



Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 2:00 pm
GoTo Meeting Online

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 2:04 pm by Nathan Coombs, chairman. Those in attendance included Bethany Howell, Nathan Coombs, Amber Pacheco, Karla Shriver, Daniel Boyes, Emma Reesor, Hallie Flynn, Connor Born, Russ Sands, Cary Aloia, Charles Spielman, Christi Bode, Chuck Finnegan, Cindy Medina, Craig Cotten, Christopher Ivers, Darin Schepp, Daryl Kohut, Erin Minks, Eugene Farish, Hannah Thill, Mike Gibson, Heather Dutton, James Henderson, Jenny Nehring, JoAnn ____, Judy Lopez, Keith Holland, Kevin Terry, Kristine Borchers, Nathan Coombs, Nikita Christensen, Peter Barkmann, Peter Clark, Rio de la Vista, Sally Wier, Sam Stein, Tony LaGreca, Travis Smith, Zena Buser, Kat Weismiller, Megan Peterson, Ronda Lobato, Steven Romero, Trevor Harmon, Virginia Christensen, and Dave Marquez. Ann Bunting and Jim Ehrlich were excused.

Agenda

Nathan Coombs asked for approval of the November agenda by general consensus as it was emailed out. No one had alterations or changes so agenda approved as is.

Minutes

Minutes for October were discussed. Keith Holland asked that the IBCC report clarify that the IBCC was in the morning and PEPO in the afternoon as a joint meeting. October meeting minutes will be corrected and are otherwise approved by general consensus.

Public Comment

Judy Lopez discussed Colorado Open Land's application for a Colorado Water Plan Grant that they will submit to support their acequia work. No questions were asked from the Roundtable, and a general consent was given for writing a letter of support as needed for this grant application.

Emma Reesor of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project wanted the Roundtable to know that the RGHRP is working with partners on a series of infrastructure improvement and streambank restoration and land conservation projects with the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, Colorado Open Lands, Conejos Water Conservancy District, and irrigators along the Conejos and Rio Grande rivers. The grant will address needs for infrastructure and conservation. The Restoration Project is putting in a series of grants to fund this effort. One is through the NRCS for an RCCP grant with the Land Trust and COL, they are also working on one through Colorado Water Plan Grant and the Bureau of Reclamation's

WaterSmart grant. A summary was sent to the Roundtable members. Emma asked the Roundtable to provide a letter of support for these grant applications. All grants build off and support each other for this effort. Nathan asked for questions, there were none. No one was opposed to a letter of support. Mike Gibson affirmed that it was a great idea. Emma will send a draft of a letter of support for Nathan on behalf of the Roundtable.

Hallie Flynn with NRCS and Intermountain West Joint Venture discussed TCP funding with a goal to improve efficiency and improving flood areas for wildlife habitat and riparian restoration outside of Del Norte. They are currently accepting applications and field visits are possible.

December Meeting Discussion

Typically, there is a Christmas lunch and brief business meeting in December. Under current conditions, this may not be the best option. Nathan opened discussion to the Roundtable. Peter Clark and Judy Lopez suggested postponing a get together. Mike Gibson suggested a normal business meeting. Daniel Boyes noted that there isn't anything to update on the Water Plan or Basin Implementation Plan at that point. Nathan noted that there are few outstanding agenda items still left over, as well as another Basin's Roundtable member asking to attend the next meeting. Bethany suggested a send out for end of the year items to know about in lieu of a meeting. Daniel is also inviting members to an open upcoming Basin Implementation Plan meeting. Cindy Medina suggested skipping December and having the next regular meeting in January. This idea seemed to be the general consensus and members agreed to not meet virtually until January.

IBCC Report

Keith Holland gave a report on the turnout and discussion of the last InterBasin Compact Committee meeting. The IBCC is trying to decide which direction to head in, revisit what the IBCC's role is, and what is expected from it. Different basins would like the IBCC to work on different things such as drought or climate change and how that affects water as well as forest and watershed health. A meeting will be held on that topic in the Southwest Basin in February. Other ideas included regional planning, discussion on funding, and ATM's. Kevin Rein gave a presentation on the Home State reservoir and demand management was also discussed. The afternoon meeting was a joint meeting with PEPO to discuss their relationship with IBCC and provide more alignment between the two.

