

**Interbasin Compact Committee
Gunnison Basin Roundtable Meeting
Virtual and In-Person Meeting
Delta
May 15, 2023**

Voting Members Present:

Thomas Alvey	North Fork WCD
Steve Anderson	Agricultural
Bruce Bair	At-Large Member
Mike Berry	Tri-County WCD
Sonja Chavez	Upper Gunnison River WCD
Mike Cleary	Crawford Water Conservancy District
Kathleen Curry	Saguache County
Bobbie Daniel	Mesa County
Allen Distel	Bostwick Park WCD
Joanne Fagan	Ouray Municipalities
Nancy Fishering	Montrose County
Steve Fletcher	At-Large Member
Austin Keiser	Grand Mesa WCD
Wendell Koontz	At-Large Member
Mark LaValley	At-Large Member
John McClow	House and Senate Ag Committees
Scott McInnis	Mesa County
Michael Murphy	Hinsdale County
Scott Murphy	Montrose Municipalities
Jim Plumbhoff	Industrial
Steve Pope	At-Large Member
Mark Ritterbush	Mesa Municipalities
Mark Roeber	Delta County
Neal Schwieterman	Recreational
Adam Turner	Local Domestic Water Supplier
Richard Udd	Delta Municipalities
Martha Whitmore	Ouray County

Voting Members Excused/Absent:

Cary Denison	Environmental
Jonathan Houck	Gunnison County
Dan Murphy	Hinsdale Municipalities
Bill Nesbitt	Gunnison Municipalities
Dave Traylor	Ute WCD
Vacant	Colorado River Water Conservation District

Liaisons and Non-Voting Members Present:

Sharon Dunning (Assistant Recorder), Raquel Flinker (CRWCD), Jedd Sondergard (USBLM), Ryan Unterreiner (CPW).

Public:

Scott Campbell (The Freshwater Trust), Sue Hansen (Montrose County), Luke Gingerich (J-U-B Engineers, Inc.), Alyssa Clarida (Colorado West Land Trust), Dick Kirkpatrick and Andy Wick (Orchard City Irrigation District), Susie Bilberry (Delta CD/DCID), Cindy Dozier (Club 20), Craig Ullmann (Applegate Group), Paul Kehmeier (Colorado Dept of Agriculture), Michael Schultz (private citizen), Mitch Thomas, Niles Riese (Orchard City Irrigation District/Fogg Ditch), Katie Radavich (Rad Earth Solutions/Redlands Water and Power), Kyle Vanderberg (Redlands Water & Power Co), Ben Katz (Western Slope Conservation Center), Mary Bachran and Jeremiah Garcia (Town of Paonia), Jeff Crane (Farmers Ditch), Cal Campbell (NF Farmer's Ditch), Brad Burritt, Janet Quinn, Wyatt Wilson (Durkee Ditch Co), Shana Harness (Grand Mesa Natural Resource Consulting), Tom Kay (Short Ditch Extension Co), Justin Musser (Montrose County FCC Services), Leslie Klusmine (Town of Paonia), Kathy Swartz (Western Slope Conservation Center), Tom Dwyer (Wright Water Engineers), Eric Krch (Engineer), Dan Gibbs (DNR), Russ Sands, Robert Sakata, Ashley Garrison, Elizabeth Schoder, Nora Flynn, Emily Smalz (CWCB), Heather Dutton (SVWCD), Savannah Nelson (PEPO), Hannah Holm (American Rivers), Steve Anders (USGS), Doug Schwenke (JDS-RESPEC), Jonathan Kelly (Wright Water Engineers), Cory Heiniger (Paonia PW Dept), Greg Peterson (CAWA), David Harold (Farmer), Marshall Haworth, Ken Quandt (Unknown).

Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m. by Chairperson Wendell Koontz.

Roll Call/Introductions

After roll call a quorum was declared to be present.

Agenda Approval

Alan Distel moved to approve the agenda as presented. Kathleen Curry seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from the March 20, 2023 Meeting

Tom Alvey moved to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2023 meeting as presented. Nancy Fishing seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

At Large Member Election

An election was held to fill the At-Large seat recently vacated by Justin Blair. The vacancy was advertised in local newspapers and relevant websites. Four applications were received: Cindy Dozier, Ben Katz, Mike Schultz and Mark LeValley. Cindy Dozier removed herself as a candidate stating she was waiting for a different seat on the Roundtable.

Ballots were collected and tallied and Mark Levalley was declared the winner with greater than a 2/3rd vote.

Education Committee Report (Savannah Nelson)

Savannah Nelson reported the Education Committee has been focused on the public education campaign. They are putting advertisements in local papers and adding a social media element as well. They are also planning to send out a newsletter this month and are regularly updating the website. They are working on the application for the next PEPO grant, which is due June 1.

Raquel Flinker gave an update on the PEPO budget. They plan to have a draft application to the PEPO committee next week. It will be similar to last year's application with an expanded newspaper campaign. There was discussion on updating the Gunnison Basin Handbook and also better outreach to newcomers.

