

**Yampa/White/Green River Basin
Roundtable Agenda
Wednesday, July 12, 2023
Location: CNCC Craig Campus
Room 185
2801 West 9th Street • Craig, CO
81625 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
**IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE IS
HIGHLY ENCOURAGED****

Meeting Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7575667369?pwd=ZnBJVFhmaS90b2RqWWVGNm94NWNZZz09>

Meeting ID: 757 566 7369

- 1. Call Meeting to Order:** Alden Vanden Brink called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM
- 2. Introduction of Members and Audience:** Roll call members. A quorum was met with 21 of the 30 voting members present. Members present were Sonja Macys, Tom Gray, Doug Overton, Julie Baxter, Steve Hinkemeyer, Alden Vanden Brink, Ken Brenner, Kacey Green, Rebecca Briesmoore, Callie Hendrickson, Madison Muxworthy, Kent Vertress, Frank Alfone, Jeff Comstock, Doug Davis, Doug Monger, Jeff Meyers, Chuck Whiteman, Chris Collins, Jennifer Holloway, Vince Wilczek. Non-voting members present were Pat O'Toole, Jonathan Bowler, and Jackie Brown.
- 3. Approve/Modify Agenda:** Frank Alfone moved to approve the agenda. Steve Hinkemeyer seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- 4. Review and Approve May 10, 2023 Minutes:** Chris Collins moved to approve the July minutes. Steve Hinkemeyer seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- 5. Public Comment:** (3 minute per individual or 5 minutes per group) Madison suggested to receive meeting materials more in advance before the meeting.
- 6. Budget Report, CWCB Update:** (15 min) Jeff Rodriguez & Jackie Brown Jeff reminded the group that August 1st is the WSRF and non-reimbursable investment project deadline which are statewide investments for regional supply needs and will apply to the 2024 projects bill. Annual WSRF allocations will be available after the September CWCB board meeting which will be reflected in the YWG Basin balance sheet during the first week of October. The Turf Replacement Program, Cycle 2 is open until the end of August. CWCB is expecting this cycle to be extremely competitive due to budget limitations and a number of projects that were submitted. Jenna Batson is the project manager and can provide more information regarding the program. The Wildfire Ready Watersheds Program and The Technical Assistance and Local Capacity Program are both accepting applications through the CWCB portal on a rolling basis. They need to be contracted by December of 2024 and spent entirely by December of 2026. An update for the Technical Assistance Program is that CWCB contractor is finally under contract. You can apply for those funds on a rolling basis and the CWCB is taking applications. Those technical assistance and local capacity funds are federal grant applications which assist with any federal grant applications. The climate change in Colorado report is expected to be finalized and released in late 2023. That is an update to the 2014 report and focuses on the newest kind of climate science and a synthesis of relevant climate science for water management in Colorado. CWCB hired a new water planning and climate impact

specialist, Emily Adid. CWCB is working on a summary document for the drought summit they held in June so all session recordings are available online here

<https://engagecwcb.org/drought-summit>.

Wildfire Ready Watersheds: <https://www.wildfirereadywatersheds.com/>

Colorado River issues: <https://cwcb.colorado.gov/colorado-river-commissioners-corner>

Climate Change in Colorado: <https://climatechange.colostate.edu/>

Jackie updated that Becky is now the full-time Colorado River Commissioner for the state of Colorado. This new position is now paid with 100 percent focus on the Colorado River and the negotiations taking place. She will also be communicating Colorado River issues back to the state through CWCB, the Commissioner's Corner, and DNR. The position before was an unpaid, appointed position. With that, CWCB will be hiring a new executive director which will be announced within the coming months. The SEIS is going through its second iteration and the state has been compiling comments. The state hired a consulting firm to interview all the board members on how the Colorado Water Conservation Board is operating. CWCB will hear from the consulting firm at their board meeting of the compiled results that come from all of the interviews conducted.

7. **DWR Update** (10 min) Erin Light updated on the measurement rules, and they have entered into stipulations with four of the seven protesters. Trial is set for late February of 2024. They have been actively involved in working with two of those remaining protesters. Their goal is to not have to go to trial with these rules. The abandonment process that was started in early 2020 continues. There are still several outstanding protests that have not been resolved for different reasons. There are two calls in place currently which are on Talamantes Creek and Bear River. The positions that Erin updated on during the May meeting will hopefully be posted for hiring by the end of the month of July.

