



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

ARKANSAS BASIN ROUNDTABLE MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES AND RECORD OF DECISIONS

February 9, 2022

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83339826655?pwd=YzY0eWhmb3Bsc1VFNDhjYWWh0T1JHZz09>

More information and presentations may be found at: www.arkansasbasin.com

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by consensus.

Approval of Prior Meeting Notes

January meeting notes were approved by consensus.

Public Comment - none

Richard Elsner spoke about Senate Bill 114. This is a bill working to protect small ponds that are used for firefighting. Richard Elsner can be reached at delsner@parkco.us

<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb22-114>

<https://dwr.colorado.gov/services/water-administration/pond-management>

REPORTS:

Executive Committee – Mark Shea

The Executive Committee reviewed and discussed Roundtable membership. There is a new member from Park County, Commissioner Amy Mitchell. Welcome Amy!

The Roundtable still has vacant seats to fill. The draft of the 2022 Roundtable Roster was distributed with meeting materials for this meeting. Please look over the draft and send in any necessary corrections.

There have been discussions in our Sister Roundtables about their interest in adding Watershed Health Seats as a part of their Roundtable Membership. There is great value in having connections with people involved in watershed health, particularly considering wildfire risks.

The EC discussed the final draft of the Basin Implementation Plan (BIP), and the projects database.

CWCB Report – Sam Stein – engagewcwb.org

Sam spoke about the last Water Equity Taskforce meeting which was on February second. A meeting recording is on the [engagewcwb](http://engagewcwb.org) website.

Roundtables who would like to meet in person are now able to do so. Mark suggested quarterly in person meetings, starting in March.

Director Gibbs will be the new IBCC chair.

Nora Flynn is moving into the role of Senior Agricultural Specialist. This position has been moved into the Water Supply Planning Section. Welcome Nora!

Current water plan grant applications can be viewed here:

<https://cwcb.colorado.gov/december-2021-water-plan-grant-applications>

Greg Felt noted several issues of discussion at CWCB including the Colorado River situation, issues surrounding the Platte River, Nebraska, and the Rio Grande River.

Greg also noted the growing focus on forest health, the shift to thinking of our forests as part of water infrastructure, and the ongoing conversation about agriculture and how CWCB can interact with the agricultural community.



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The Roundtable's comments on Demand Management were well received and aligned with comments from other basins.

IBCC- Jeris Danielson

Jeris will forward an agenda for the next IBCC meeting to Roundtable Members.

Program – Heather Patno

Heather presented on the Colorado River situation, history, and explained several graphs.

The Colorado River supplies water to seven basin states and Mexico, and is managed by the "[Law of the River](#)," a collection of compacts, laws and documents that regulate use of the river. 16.5 million acre feet (maf) are allocated every year, 7.5 maf each to Upper and Lower Basin States, and 1.5 maf to Mexico. There is 60 maf of storage.

The Colorado River is facing a severe drought. Water year 2021 marked the second lowest Lake Powell inflow since 1964 and is part of the driest 22 year and 10 year period, indicating a drying trend. Lake Mead and Lake Powell both marked a historical low in 2021.

Soil moisture conditions are very dry as well, which will impact runoff producing areas.

This dryness prompted the [Drought Response Operations Agreement](#) (DROA) as part of the 2019 Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan. DROA releases began in July 2021.

Regarding projections, the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) implemented its 30-year average shift, so in 2021 we were using the 1981-2010 averages. In October 2021 this switched to using 1991 to 2020 averages. This removed the significant wet hydrology from the 1980's from current forecast possibilities, and incorporated the last decade of record dryness that has occurred with climate change, resulting in a more accurate forecast.

Snow water equivalent (the amount of water that will be released from snowpack) is also lower than average in water year 2022.

Currently the Drought Response Operations Plan is circulating for review and is scheduled to be finalized in April. Lake Powell's required monthly release is 7.48 maf. Part of the plan is to hold that water back in the winter/spring months to be released in the summer, which will help keep Powell full, however, the minimum projections for September still show the possibility of levels dropping below the minimum power pool line. Lake Mead's likely conditions put it at a Level 2 shortage condition.

Heather answered a question about what happens if water drops below the power pool level in Lake Powell. Glen Canyon Dam would no longer be able to provide hydroelectric power.

Heather also explained that the reservoirs in the Upper Basin like Blue Mesa, Flaming Gorge and Navajo, could provide significant increases to Lake Powell; in particular Flaming Gorge Reservoir.

Heather explained that Navajo not releasing the additional 20 thousand acre feet was based on conditions at the beginning of December. Under the minimum probable projections it was determined that Navajo would not be able to meet its minimum contractual obligations and thus could not release more water. Those kinds of considerations would be applied to all the Upper Basin areas, fulfilling contractual obligations before releasing additional water to Lake Powell.

Terry asked if there were years in which the lower basin states took more than the 7.5 maf. And if there was a record of that. Heather explained that there is record of lower basin states taking more in the early 2000's.

Rick Kienitz observed that lower basins have received more water than agreed while Upper Basins are experiencing shortages. The lower basins have come up to compliance, but will they stay in compliance even in surplus years? Heather noted that we have seen compact compliance since 2005, and since we have released more in the past, we are able to send less.



