

Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 2:00 pm
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101

Chairman brought meeting to order at 2:03 pm. Reminder to sign in. Introductions.

Those in attendance were: Erin Minks, Keith Holland, Larry Sveum, Bob Rice, Emily Chavez, Brenda Felmler, Greg Brophy, Craig Cotton, Darin Schepp, Travis Smith, Heather Dutton, Daniel Boyes, Cathy Morin, Cindy Medina, Kevin Terry, Chuck Finnegan, Larry Crowder, Steven Romero, Rio de la Vista, Don Thompson, Ann Bunting, Jo Ann Slivka, Megan Holcomb, Denton Lire, Judy Lopez, Ron Brink, Cleave Simpson, Davis Marquez, Nancy Escalante, Wayne Schwab, Stan Moyer, Chris Shafer, Emma Reesor, Mario Curto, Cary Aloia, Nathan Coombs, Virginia Christiansen, Eleni Pateras, Bethany Howell, Ronda Lobato, Daryl Kohut, Charles Spielman, Jason Willis, Peter Clark and Heather Greenwolf.

Chairman announced that the Cenicero Project, which was approved pending environmental work, wasn't able to submit their proposal in time for the deadline of the September meeting, so it has been pushed back to the November meeting.

Updated basin planning will begin in the upcoming months. Local contractors will be streamlined with a state contractor for adherence to the Colorado Water Plan.

October meeting will be cancelled due to lack of business after board acclimation. Email approval by the board will be solicited for the pending letter of support for *"For the Love of Colorado's"* application to the CWCB's Water Planning grant for funding. Rio de la Vista will provide letter of support template on *"For the Love of Colorado's"* behalf for board approval to support the project.

Agenda – Megan Holcomb of the CWCB has been added as item 9.a. Ron Brink moved to approve the agenda as corrected, Judy Lopez seconded. All approved and the motion passed.

Minutes – Charlie Spielman requested that his name be added to the list of the attendees for the August 13, 2019 meeting. Keith Holland added a correction to the minutes on page 4, that subdistrict 1 should actually be noted as subdistrict 4 in the San Luis Creek area. Judy Lopez motioned to approve the minutes with corrections, Keith Holland seconded. All approved the motion.

- Public Comment – Charlie Spielman noted that we could do a better water plan on our own, rather than hiring a consultant, and at less cost. Ron Brink noted that we should all be involved in whatever adjustments we would like to make. Chairman noted that local contributions would not be excluded, but that it makes it easier for CWCB staff if all of the plans have a consistent format.
- Rio de la Vista announced a water lecture at Adams State with Justice Gregg Hobbs.
- Stan Moyer commented on the road tax meeting in Alamosa being very sparsely attended and encouraged others to attend the water meeting.

- Heather Dutton invited the public to the ribbon cutting on Sept. 18th at 5 pm for the new radar project.
- Cathy Morin invited the public to the annual Headwaters Hoedown for Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust on Sunday, Sept. 15.
- Christi Bode invited the public to the Mountain Film on Tour in Monte Vista on Thursday, Sept. 12.

The chairman noted that the Water Export Subcommittee has not met since the last meeting and that here is a spot secured at the Metro Basin Roundtable in October for representatives of the Rio Grande Basin to discuss impacts of water export from the Valley to the Front Range.

Greg Brophy presented from the coalition in support of “*Yes on referendum DD.*” Brophy noted that the website is www.yesondd.com. This referendum authorizes the taxation of sports wagering done through the mountain casinos and will be used to fund the Colorado Water Plan. They are looking at gaining \$26 million per year to be used to implement water projects that are outlined in the Colorado Water Plan. Colorado casinos would pay a 10% tax for this type of wagering, of which 93% will go to fund the Colorado Water Plan projects. The coalition would like to have as much support as possible from organizations and water users before beginning the voter education phase. The proposal which will be on the ballot in November, is also seeking support from individuals, who can endorse the referendum by going online.

Rio de la Vista asked if the money would be run through CWCB’s water grant funds, Brophy responded yes. This would be a dedicated stream of money approved by voters, separate from severance tax funds. Ron Brink thanked Brophy for coming, and asked how many groups he’s presented to and what were the outcomes? Brophy responded that most weren’t interested in the sports wagering part, but were interested in the water part. There is support from county commissioners, although some people are opposed to gambling. The coalition is looking at other states to observe how implementation occurred. There would be a cap on the \$29 million. Emily Chavez asked about the other 7% not going to the water plan. Brophy answered that it would fund gambling addiction hotlines and backfill the horse racing industry if that loses money to other types of gambling. Cleave Simpson asked about public’s perception of the referendum. Brophy answered, that there had been initial polling done, but the obscure language of the ballot was confusing.

Rio de la Vista made a motion to support referendum DD as a Roundtable, Ron Brink seconded the motion. All in favor and the motion passed.

