

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 14, 2023, at 2:00pm
Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Alamosa, Colorado

Call To Order

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

The membership attendance is included in the membership spreadsheet. A quorum was determined to be present.

The minutes from the February 14, 2023, meeting were approved as presented.

Public Comment:

Jenny thanked the group for their support with the Monte Vista Crane Fest.

Heather announced that Nathan was appointed to be the Rio Grande Basin's CWCB representative. Travis Smith thanked Heather for her past service and thanked Nathan his willingness to serve on the CWCB Board.

Sharon Vaughn with the San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex noted that there is a new headquarters building for the Valley at the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge.

Sarah Stoeber, SLV Council of Governments, noted that they are working on an intergovernmental agreement for opposing water exports. She introduced Craig Bearclaw and he noted that he will be looking into federal funding and resources to share with the community.

Nathan noted that there were several roundtable appointed positions open. Daniel Boyes Letter of interest was the only letter received for the Watershed Health Position. Nathan asked for any nominations from the floor. Daniel Boyes was appointed Watershed Health Representative. Judy Jolly submitted her letter of interest for the PEPO Liaison, there were no further nominations. Judy Jolly was appointed PEPO Liaison.

Nathan stated that he would need to step away from the Roundtable Chair as his time would be dedicated to the CWCB State board position. Travis nominated Heather Dutton to complete the 2023 Chair term. Mike seconded the nomination. Heather was elected as Chair. Cindy nominated Kevin Terry to fill Heather's position as Vice Chair. Judy seconded the nomination. Kevin was elected Vice Chair. Heather took over the chair position, effective immediately.

Fay Hartman with American Rivers gave an updated on Federal Funding Opportunities. They continue to follow the Federal Funding streams including NRCS funding and Forest Service Funding through the Inflation Reduction Act. Currently, \$1 billion is allocated for 2023 NRCS funding within the IRA funding. The Forest Service has funding allocated through BIL and IRA. Priority landscape is currently the Front Range. The BLM has been allocated 50 million under IRA for drought resilience and riverscape restoration (IRA). The San Luis Valley is a priority watershed for Colorado BLM. It was recommended to connect with field offices and state leadership. The Reclamation (BIL) programing for Environmental

Water Resource Projects has a Deadline March 28, 2023, with a 75% match. The Rio Grande has funding opportunities through IRA equaling \$4 billion for drought mitigation and habitat restoration. America the Beautiful Funding preproposal project due date is in April 2023. Full proposal is due in July which will be invitation only. This funding does include staffing and capacity element.

Jeff Rodriguez, CWCB staff, gave an update from the state board. He noted that CWCB and CDA is having a joint meeting focusing on the Robust Ag section of the Water Plan. He also reminded the group of some deadlines and events that are approaching.

- The Turf Replacement Program closes March 31, 2023.
- Drought Summit will be May 31 and June 1.
- C-9 Roundtable Summit on November 14th (Denver).
- WSRF deadline is April 1 and followed by the June 1 deadline (June 1 is the Fiscal Year due date).
- PEPO meeting will be held March 17th.
- Water Plan Grant Deadline is July 1st.

Wayne Schwab with Trinchera Irrigation presented his funding request for a Levy Diversion Study. He noted that the current structure is 40 years old and is in disrepair. This portion of the project cost is \$22,000 with \$16,500 from the roundtable being requested and \$5,500 match. 37 shareholders are directly affected by this diversion. Judy moved to approve funding. Nathan seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Kevin Terry and Tanner Dutton presented their project funding request for “Trout Houses”, Toilet Replacement within the Divide District in partnership with Trout Unlimited. They noted that many of the toilets are 100 years old. The massive increase in use of public lands this has created a water quality concern with these outdated facilities. The roundtable request for this project is \$281,750 with a match of \$110,615. 9 toilets will be installed using this funding. Tanner noted that he has applied for title 2 funding for this project and if award, those funds will replace other toilets. Judy moved to fund this project. Nathan seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Heather Dutton, Ryan Unterreiner and Tony Aloia presented their funding request for the Beaver Creek Seepage Study. The reservoir was built in 1912 through 1914. Tony noted that the seepage is currently 24 acre feet per day. Phase one of this project will be a geotechnical study to complete drilling with the Dam Safety team and the State engineer. Depending on the results of phase one, phase two will be a grouting campaign, if feasible. It was noted that this reservoir has many stakeholders within the room including Conservancy Districts and Subdistricts. The budget for this project includes Basin fund request of \$50,000, \$120,000 CWCB request, with a match of \$39,800. San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, Trout Unlimited and CPW are contributing cash and in kind match to this project. Nathan moved to approve the project. Tim seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Nathan Coombs and Clint Crowe presented their project preview on the Sheep Creek Fire pond concept. Sheep Creek is a subdivision in the Conejos Canyon. During the fire in 2022 their pond was used for fire mitigation. A video was shared showing the helicopter collecting water from the pond. This subdivision has an augmentation through the Conejos Water Conservancy District and also have an early spring water right. This project will allow Conejos Conservancy District to augment the pond and keep the pond at a higher elevation so that it can be used for fire mitigation. The project would install two parallel

pipelines to exchange water in and out of the pond as needed. The request is for \$60,000 WSRF funding with a \$20,000 match.

Katherine Cody with Ducks Unlimited presented a project preview for the Monte Vista and Alamosa Wildlife Refuge for Restoration on the refuges. The project would remove manmade terraces that prevent the natural flow of water through the refuge's units. The total project is \$500,000 for the Monte Vista Wildlife Refuge and \$250,000 for the Alamosa NWR. CPW has a block grant that is also providing funding for this project. Sharon noted that downstream users on the Rock Creek drainage will most likely benefit by this naturalized flow.

Daniel Boyes, Rio Grande Restoration Project, presented a project preview for the Independent Ditch Project. He noted that the project is 3 miles upstream of Alamosa with the majority of shares are owned by the City of Alamosa. The headgate is currently inefficient and unsafe. Restoration and automation are the main two project deliveries. Another project will be doing stream bank restoration above this project. These projects will be coordinated to lower costs of mobilization. The total project cost is \$227,700 with a WSRF request of \$149,800.

Heather Dutton and Sarah Jones (Jones Family Farm) presented their project preview on Rye Resurgence Project. The project would partner with 10 farmers to grow 60 acres of Rye with 30 acres used for cover crop only and 30 acres grown out for value added crops. This crop is a low water use crop but would also provide a cash crop element to make it economically feasible for farmers. The total project cost is budgeted to be \$749,000. The funds would be used to clean, process and market rye.

Greg Peterson, Colorado Ag Water Alliance presented a project preview on his Drought Resiliency Projects. The program was offered in 2023 to provide flexible project funding for small projects for Farmers and Ranchers. \$375,000 is being allocated in 2023 to 30 projects around the valley. The goal for the coming funding cycle is to find more good projects and scale up current projects. Phase two will scale up 10-20 projects and fund 20-30 new projects. The budget is \$1.2 million, securing WSRF funding through basin, requesting \$75,000 from each roundtable. Phase two will provide funding through 2026. Currently, Wilson Water Group is looking over all the projects.

Judy Lopez noted that the Education Committee is hosting a Snow Survey Tour and Tour of Wolf Creek Ski Area on March 29th.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.