

IBCC call Colorado River Basin

1. July 22, 2019, CBRT Minutes.

1. **July 22, 2019 CBRT Minutes** – Grant request for ditch improvement in Missouri Heights near Carbondale, and for a stream improvement plan on the North Fork of Colorado River; Colorado drought mitigation plan; West slope rancher plans to develop a response to a Compact Call; projected April hole in 15-mile reach.
2. **Next Meeting: July , 2019, Glenwood Springs Community Center, 12:00 – 4:00.**
3. **Upcoming Meetings**
 - a. Aug 22: CWCB Regional Demand Management workshop will be held at Colorado Water Congress summer conference in Steamboat Springs.
 - b. Mon, Aug. 26, 2019, CBRT Roundtable Next Steps Meeting.
 - c. Sep. 18, 2019 Colorado River district annual seminar
 - d. Sep 23, CBRT Roundtable Meeting
 - e. Sep 25-26 Roundtable Summit in Winter Park
4. Reporter: These minutes were prepared by Ken Ransford, Esq., CPA, 970-927-1200, ken@kenransford.com.
5. **CBRT Members Present:** Nathan Bell, Don Boyer Basalt Water Conservancy District, Paul Bruchez, Stan Cazier, Carlyle Currier, Dan Harrison, Mark Hermundstad, Diane Johnson, Merritt Linke, April Long, Margaret Medellin, Ed Moyer, Ken Neubecker, Jim Pokrandt, Ken Ransford, Steven Ryken, Karn Stiegelmeier, Lane Wyatt
6. **Guests:** Jeff Bandy Denver Water, Patrick Coleman, Dennis Davidson Mt. Sopris Conservation District, Ken Fucik and Dave Troutman Upper Colorado River Watershed Group, William S. George of Colorado Ranch Company, David Graf, Megan Holcomb CWCB, Hannah Holm CMU, Paul Kehmeier Colo. Dep't of Ag, Kathy Kitzmann Aurora Water, Kirsten Kurath, Esq., Bailey Leppek SGM, Kate Lewis, Doug Burton, and Roy Fazzi of the New Multi Trina Ditch Co, Holly Loff, Dave Merritt, Maria Pastore Colorado Springs Utilities, Laurie Rink Mid Colo WCD, Scott Schreiber, Scott Strange, Chris Treese, Richard Vangytenbeek Colo Trout Unlimited, Kent Whitmer Middle Park Water Conservancy District
7. **River Forecast.** Granby is spilling, Green Mt. and Ruedi Reservoirs are full, and even Blue mesa is 99% full, surprising people since it was so low. The Colorado River is flowing _____ cfs at Dotsero, above the 78-year median flow of _____ cfs on this date.¹ The Colorado River is flowing 9,300, the median is 3,640 cfs at Cameo, close to record cfs flow on this date.² In snowed in the high country June 21-23, causing flows to decrease, and rebound for a second peak around July 4. The endangered fish calls have

¹ Dotsero forecast: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?site_no=09070500.

² Cameo forecast: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/co/nwis/uv/?site_no=09095500&PARAMeter_cd=00065.00060

been canceled this year. This shows the inherent variability in annual water flows. 2019 is only the fifth year since 2000 that the snowpack has been above average.

8. **WSRA grant balance.** There is \$222,826 in the WSRA, and we'll receive \$140,000 on January 1 and again on July 1 next year.
9. **Granby diversion improvement:** \$50,000 basin request, and \$160,403 statewide grant request. This project has statewide importance, and is supported by Northern Water, Denver Water, Grand County, and the Town of Granby. The Next Steps committee recommends approval; Merritt Linke motioned to approve, and Nathan Bell seconded it. It passed unanimously. Angie Fowler, Bruce Hutchins, and a third absent CBRT member all approved it by email as well.
10. **Multi Trina Ditch washout \$105,000 grant request.** Roy Fazzi and Dennis Davidson made the presentation. The ditch is 6 ½ miles south of Silt, and the ditch has blown out on the Fazzi property. The ditch is 25 miles long, starting on the west side of Sunlight Ski Area, and it provides irrigation water to 2,300 acres of hay fields; another approximate 1,200 acres are irrigated downstream. The washout is 1,000' long, and has been that way for many years. They plan to pipe around it. There's a concrete inlet box and an outlet box, and 1,000' of HDPE (high density polyethylene) pipe. The ditch company has committed to spending \$20,000 of the \$248,700 total cost; the NRCS is willing to contributed \$111,700. It will go into gated pipe. The water rights date back before 1922. The Next Steps committee will review this on August 26.
 - a. **Carlyle Currier asked if the line could be pressurized** so ranchers could sprinkler the fields. Over the 1,000' length, it only drops 36,' not enough to pressurize the ditch.
 - b. **Dennis Davidson said the conservation district supports this project.**
11. **Mountain Meadows Missouri Heights grant application.** Felix Tornar and Scott Strang asked for another grant to pipe 5,520' with HDPE pipe, since the Basalt Mountain terrain is rocky. Most of the ditch is in Eagle County, but most of the irrigated land is in Garfield County. They lose about 50% from transit losses, this dropped to 25% with recent improvements financed by WSRA grants, and with the final proposed improvement, they'll reduce ditch losses to 2-3%.
 - a. **The Missouri Heights reservoir has 3 main ditches.** This is the highest in elevation, has the most acres, and handles the most water. This is the 4th phase of the project; the CBRT helped finance phases 1 and 2. They've piped about 15,000.' The water comes from Park Reservoir. The reservoir is a popular birdwatching site. Potatoes used to be grown there. Of 16 cfs that was being diverted, only 10 cfs was being delivered. Now, delivery losses will be eliminated. When 3,500' of the ditch was lined with corrugated plastic in 2015, it was the first project in the US to use this material.