Rio de la Vista asked Brophy about his role in the Renewable Water Resources water export scheme. Brophy responded that he is in favor of the Colorado Water Plan and that water is a property right that people should be allowed to sell. Judy Lopez asked what part the water export plan did he support? Brophy discussed his past work as a legislator with creating the Republican River Water Conservancy District, the increase in drought, and the inclusion of a reservoir counting against Colorado’s usage under the Republican River Compact. This meant that the evaporative losses were very prohibitive to the areas agriculture and so they made the very unpopular decision to close Bonney Reservoir. Brophy used that as an example for why he’s comfortable allowing the Front Range to buy water from the San Luis Valley. Senator Larry Crowder commented about public commodity prices being the biggest problem in agriculture and that he would be opposing any water export.

Keith Holland commented on a Denver Post article about increasing neighborhoods and its effect on warming the global climate. He pointed out that it does not make sense to take water out of areas that help the Earth to breathe rather than increase the footprint with concrete and brick structures.

Cary Aloia asked that Brophy consider not lobbying for Renewable Water Resources. Aloia pointed out that personal property rights are important, but that we should not have to figure out the water problems of Denver by sending our water to those who haven't done their part in reducing water used in golf courses, lawns, etc.

Steven Romero, Costilla County Commissioner, discussed that reducing reality to economics instead of thinking about sustainability is cutting our future short. A value should be placed on sustainability, political and economic, rather than having no value in those arenas. Judy Lopez commented on the previous example from Brophy about losing a recreation resource and that our area isn't opposing the sale of a water right but opposing the removal of the water from the Basin. Ron Brink commented that we must have a balance with using water and that we won't have any sustainability if we remove water from the San Luis Valley. Cleave Simpson noted that we struggle to balance supply and demand, but that we have begun finding solutions on our own that allow us to match supply and demand. Further, we have funding partners who are interested in helping us keep our water here. Simpson pointed to the conceptual framework and that it regards water transfers as a disruption to long term sustainability, an idea as described in the Colorado Water Plan. A fact that has been ignored by Renewable Water Resources.

Heather Greenwolf of Headwaters Alliance is requesting a letter of support from the Roundtable for a grant application they are submitting through the CWCB Watershed Protection Program for \$100,000. Greenwolf noted the background of the application with the extreme amount of flooding in the Willow Creek floodplain. They are working with Jason Willis of Trout Unlimited on stabilizing the creeks and a more holistic approach to tie together all the areas of the floodplain. Travis Smith suggested that they continue to tell the story of Willow Creek as they are asking for funds. Cindy Medina gave suggestions of lessons learned as they are working on the application. Charlie Spielman clarified that they are just asking for a letter of support. Brief discussion ensued about the use of CWCB funds from Roundtable to the Watershed Restoration Fund. Heather Dutton encouraged the plan and lauded their effort. Charlie Spielman made a motion to write a letter of support, Wayne Schwab seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Wayne Schwab of the Trinchera Irrigation District gave an update on the project with Mountain Home Reservoir regarding replacement of the dam valve outlet works. Schwab described the valve replacement process and gave photo evidence of the scope of the project.

IBCC Update – Cleave Simpson gave an update on their joint meeting with IBCC and CWCB. Discussion is intense about the Colorado River consumptive use and a demand management plan. There will be a meeting with a combination of legislators to consider potential water bills in the upcoming weeks.

Megan Holcomb of the CWCB gave an update about the C9 Summit – chairs of the Roundtables will meet during that time. The next CWCB directors' meeting will be in Alamosa next week. The board will tour farms and potato harvest as well as meet. Heather Dutton added that the afternoon agenda for next Wednesday's board meeting will be about the radar project before the actual ribbon cutting ceremony.

Subdistrict Update – Cleave Simpson noted that all six subdistricts are approved or are pending approval with the state water engineer, after years of discussion and working to self-regulate.

Division of Water Resources – Craig Cotten, Division 3 engineer, updated the basin on current river conditions. Cotten also noted that the Colorado Water Officials conference will take place in Alamosa on

Oct. 3-4, it is the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Compact. The estimated annual flow on the Rio Grande River at Del Norte is 950,000 acre feet (146% of long term average). It is a decrease of 30,000 AF from the August estimate. Our obligation to downstream states is 380,000 AF (40% of average). Current curtailment is 35%. River flows were above average until mid-August, when levels dropped to below average. The Conejos River has an annual flow of 430,000 AF or 143% of the long-term average. It is a decrease of 20,000-acre feet from the August estimate. Obligation to downstream state is 214,000 AF or 50% of index. Current curtailment is 35%. Reservoir releases on both rivers inflated the averages for the end of August.

Trinchera Creek had similar peaks and flows to the Conejos and Rio Grande Rivers. Culebra Creek did not see the same amount of flows as other creeks.

Annual precipitation for fall is above average, but moves off in December through March 2020.

Cotten discussed a new irrigation well application for the Culebra Creek area (not seen since the 1980's). The division engineer's office has filed a statement of opposition as well as, the acequia association and conservancy district, it remains an ongoing case.

Chairman noted that no meeting will be in October. The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 pm.

The next

Executive Committee meeting will be November 12, 2019 at 1:00pm

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

623 Fourth Street

Alamosa, CO