8. Roundtable Projects and Committees:

- a. **PEPO** (5 min) Patrick Stanko and Ken Brenner Grant application was submitted by the June 1 deadline. They are still working on the event calendar to do public outreach within the surrounding communities using the new canopies.
- b. **Big River Committee** (30 min) Jeff Meyers and Ken Brenner
 - i. BRC update, The SEIS that was released in April was recently rescinded because the lower basin states such as Nevada, Arizona, and California reached an agreement and requested that the Bureau of Reclamation rescind the draft and add their plan as another alternative. The bureau agreed. At this time, it is unknown whether the new document includes the lower basins plan, but there is some evidence that suggests so. Jeff provided a summary of what the lower basin's plan entails. Zane Kessler included that the commissioners original call was 2-to-4-million-acre feet per year, to address the structural deficit. It's been stated by the state, the UCRC, and others in the upper basin that any meaningful fix on the big river is going to have to include permanent reductions of use by the lower basin. Ken added that although it was great to see the extra snowpack last winter, it did more harm than good from the standpoint of these negotiations.
 - ii. White River Management Plan Programmatic Biological Opinion action item, During the May meeting David Graf gave a detailed presentation on the White River Management Plan and the implication of going forward with a programmatic biological opinion on the White

River. He asked the Big River Committee to look into this and draft a letter of support on this matter. Rebecca explained that the White River planning team has been working approximately a decade on the White River management plan, by the Upper Colorado Endangered Fish Recovery Program to protect and recover endangered fish in the White River. The plan has just started the finalization processes and the potential next step is to go through the programmatic biological opinion. Without a PBO, that management plan will serve as a guidance document, but a PBO would have a cooperative agreement signed by parties involved in the planning team and would make that document an accountable action plan. Another component of what the PBO would do is provide protections for water users by creating an authentication source of water so that people with water projects over 100-acre feet don't have to go through an individual endangered species act section seven consultation. The planning team is set to make a decision in August. Doug Overton moved for the YWG BRT to send a letter of support to the US Fish and Wildlife Fish Recovery Program in name of David Graf. Sonja seconded the motion. Maddy and Alden abstained from voting. Motion passed.

- c. **IBCC** (10 min) Jeff Meyers and Ken Brenner
 - i. Drought Task Force, The legislation passed a bill saying that they would consider ways for Colorado to prepare for compact compliance and that include acquisition of water rights as well as other things. Jackie updated the group that she was appointed to the task force by Representative Lynch as the industrial representative, representing her employer, Tri-State Generation and Transmission because of the water rights they hold on the west slope. As of now, they have not been updated on when their first meeting is. However, the timeframe laid out in the legislation indicated July 15 as a deadline for finding a facilitator who it is assumed will be arranging meetings etc. There will be a total of 12 meetings between now and December 15. Jackie stated that her opinion of the mission of the task force would be to make sure that all members are on the same page with the body of knowledge that exists on the demand management work that has been done in the past.
- d. **Grant Committee & Action** (10 min) Steve Hinkemeyer updated the group on the change in the CWCB 2023 grant cycles by providing a revised grant summary sheet. He explained that in past years CWCB doesn't count money coming out of the YWG BRT account until the project gets approved at the CWCB meeting. The new accounting change that the CWCB is making is that whatever funds are in the YWG BRT account on July 1, plus the YWG BRT grants that were approved at the YRG BRT level, but not yet by the CWCB. With that, the YWG BRT new account balance is going to be \$173,588 after the September CWCB meeting. This is when the CWCB will decide how much money the YWG BRT gets for the next grant cycle which will be funded in early October. Steve is going to modify the guidelines according to this new accounting change and will bring the revised guidelines to the next meeting. Jeff explained that the change was made because the CWCB wanted to give the roundtables as much run time as they could so they could receive the full allocation.

