

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable

Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Meeting Minutes Tuesday June 14, 2022

Call to Order

President Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Those in attendance were Nathan Coombs (CWCD/Roundtable Chair), Emma Reesor (Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project), Judy Jolly (Ag Member At-Large), Dale Pizel (Wildlife), Pete Clark (Water User at Large), Wayne Schwab (Trinchera), Heather Dutton (CWCB/SLVWCD), Connor Born (Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project), Dwight Martin (Alamosa La Jara Water Conservancy District), Daniel Boyes (RGHRP), Virginia Christensen (Water User at Large), Charlie Spielman (Industrial/Municipal), Nikita Cooper (Rio Grande County Representation/Roundtable Secretary), Cassandra McCuen (RGWCD), James Henderson (Conejos County), Jim Ehrlich (Alamosa County), Erin Minks (Senator Bennet), Travis Smith (Reservoirs), Rio de la Vista, Michael Carson (City of Alamosa), Amber Pacheco, Ethan Frank, Cary Aloia (Environmental Representative), Darin Schepp (DWR), Erin McWilliams (RGHRP), Hannah Trill (Rio Grande Water Conservation Education Initiative), Judy Lopez (Trinchera), Sam Stein (CWCB), Suzanne Beauchaine (National Wildlife Refuge), Anna Greenburg, Bethany Howell (CDA), Ethan Franke (Headwaters Alliance), Jenny Nehring (Wetland Dynamics), Chris Shaffer (USFWS), and Daryl Kohut (RGNF). Members with excused absences: Kevin Terry and Mike Gibson.

The agenda was approved with additional items added. The minutes from May 10, 2022, were approved as presented.

Public Comment

- Charlie Spielman commented that he thought Rio Grande County Commissioner, John Noffske, brought up a good point regarding the Renewable Water Resources proposal. His idea is to make the sale of any water socially unpopular that no one wants to carry out that transaction. Charlie also would like to receive some follow up from the Forest Service staff that spoke at the previous meeting.
- Rio de la Vista thanked everyone that was involved with the "Growing Water Smart" program held with county officials and municipal officials. The goal of the program was to discuss water planning. She also noted that the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center is working on hiring a new director. Water 101 will start August 23rd and community members can audit the class for \$150/semester.
- Michael Carson noted that the Council of Governments will meet June 20, 2022, at 4:30 p.m. to discuss 1041 regulations and permitting to help with water rights and protecting rights within the valley. Michael welcomed comments regarding that idea. Travis commented that 1041 regulations should be reviewed however, private property rights issues create a fine line. Travis recommended that the Roundtable have more education on private property rights and 1041 regulations.
- Cassandra McCuen announced that she will be helping host a HCP tour at the Higel State Wildlife area June 17, 2022, from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

New Business

Virginia Christensen with the Terrace Irrigation Company requested a letter of support for the Colorado Water Plan Grant with total project cost being \$1,018,799 for their Water Efficiency Project. The project will affect both the Terrace Main Canal and Terrace Creek Canal with the goal to increase surface water delivery efficiency and help producers decrease ground pumping. Travis Smith moved to write a letter of support. Dwight Martin seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Emma Reesor with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project also requested a letter of support for the Colorado Water Plan Grant. The project is for the Farmers Union Headgate and Rehabilitation project and will replace the diversion structure. The project includes better water control in both reaches, fish passages, and bank stabilization downstream of the diversion. The grant request is for \$400,000 with total project cost being \$1,025,000. Travis Smith moved to approve a letter of support. Judy Jolly seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Emma Reesor also spoke on behalf of the Southwest Conservation Core requesting a letter of support for the Colorado Water Plan Grant. The Youth Core is requesting a Water Plan Grant to further water plan goals and priorities. They will be working with agencies within in the Rio Grande Basin to help further these goals. 8 youth will be working with the restoration project for three weeks on rehabilitation projects. Dale noted that the Southwest Conservation Core is a great group to support with hard working youth. Jim moved to approve the letter of support. Dale seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PEPO/Education update was given by Emma Reesor. May education activities included the Gunnison Tour, Rio Trio, and the PEPO Grant was submitted. July's theme is Watershed health, August's theme is HCP, Birds, and Wildlife. Danial wrote an article for Water 22 and a Water 101 fact sheet. Daniel reviewed the Recreation Boating 101 fact sheet that he created.

Heather Dutton updated the group on the Colorado Water Conservation Board. The board worked on updating the Water Plan at the last meeting and will have a draft out for public review by June 30. The board's goal is to have the water plan grant updated by the end of the year. The board took a pause on the demand management discussion to allow other states to find their own solutions. The board will be working on drought management, declining water supplies, and building more resiliency into Colorado's water systems. Dan Gibbs, Director of National Resources will be in the Valley on June 21, 2022, and there will be a reception at Cattails at 6 pm. Sam Stein commented that the July meeting will be held on June 20 and 21 in Denver. The Water Plan draft will be released June 30 for a 90-comment period. He asked that members share stories on engagecwcwcb.com. IBCC meeting will be June 30 in Summit County. He thanked the PEPO coordinators for getting PEPO grants in.

Amber Pacheco, Rio Grande Water Conservation District updated the group on subdistricts in the Valley. Subdistrict 1 board is working on their 4th plan of water management. Their board has approved the plan and will be reviewed by the RGWCD board, but a meeting has not been set yet. Subdistrict 5 did receive an approved Annual Replacement Plan but are waiting for an Substitute Water Supply Plan to be approved. This district has not been pumping since May 1. Subdistrict 4 is working to establish conservation easements on 12 circles. They may also be drying up 8 circles to help meet sustainability. They are working to revegetate soil and are working to restore historic stream reaches in that area.

Other subdistricts have a lot of moving projects and are working on permanent forbearance agreements.

Darin Schepp, Division Water Resources, Division No 3, noted that the Rio Grande River peaked in early May and the basin is currently at 12% of normal snowpack. Precipitation outlook looks to be below normal. He noted that the Rio Grande is anticipated to have a 365,000 acre feet annual flow index and the Conejos River at 225,000 acre foot annual flow index. He mentioned that abandonments protests need to be in by June 30.

Erin Minks commented that communication at these meetings and others help her stay on top of legislation that may affect the Rio Grande Basin. There is a bill coming out of New Mexico on Rio Grande Basin that she is watching. She asked that folks contact Erin if there are any bills that relate to the Valley or Rio Grande Basin.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

The next:

Roundtable meeting: July 12, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.

Executive Committee: July 12, 2022, 1:00 p.m.