CWCB IBCC Presentation

Russ Sands from the CWCB presented on the history of the IBCC and Roundtables. The main goal of the creation of the IBCC is to be a united think tank from regional interests back to a statewide lens. Challenges and successes are represented regionally but can be learned across basins. Russ gave a basic framework of the set up of the IBCC with House Bill 1177. The IBCC helps find consensus and provides an environment for discussion on guidance of cross-basin issues. It is also a representative body that can elevate and negotiate on behalf of the water community. The vision for IBCC and PEPO is to collaborate on state challenges and strengthen connections to education and outreach. This creates a process to inform and involve the public and becomes a mechanism by which public input and feedback can be relayed back to the IBCC.

IBCC Rio Grande History

Mike Gibson and Travis Smith discussed the history of how the Rio Grande Basin became a Roundtable. Travis gave background on the Colorado Water Plan, being a new member of the CWCB Board of Directors in 2005, the drought of 2002, and referendum A. By creating a mechanism basin by basin, the state was incentivizing cooperation and expand the conversation beyond the water user community.

Travis recommended reading the Water for the 21st Act. Mike Gibson also discussed the local issues that were faced and a shortfall of water availability to meet needs at the time. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District board members were already discussing and collaborating with multiple community partners, which made creating a Roundtable seem superfluous, but others were willing to try. Many people have made the Roundtable and the IBCC the partnership that it is today. It is a success story about grassroots ability to get things done. Mike Gibson suggested sending a copy of HB 1177 be sent to everyone on the Roundtable. Heather Dutton added that our community is grateful and owes Travis and Mike thanks for their hard work.

PEPO Update

Bethany updated the Roundtable on public education and outreach efforts, primarily preparing the send out of the next quarterly newsletter, utilizing infographics on social media as often as possible, and working on the third episode of the basin podcast. She also mentioned the State Water Education Action Plan's Critical Water Concepts, asking the basin to give feedback on prioritizing the concepts for our basin through a Google Form survey. She is working with the SWEAP Task Force to align the concepts with K-12 academic standards. She also discussed the statewide PEPO discussion with coordinators on collaborating across basins and the need to work together to highlight issues faced by every basin.

Subdistrict Report

No one from the Rio Grande Water Conservation District was available to provide a subdistrict report.

Basin Plan Update

Daniel gave an update on the work with projects to submit for the BIP, they are looking for submissions in the next couple of weeks as the deadline is November 20th at 5:00 pm. There is a project template that should be used which is at www.rgbt.org. Details don't have to be completely ironed out, but projects should be submitted so they're in the hopper. A project tiering work session will be held to be able to prioritize projects in early to mid-December. The project tier matrix involves data-centered tools to allow dynamic and ongoing updates to projects. Status categories, alignment with BIP, local plans, and Colorado Water Plan, availability of project data, and criticality will determine prioritization. Tiers 1-4 will be determined to separate projects, with 1 being ready to go, and 4 being considered but not moving forward without extensive work. Daniel also discussed that a Wildly Important Goal (WIG) from the governor's office is to identify at least 20 Tier 1 projects from each Basin with accurate costs. Daniel and the RGHRP staff are willing to work on project data and help finesse projects for submission.

Colorado Division of Water Resources Report

Craig Cotten gave a brief description about Compact deliveries, which were both slightly over-delivered on both the Conejos and Rio Grande systems. Diversions were shut off for the irrigation season on November 1st. We should be in credit status on the Conejos River system. The Rio Grande system has gone into recharge with the bigger canals. This should be continued for another week before being shut off. The Rio Grande Compact Commission meeting will be on Thursday, November 12, virtually, instead of in April in person as usual. Groundwater rules and regulations deadlines are coming up on March 15, 2021. Wells will be shut off if they do not have approved augmentation plans in place. Update on precipitation, over 3 feet of snow at Wolf Creek Ski Area. We are at 214% of average in the Rio Grande basin with recent storms. Mike Gibson asked if the new radar system was being used with weather reports, Nathan replied that it is in conjunction with Snotel sites. The National Weather Service is able to use the radar system, but don't seem to be using it regularly.

CWCB Report

Sam Stein from CWCB discussed the governor's budget for the new year, which is including \$6 million for forest grants and \$4 million for watershed restoration grants, in addition to \$5 million already approved. The 5 year anniversary for Colorado Water Plan is November 19th. Stories are encouraged to be shared at the CWCB website www.engagecwcw.org. The board of directors meeting will be November 18-19, held virtually.

Other Business

Nathan noted that the website should update the IBCC representatives on their web page. Reminder that there will not be a meeting in December, next meeting will be January 2021.

Meeting adjourned at 3:36 pm