Salinity Reduction Grant Funding Opportunity (Paul Kehmeier)

Paul Kehmeier, with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, discussed a funding opportunity offered by the BOR for decreasing salinity in the Colorado River. The application period opens in June and closes at the end of September. There is up to \$45M available to upper basin states. It is a laborious task to apply and help is available. Contact Susie Bilberry or Paul for information.

Grant Review Committee Report (Tom Alvey)

Tom Alvey introduced an adjustment to an existing grant and seven new grant requests. An eighth applicant, Crawford Mesa Water Users, dropped out since CWCB guidelines do not allow WSRF funds to be used for treated water improvements.

Stewart Mesa Funding Adjustment

At the January meeting the Roundtable approved \$30,000 in basin funds and \$275,000 in state funds for the Stewart Mesa Canal Diversion Modification and Restoration Project. Because of the CWCB guidelines, 10% of the total project must come from the basin. In order to comply our basin share would need to be \$39,198.

John McClow moved to approve the adjustment for Stewart Mesa from \$30,000 in basin funds to \$39,198 in basin funds. Marti Whitmore seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

a. Town of Paonia

This request is for a hydrogeological study of the Paonia spring system. The request is for \$25,000 in basin funds and \$122,975 in state funds. Part of the project will improve the collection system and measure water. The study part of the project was recommended by Wright Water Engineers to better understand the fluctuations and availability of water from the system. Paonia needs improvements to their domestic water system and this will be a first step in the process. This is a BIP project and the Committee recommends full funding.

Marti Whitmore moved to approve the request from the Town of Paonia for \$25,000 in basin funds and \$122,975 in state funds for a hydrogeological study of the Paonia spring system. Nancy Fishing seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

b. Short Ditch Extension

This request would allow the completion of a BOR funded pipe project to complete the piping of the Short Ditch Extension, a ditch company near Hotchkiss that irrigates 346 acres. The requested amount is \$55,000 in basin funds and \$70,505 in state funds. The funding is needed because of cost increases that the BOR won't cover. This is a project listed in the BIP with positive benefits to agriculture and improving aging infrastructure. The Committee recommends full funding, but with a slight adjustment to the basin/state split to be \$40,200 in basin funds and \$85,305 in state funds.

Allen Distel moved to approve the request from Short Ditch Extension for \$40,200 in basin funds and \$85,305 in state funds to complete the piping project of the Short Ditch Extension. Neal Schweiterman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

c. WSCC Farmers Ditch

This request is for the replacement of the Farmers Ditch Diversion from the North Fork of the Gunnison, near Paonia. The requested amount is \$100,000 in basin funds and \$200,000 in state funds. The Farmers Ditch diversion is an aging structure (over 100 years old), which has been identified as particularly dangerous for boaters and impassable for fish. The Western Slope Conservation Center (WSCC) is the project sponsor. A previous Stream Management Plan completed jointly by WSCC and North Fork Water Conservancy District (partially funded by WSRF) ranked this as one of the most necessary improvements on the river. The current diversion is very inefficient, dewateres the river in summer and is hard to operate. This is another BIP listed project and the Committee recommends full funding.

Jim Plumoff moved to approve the request from Western Slope Conservation Center for \$100,000 in basin funds and \$200,000 in state funds for the replacement of the Farmers Ditch Diversion. Neal Schweiterman seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

d. Durkee Ditch

This is another request for pipe assistance on a BOR project. The request is for \$88,807 in basin funds and \$176,193 in state funds. Durkee Ditch delivers water to Redlands Mesa near Hotchkiss, serving 16 shareholders and over 500 acres. This is a valuable project which protects a 1908 water right, preserves agriculture and replaces aging infrastructure. It is a BIP listed project. The Committee recommends reducing the basin funding to \$68,654 and asking the ditch company to put in \$20,000. This would be the company's only input. The state funding would remain the same at \$176,193.

Allen Distel requested language to be added to the motion stating funding is contingent upon approval of the BOR grant.

Austin Keiser moved to approve the request from Durkee Ditch Company in the amount of \$68,654 in basin funds and \$176,194 in state funds for the Durkee Ditch Pipeline Project, contingent upon approval of the BOR grant funding. Allen Distel seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

e. Colorado Ag Water Alliance (CAWA)

This request is to fund innovative drought projects by farmers. The request is for \$75,000 in basin funds and \$50,000 in state funds. CAWA is asking all RTs, except for the Metro, to help fund the second year of a program they started to identify and develop drought response programs identified by ag producers. The funds would be used to find new projects and scale up projects from this year's trials. Because of the amounts requested this month, the Committee recommends \$50,000 in basin funds and their requested \$50,000 in state funds.

Nancy Fishing moved to approve the request from Colorado Ag Water Alliance in the adjusted amount of \$50,000 from basin funds and \$50,000 from state funds for funding of innovative drought projects by farmers. Allen Distel seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

f. Redlands Water and Power

Redlands Water and Power requests \$33,327 in basin funds for a Systems Optimization Review (SOR) of their hydro power plant at the Redlands diversion near Grand Junction. Like the Town of Paonia, this study would begin a long-discussed project to improve and upgrade an existing facility. The WSRF funds would help leverage a \$100,000 request for a BOR Field Services grant. This is a BIP listed project and the Committee recommends full funding.