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Mallory Hiss asked who would be involved in the post 2026 negotiations; setting up operational strategies for Powell, Mead and the upper and lower basins. Heather explained that all seven basin states will be part of those negotiations. Becky Mitchell would be involved in those negotiations, as well as environmental groups, hydropower interests, federal agencies, national parks service, and additional interest groups.

Bob Hamel asked if the 7.4 maf for the lower basins includes the tribal water allocation. Heather said she would follow up on that question.

Mark noted after the presentation that water in the presentation was measured by the Million Acre Feet. Mark remarked on how little the Arkansas Basin imports from the Colorado River, about 150,000 acre feet, yet how valuable that water is to the Basin. There is only 500,000 acre feet that is imported to the entire front range which is about equal to the yearly evaporative loss off of Lake Powell.

Heather Patno can be reached at hpatno@usbr.gov.

Needs Assessment Committee – Mark Shea

No updates. There are upcoming grant cycles that Abby will make everyone aware of.

Ag/Muni Committee – Mark Shea

No updates.

Enviro/Rec Committee – Bob Hamel, Amber Shanklin, Rena Griggs

There will be a February 28 meeting, and there is some new interest in the committee.

The Arkansas River Basin Water Forum will occur Apr 28-29, in Salida (Steamplant). Registration is now open.

<https://www.arbwf.org/>

ARWC – Jonathan Paklaian

ARWC is planning for the upcoming year.

Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) money is available to be requested through the grant process. The first round is on February 14th, and ARWC has a proposal.

The Lead Forester Andy has gone to Lake County to meet with people in anticipation of this year's projects.

ARWC will also be perusing the Natural Resources grant.

The ARWC Board meeting will occur February 10th and there will be discussions involving ARWC's relation to the Roundtable and the work they are doing.

PEPOW – Alli Schuch, Paul Fanning (meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month, at 1:30 pm)

The statewide PEPO meeting is February 22.

There was an unscheduled meeting which focused on the new funding plan, and more clarification will be provided.

PEPOW has been working with Water Education Colorado (WECO) for a mini tour, August 26. This is a WECO program, but WECO touches base with the Roundtable for resources. WECO will be conducting a mini tour in every basin. The people selected for the tour will be new people, not necessarily involved with the water world. The Workgroup meeting next week will be focused on developing a focus on activities that relate to the BIP, and improving communication between the roundtable and CWCB, and improving communication between roundtable members.

Alli has reached out to Jonathan, about how PEPOW and ARWC can strengthen each other and share project stories. Alli also chatted with Dylan O'Hare, from Palmer Land Conservancy.



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The first network meeting has occurred with over twenty people involved. These will continue to take place on a bi-monthly schedule.

Colorado Rural Water Association's Children's Water Festival etc. Web Page:

<https://www.crwa.net/childrenswaterfestival>

BIP Update – Lindsey Griffith

Lindsey reviewed where to find the Basin Implementation Plan on engagewcwb.org, and reviewed Volume One of the BIP.

Special focus was drawn to the section which contained the revised statement on transfer of water rights from irrigated agriculture. The statement now reads, “Agriculture Producers are the largest owners of water resources in the state. As new or growing users, particularly municipalities, require additional water resources, they often purchase it from agricultural users. The Arkansas BRT is concerned that additional transfer of water rights from irrigated agriculture to other uses that results in the permanent dry-up of irrigated land is undesirable and should be avoided if at all possible and further recommends mitigation efforts to protect local economies and land health if permanent transfers occur. This multi-base constituency is reflected in the goals outlined for agricultural water in the Arkansas Basin.”

Lindsey also addressed concerns from the last meeting over projects being included in the BIP that the Roundtable did not necessarily endorse. Lindsey went over the tiering system, which is included in the BIP which explains the difference between projects that have been proposed and are being considered, and projects that have already moved into later stages.

Sandy pointed out that there was discussion in the Executive Committee about having indication on the projects database that would signify whether or not the Roundtable had reviewed the project.

The final draft of Volume 1 of the Basin Implementation Plan was approved by consensus.

The final draft of Volume 2 of the Basin Implementation Plan was approved by consensus.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 pm.

Admin Email: ARKBASINRT@GMAIL.COM

MEETINGS/LINKS:

- Arkansas Basin Roundtable Annual Meeting: February 9, 12:30 pm www.arkansasbasin.com
- PEPOW: www.pepoarkbasin.com
- Enviro/Rec: January 31
- CWCB: January 24-25 <http://cwcb.state.co.us/Pages/CWCBHome.aspx>
- PEPO Statewide: TBD
- Arkansas River Basin Water Forum: <http://www.arbwf.org/>
- Colorado Water Plan: <http://coloradowaterplan.com/>
- Colorado Flood Threat Bulletin: www.coloradofloodthreat.com
- Stream Management Plan Resource Library: <https://coloradosmp.org/>
- In-Stream Flow Rule Revisions: <https://cwcb.colorado.gov/instream-flow-rules-revisions-hb-20-1157>
- DARCA - <https://www.darca.org/>