- b. **Most fields irrigated by this ditch are sprinklered.** Many cottonwoods along the ditch are consuming ditch water; the pipe will eliminate this problem, but the cottonwoods will die as well.
 - c. **The total cost is \$544,300, of which NRCS will pay \$273,000;** the WSRA request is \$140,000. The ditch company is providing \$73,000.
 - d. By irrigating the easternmost property during the fire last summer, it stopped the Basalt Mountain fire from advancing.
 - e. April Long asked if there were any water quality problems from the fire, and Scott Strang said it was hard to answer this because of the high runoff this year.
 - f. Piping also helps to reduce salinity leached from the topsoil. Selenium concentrations increase from water percolating through the soil. This will enable water to remain in the reservoir longer where it can percolate into the groundwater table. The reservoir is 1,200 acres. The ditch would amount to about 10 acres, so nearly all water replenishing the groundwater table comes from the reservoir, not from ditch seepage.
 - g. Ken Neubecker asked if water could remain in Cattle Creek. Felix said the reservoir only fills with spring runoff. Neubecker mentioned that Cattle Creek is chronically dry. Davidson said there's nothing to be gained by the landowners from leaving more water in Cattle Creek.
12. **Restoring the North Fork of the Colorado River**, Upper Colorado River Watershed Group, Ken Fucik and Dave Troutman. They asked for a \$40,000 grant to help create a stream management plan; the total cash funding needed for the project is \$54,000. "Nine Elements" is another name for a stream management plan under Section 319. The North Fork of the Colorado River runs drains the Never Summer Wilderness Area and empties into Shadow Mt. Reservoir. The area under consideration is the Kawauneechee Valley seen from Trail Ridge Pass when descending west toward Grand Lake. Partners include the Colorado River District, Grand Lake and Grand County.
- a. **The Grand Ditch takes approximately 90% of water that would irrigate this area.** Two recent breaches of the Grand River Ditch have poured tons of sediment accumulating in the ditch into the valley below where the North Fork of the Colorado courses through the Kawauneechee Valley. That raised the level of the river bottom, making the river so shallow that people can no longer kayak it. It causes the water to warm and nutrients to accumulate in Shadow Mt. Reservoir, causing algal blooms.
 - b. **They are investigating the acquisition of additional water rights**—the Metro Recreation District may have water rights that it is not using. There is a lot of public access to this stretch of the river.

- c. This spring, the North Fork was running brown, but the Tanahoochoo River coming out of Rocky Mountain Nat'l Park was clear, demonstrating the impact the sediment is having on the river ecology.
- d. The Upper Colorado River Watershed Group is a tax exempt charity of primarily scientists who will donate their services. It's goal is to turn this river stretch into Gold Medal waters. The National Park sued the Grand River Ditch Company after a washout and received a \$9.1 million settlement.
- e. **Ed Moyer recommended that the Applicant bring Northern in as a partner.** Northern is partnering with Ducks Unlimited to restore beaver dams. Fucik responded that Northern's emphasis has been in the lower part of the valley, not the higher reach targeted by the stream management plan.
- f. They are considering proposing a trade of water rights so that water being captured in the Never Summer mountains by the Grand River Ditch water can stay in the North Fork of the Colorado and increase diversions through the Adams Tunnel to substitute this water being left in the North Fork of the Colorado River.
- g. There have been at least 20 breaches of the Grand River Ditch in the past 120 years, one within the past few years, and over the years, the Kawauneechee Valley was acquired by the National Park Service. There's nothing to trap the sediment, and it ends up in Shadow Mountain Reservoir.
- h. The North Fork is the main stem of the Colorado River. Two other streams, the North Inlet and East Inlet, drain from Rocky Mountain National Park into Grand Lake.

