general agreement was established that the Roundtable would be opposed to the Renewable Water Resources export plan. A committee was put together to develop what the framework for this message will look like. Emma will send out a doodle poll to committee members to schedule the first meeting.

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

Megan announced that CWCB is undergoing a major website update, and that there will be a reminder to register for the C9 Summit conference in Winter Park sent out shortly. Funding will be available to cover travel costs for the meeting, and can be used for mileage, lodging, and registration, but not food. Registration is free for all Roundtable members but is \$75 for members of the public. You can register for the event at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/c-9-statewide-summit-of-colorados-9-basin-roundtables-tickets-53164478386>

The next CWCB board meeting is May 15 and 16 in Gunnison; 6 WSRF grants are up for consideration, with one from the Rio Grande. The September board meeting will be held in Alamosa and will coincide with the ribbon cutting for the new radar.

**IBCC Update – Cleave Simpson, Rio Grande Water Conservation District**

There is not much to update – the IBCC hasn't met since February, and the next meeting will be coordinated with the July CWCB meeting in the Arkansas basin.

**Subdistrict Update – Cleave Simpson, Rio Grande Water Conservation District**

Since March, subdistricts 1, 2, and 3 have submitted their annual replacement plans (ARPs) to the state engineer and been approved. Starting May 1, these subdistricts began operating under their ARPs to mitigate injurious depletions. March 15, Judge Swift approved the rules and regulations for groundwater withdrawals, mandating that non-exempt wells must have plans in place to replace depletions by March 15, 2021. Subdistrict 6 should be online next year, which will generally double the impacts of subdistricts 1, 2, and 3. The radar tower has been built, and final pieces and parts will be installed in two weeks. A training will be held on how to run it in the last week of May; after that, the radar will be up and running.

**Division of Water Resources Update – Craig Cotten**

The rules and regulations approved in March are official, as the timeline to appeal has ended and there were no appeals. All six subdistricts and the Trinchera subdistrict are planned to be up and running by May 1, 2020. People who are non-exempt and either do not want to join subdistricts or are outside of subdistrict boundaries will have to file augmentation plans by March 15, 2021. All the non-exempt wells in the Valley should be replacing their depletions by that date.

The snowpack in the basin is currently 186% of average, which is inaccurate because it is off-peak; the snowpack is 146% of the average peak. The Rio Grande SNOTELs are showing 162%, while NRCS percent of average runoff forecasts are around 130%, not including the most recent storm. NOAA is predicting above average precipitation for the rest of the summer, with temperatures around average.

The estimated annual flow for the Rio Grande is 850,000 AF, 136% of the long-term average, with 34% (292,000 AF) due to downstream states. 90-100,000 AF will be delivered during the winter months, resulting in 28% curtailment. The irrigation season opened April 1. This will be the first year over 800,000 AF in over twenty years.

The estimated annual flow for the Conejos is 400,000 AF, 133% of the long-term average, with 47% (188,000 AF) due to downstream states. DWR is predicting a 41% curtailment. The irrigation season opened April 8.

Reservoirs in the basin are currently at low levels, with some capacity available.

Chairman Coombs adjourned the meeting at 3:37pm.

The next  
Executive Committee meeting will be June 11, 2019 at 1:00pm

Next Roundtable Meeting: June 11, 2019 at 2:00pm  
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District  
623 Fourth Street,  
Alamosa, CO 81101