



Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 2:00 pm
GoTo Meeting Online

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 2:03 pm by chairman. Those in attendance included Connor Born, Craig Cotten, Daniel Boyes, Reeves Brown, Allen Law, Ann Bunting, Bethany Howell, Virginia Christensen, Cary Aloia, Charles Spielman, Cindy Medina, Cleave Simpson, Darin Schepp, Daryl Kohut, Dwight Martin, Emily Chavez, Eugene Farish, Cathy Garcia, Hannah Thill, Heather Greenwolf, Keith Holland, Kevin Terry, Marisa Fricke, Megan Peterson, Mike Gibson, Nathan Coombs, Rio de la Vista, Ronda Lobato, Ryan Unterreiner, Sam Stein, Zena Buser, Steven Romero. Peter Clark was excused absent.

Agenda

Chairman asked to approve the agenda by common consent unless otherwise opposed. None were opposed and the September agenda was approved as presented.

Minutes

Minutes for July (there was no August meeting) will be approved by common consent unless otherwise opposed. None opposed and the July minutes were approved as presented.

Public Comment

Rio de la Vista announced the Q&A about the water export is available to view on Adams State University's YouTube channel.

Dwight Martin asked a question about weather modification noted in the newspaper. Nathan Coombs responded that sites were set up to monitor weather in Pagosa Springs. The project is in the experimental stage as far as cloud seeding. No one has applied for a full use permit. The effect on Valley weather is unknown. Dwight asked if anyone had any more information that he would be interested to know more.

Bethany Howell gave a PEPO update about the newly launched podcast and information available on the Basin Facebook page.

Gallagher Amendment

Reeves Brown of Building a Better Colorado was invited by Rio de la Vista to discuss the Gallagher amendment on the upcoming ballot initiative. The presentation included background on the Gallagher amendment as passed in the 1980's, particularly regarding information on the points of property tax use and market value in regard to population growth. The current question being asked is if the recession impacts Gallagher's assessment rate. Additionally, based on change in value of residential property vs.

non-residential property over past two years, if residential has grown, then Gallagher amendment recommends that the assessment rate goes down. TABOR dictates that the residential tax rate cannot go up without a statewide vote.

Communities whose public services depend on residential property taxes for their funding will be adversely affected as the residential assessment rate drops in accordance with TABOR's stipulations. This cut in taxes will effectively be permanent as voters would have to specifically vote to raise the residential assessment rate in another initiative. Voters can choose to change the Gallagher amendment to increase the tax rate comparably with residential assessment rate. All information is available at www.buildingwabettercolorado.org or contact reeves@buildingabettercolorado.org.

Rio de la Vista made a comment about how this funding would affect conservation and water conservancy districts. She also asked how agricultural lands fit into the assessment, and it was explained that ag fits into the non-residential category and would also share the tax burden outside of residential taxation. Mike Gibson thanked Mr. Brown for his explanation, especially as it pertains to the revenue side. Brown explained that it is a challenge to navigate through the legislative fiscal policies. Cleave Simpson also thanked Brown for his explanation and asked about a path forward that might include counties rather than a state policy. Brown thought that would be a bigger challenge than the current structure. Nathan Coombs summarized the discussion as repealing Gallagher doesn't affect TABOR on raising tax rates. Brown agreed that Gallagher has no consequence for TABOR if repealed. There would be potential empowerment for eventually lowering an assessment rate. Some continuing discussion regarding the consequences of repealing the amendment.

IBCC Report

Ann Bunting reported that there hasn't been an IBCC meeting since the last Roundtable meeting.

Subdistrict Report

Cleave Simpson reported that the active subdistricts continue to address their depletions to the aquifer. Poor runoff has made it challenging for program managers who are trying to administer forbearance agreements. Subdistrict 6 is about to submit their first annual replacement plan which will be a partial year replacement plan. The clock is set to submit an approved plan by the end of this month to repair injurious depletions on the Conejos and Rio Grande rivers. Subdistricts 4 & 5 in San Luis Creek and Saguache Creek response areas will be working on their partial year plan for approval in March of next year. Simpson concluded his report as technical difficulties with weather precluded more information.

Basin Plan Update

Daniel Boyes of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration project updated the Roundtable on the BIP process. The 2019 technical update to the water plan is set for end of September. Project deadlines are set for November 20, 2020. Project tiering will take place through December and January of 2021. Subcommittees will meet to finalize projects. Tiering workshops with the Roundtable will take place in October to ensure people are comfortable with the process. Boyes mentioned that many projects have come in through this new BIP, but they would like to go through the technical update and data analysis results to continue thinking about and developing projects. The November deadline will be a hard deadline. Emails will go out with scheduled technical presentation update meetings. If people would like to be part of subcommittees or ask questions, they can get in touch with Daniel via email at daniel@riograndeheadwaters.org. Nathan Coombs mentioned working on the updated Basin Plan Goals and looking over the goals. The updated goals will be sent to the Roundtable within the next two weeks in order to approve them during the October meeting.

CDOW Report

Craig Cotten, division 3 engineer, discussed how rains have helped buffer the low water, but that overall, the flows are still very low. Cotten also discussed the extreme drought conditions both here and in New Mexico, the upcoming groundwater rules and regulations and the fact that the unconfined aquifer continues to decline in storage.

CWCB Report

Sam Stein gave a report on the drought tour to assess conditions for the areas most impaired by 2020 drought and wildfires. There was a Southwestern Drought tour in 2018 and the governor is continuing to have those throughout the state, with the goal to hear from communities impacted by drought. There is a new website to engage through the CWCB. Click this link for more information <https://engagecwcb.org/login>

They are not expecting the WSRF to receive any funds from severance tax over the next 3 years from the oil and gas industry. Roundtables are asked to be judicious with their funds and all are trying to stretch their funds throughout the state. Staff are trying to get feedback about updating the grant criteria and guidelines. A survey can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CJXKQZW>

A combination of staff and IBCC members have gone over changes to move the deadlines up a month for submission for WSRF requests, cleaning up language and terminology, and deciding to put 100% of funds in the Basin accounts each year at one time instead of spreading them out over the year. A new executive order is expected from governor with a more lenient safer at home phase. DNR will continue to give guidance for travel policies for staff, grant applicants, and Roundtable members. It may allow leniency for in person meetings, but staff are scheduled to work from home until January 1st. Demand management workshops took place in the past couple of weeks. The board is continuing to look at feasibility study. Key dates will be board meetings on September 15-17, the next IBCC meeting is scheduled for October 21st. All will be virtual until further notice.

Rio de la Vista asked for more clarification regarding WSRF grant submissions. Sam replied that instead of one month for review, the submission date is pushed up so that board members and staff have two months to review. Grant applicants should have all their materials ready earlier than previously.

Other Business

Mike Gibson asked about Cindy Medina's letter to the Roundtable regarding engagement in social justice issues. It was decided that it is too difficult to include in the goals at present but should be considered for future discussion. Gibson mentioned that it is a topic that is being discussed in other areas such as the Colorado Water Congress (CWC). Rio de la Vista commented that their intention is to follow the direction of the CWC and that we should continue to learn about these topics and include others in Roundtable meetings. She mentioned that the CWC virtual summer conference includes a session on *Advocating for Equity* scheduled for September 17 at 3 pm.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:16 pm.