Allen Distel requested language to be added to the motion stating funding is contingent on approval of the WaterSmart grant in the amount of \$100,000.

Neal Schweiteman moved to approve the request from Redlands Water and Power for \$33,2327 in basin funds for a Systems Optimization Review contingent on approval of the WaterSmart grant in the amount of \$100,000. Bobbi Daniels seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

g. Delta Conservation District – Fruit Growers Reservoir

This is a request from Delta Conservation District on behalf of Orchard City Irrigation District (OCID) for \$100,000 in basin funds and \$150,000 in state funds to replace the headgate, valve and operating mechanism on Fruit Growers Reservoir, a Bureau of Reclamation owned dam near Orchard City. This is also a BIP listed project. The Committee recommends full funding.

Austin Keiser moved to approve the request from Delta Conservation District for \$100,000 in basin funds and \$150,000 in state funds to replace the headgate, valve and operating mechanism on Fruit Growers Reservoir. Jim Plumoff seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Kathleen Curry asked if the state funding amount would be available to fully fund the approved grants. Kathleen will follow up and get back with the Roundtable.

Snowpack and Spring Flooding Forecast (Raquel Flinker)

Raquel Flinker gave a hydrology update on snowpack and spring flooding for the Gunnison Basin. The Gunnison Basin is currently at 186% of the snowpack median. Raquel discussed snowpack, water supply forecast and flows for the North Fork, Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers.

Colorado Water Conservation Board Report (Steve Anderson)

Steve Anderson reported there hasn't been a CWCB meeting since the last Roundtable meeting. The next meeting will be in July somewhere in the Gunnison Basin.

Steve announced Becky Mitchell is going to become full-time with the Upper Colorado Commission, and although will still be part of the CWCB, she will no longer be Executive Director.

The drought summit will be May 31. Kathleen Curry will be a panelist. The reservations filled up quickly and the meeting is at capacity.

CWCB Updates (Elizabeth Schoder)

Elizabeth Schoder updated the Roundtable on the Drought Summit, 2023 Legislative Session and funding deadlines. She also discussed 1051 reporting, wildfire ready watersheds, the upcoming C9 Summit, draft SEIS and technical assistance.

Interbasin Compact Committee Report (Joann Fagan, Mark Roeber)

Joanne Fagan reported the IBCC has not met since the last Roundtable meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for June 8 in Glenwood Springs. The Committee is only meeting 3 times per year, and they have not met since February. Nancy Fishing brought up a concern about the Roundtable not being informed about legislation.

SB23-295 Colorado River Drought Task Force (J. Plumhoff, K. Curry, S. Anderson)

Kathleen Curry discussed the Colorado River Drought Task Force bill. It is a 17-member task force. The task force will have to prepare a report by December 15 to the Water Resources and Ag Review Committee. The focus is to prepare potential legislation to address compact compliance needs with parameters that specify any program ideas coming out of the task force would be based on a voluntary, temporary and compensated scenario and equitable to all basins. There was further discussion about how to get appointed and the requirements for a seat on the task force.

Nancy Fishing moved to send a letter to Speaker McClusky encouraging her to appoint a west slope individual to chair the task force. Marti Whitmore seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Wendell Koontz and Kathleen Curry will work on the letter.

Colorado West Land Trust (CWLT) Water Protection Strategy (Luke Gingerich, J-U-B Engineers)

Luke Gingerich with J-U-B Engineers, and Alyssa Clarida and Scott Kimble with CWLT, gave a presentation on the Colorado West Land Trust Water Protection Strategy.

The purpose of conservation easements is to preserve land primarily to limit development. The conservation easements are primarily agricultural working lands and wildlife habitat. The project objectives are to develop a water protection plan for the organization and provide additional services that help CWLT manage its deeded water interests and guide CWLT conservation efforts.

Big River Issue Discussion (John McClow)

The Yampa/White/Green Roundtable has established a Big River Committee. The discussion was about whether the Roundtable felt a committee was needed in the Gunnison Basin Roundtable. After some discussion, in order to keep a focus on the big river issues, it was decided John McClow, Steve Anderson, Kathleen Curry and others would report on big river issues at each meeting.

Public Comment

Sue Hansen commented the Roundtable is the mechanism to hear information on the western slope and feels it could be more open and transparent.

Jeremiah Garcia asked when the BIP language will be updated specifically regarding municipalities.

Russ Sands commented on what other roundtables are doing to be more involved about big river issues. Director Sakata added John McClow is a great resource for big river issues due to his involvement with the Water Congress. The Water Congress also has a webpage that shows the bills and tracks them. Russ Sands also discussed the language in the BIP and when the next update is scheduled.

Other Business

None.

Future Meetings

The next regular Roundtable meeting is July 17, 2023, 3:00 pm, in the Roubideaux Room in Delta.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Roundtable, the meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

Mike Berry, Recorder

Action Items

Kathleen Curry follow up and get back with the Roundtable on available state funding.

Wendell and Kathleen will work on a letter to Speaker McClusky encouraging her to appoint a west slope individual to chair the Colorado River Drought Task Force.