13. **Colorado River Risk Study Phase III, Jim Pokrandt.**

- a. **Risk drivers:** hydrology, consumptive use, and low reservoir levels. At the end of the water year (Sep. 30, 2019), Lake Powell will be 57% full, compared with 39% at the beginning of the year (Oct. 1, 2018).
- b. **Stress test is based on 28 traces of the same water years between 1988 and 2017, then 1989 to 2017 and adding 1988 to it; then 1990 to 2017, and adding 1988 and 1989 to it, etc.**
- c. **The likelihood of the 10-year running average Lee Ferry volume dropping below 82.5m is 46%; if another 500,000 af is developed (11.5% of total Upper Basin current consumption) the risk basically doubles (92%).** This is potential additional use by all 4 Upper Basin states, although demand in the Upper Basin has been steady the past 20 years.
- d. **Average Colorado River diversions are 2,532,562 af per year,** nearly half of which occurs in the Colorado river basin (1,220,386 af, of which 550,989 are TMDs) to the East slope. TMDs equal approximately 25% of total Colorado

River diversions, and 57% of all post-Compact uses. **1.6 million af of the total consumptive use is pre-Compact.**

- e. **70% of Yampa's water is pre-compact. The pre-Compact diversions held by the Front Range amounts to solely the Grand River Ditch, 19,173 af.**
 - f. **Since so many of the agricultural rights are pre-Compact, do they have anything to worry about?** Yes, because Green Mountain Reservoir and Taylor Reservoir are post-Compact rights so late season irrigation flows are at risk.
 - g. **Call date implications:**
 - i. **A July 1957 call date calls out the Fry-Ark and Dolores projects**
 - ii. **Sep 1940 calls out Dillon Reservoir.**
 - iii. **Aug 1935 calls out Granby Reservoir.**
 - h. If there was a single call as of Aug 1935, the Colorado River Basin would meet 66% of the call, and TMDs would account for 56% of this (i.e., 85% of the total call). Large TMDs often end up being the swing call, meaning they're the ones being cut off.
 - i. Disclaimer – the Power Point does not represent the official position of any entity on the Colorado River.
 - j. The final Phase III report is due in late summer.
14. **CWCB Demand Management activities – Brent Newman.**
- a. “Develop the state's position and approach on whether and how to develop any UB Demand Management program that could be potentially be implemented within Colorado consistent with state law to avoid or mitigate the risk of involuntary compact curtailment and to enhance certainty and security in the Colorado River water supply.” CWCB Support and Policy statement, Nov. 2018.
 - b. The CBRT is well represented in the Demand Management workgroups: Paul Bruchez is on agricultural impacts workgroup; Jim Pokrandt is on the educational workgroup; Karn Stieglemeier and Chris Treese are on the economic workgroup; Kathy Chandler Henry is on the government workgroup, David Graf and Kathy Kitzmann of the City of Aurora are on the environmental workgroup.
 - c. The CWCB's position is that the negative impact of a Call has to be shared throughout the state.
 - d. This is the first time Colorado has ever broached the feasibility of a Demand Management program. It implicates all UB states, and must involve the other UB states and federal government. This not about how a Compact curtailment would

be implemented; that is Kevin Rein's, the State Engineer, job. This is about how voluntary, temporary, and compensated reductions in consumptive use would be implemented.

- e. If all four UB states say this is feasible, then the state will develop a Demand Management program. The 3 other UB states and the federal government must ultimately approve Colorado's Demand Management program.
 - f. Workgroups – 85 people have accepted the CWCB's invitation to be on workgroups. As subject matter experts in Colorado River issues or water management, they are helping the CWCB develop its position. Chris Treese is on a work group. Workgroup members are typically not currently in positions of leadership in Colorado water circles.
 - g. Workgroups will meet 4 times in the next year. Linda Bassi is running the environmental work group; Karen Kwon is running the policy workgroup.
 - h. The meetings are public so the public can attend every meeting and the minutes will be posted on the CWCB website.
 - i. The CWCB will maintain the state's position in every meeting going forward.
 - j. Aug 22: CWCB Regional Demand Management workshop will be held at Colorado Water Congress summer conference in Steamboat Springs.
 - k. Brent Newman emphasized that the CWCB will not be recommending a Demand Management program next July; instead, it is in a fact-finding mode, not a policy implementation mode.
 - l. Rebecca Mitchell, CWCB director, drafted an update to make the workgroups public, dated July 21, 2019.
- 15. Kirsten Kurath said the Demand Management subcommittee's next meeting may be convened after Colorado Water Congress.
 - 16. GVVUA won a \$178,884 Water Smart grant from BuRec for electrical work on the Cameo roller dam and thanks the CBRT roundtable for its support.
 - 17. Hannah Holm requested the CBRT write a letter of recommendation to support a grant application to survey water professionals and participants about the type of water programs that CMU should offer. Paul Bruchez made the motion, Merritt Linke seconded, and it passed unanimously.