- 9. Colorado River District Update** (15 min) Zane Kessler, Director of Government Relations for the Colorado River District, provided an overview of the 74th legislative session which was adjourned on May 8. Zane reminded the roundtable members that the River District Board of Directors holds bi-weekly legislative meetings throughout the legislative session, where they take input from partners and water users within the district. They engage in robust conversation about potential legislation and legislation that's been introduced. The board does take positions on all of the bills that that Zane is charged with lobbying at the Capitol. To be added to the email distribution list for the Colorado River District's legislative updates and meeting notifications, please email Stephanie Moore at Smoore@crwcd.org. Senate Bill 23-270, which was the stream restoration bill was a priority for the Department of Natural Resources. It underwent extensive amendments to narrow its focus before it was passed. Those amendments that narrowed its focus were generally a point of consensus between the proponents and the critics of the bill. As enacted into law, Senate Bill 23-270 states that a stream restoration project designed and constructed within a natural stream system that is limited to certain minor stream activities or has obtained permits and is under construction by August 1, 2023, does not cause material injury. The Eagle River Water and Sanitation District brought Senate Bill 150 which requires the labeling of disposable wipes. This has become a much bigger problem since the COVID-19 pandemic where wipes that are not flushable (with misleading labeling) have led to pipe blockages and financial burdens that are more prominent on rural utilities and water treatment facilities. The board of the River District supported that bill and was passed through the legislature without much objection. Landscaping HOAs can no longer prohibit an individual property owner from using zero scape, non-vegetative turf grass, or drought tolerant vegetative landscaping which the River District supported as well. Senate Bill 295, which created the Drought Task Force, has been the subject of controversy. The River District was involved in the creation of the Colorado River Drought Task Force. Although the task force is not required to make legislative recommendations, they are asked to come with recommendations for legislation that provide additional tools for the Colorado Water Conservation Board to collaborate with the two Westslope conservation districts and other relevant stakeholders in the development of programs that address drought in the Colorado River Basin. It also implicates some of the interstate commitments related to the Colorado River and its tributaries through conservation programs. The River District fought hard to ensure that any recommendations by the task force be consistent with the foundational agreements around demand management that have occurred over the last 10-15 years.
- 10. Outstanding Waters-Friends of the Yampa** (10 min) Jenny Frithsen & Kent Vertrees, The Outstanding Water project is part of a outreach effort that Friends of the Yampa is required to do. Friends of the Yampa joined the Outstanding Waters project in August of 2022. It's a three-year effort where they sample 8 times. They are with a group of stakeholders such as the Roaring Fork Conservancy, the Pew Charitable Trusts, American Whitewater, American Rivers, Water Resource Advocates. In July of 2022, the Southwest corner of the state was designated over 500 river miles, 22 stream reaches of outstanding water, which is the highest water quality that they have in the state of Colorado. These are awarded to the state's streams, rivers and creeks that have the highest water quality deemed by the state of Colorado. It's part of the Federal Clean Water Act. They are working with the Water Quality Control Division and Colorado Department of Health and The Environment. These are designated to protect existing water quality which is proven by doing water sampling. Then it goes through a rulemaking process with the

Water Quality Control Commission and CPSU. There are 12 standards that must be met or exceeded. They are collecting information on dissolved oxygen, pH levels, E. Coli., nutrient measurements (nitrate and ammonia) and seven different dissolved metals. They are also collecting information that demonstrates that the reaches have significant ecological or recreational value.

- 11. Airborne Snow Observatory** – action item (20 min) Jeff Deems provided an overview of what their program looks like. They currently monitor their mountain snow reservoir on a sparse number of SNOTEL stations. With those stations, they try to capture the dynamics of the mountain snowpack. However, with wildly disparate forecasts leads to uncertainty in snowpack volume which also leads to uncertainty in runoff forecasts, water management practices, and allocation/administration of water rights. Which leads them to the motivation behind Airborne Snow Observatories. This would move beyond the station measurements and measure the snowpack throughout the watershed at high resolution. They use a twin-engine aircraft, a light laser scanner or lidar and a spectrometer to determine snow depth, snow water equivalent, and snow albedo/reflectivity which provides much more certainty in determining how much snowpack is on our mountains. Airborne Snow Measurement (CASM) Workgroup - stakeholder led effort to build and sustain the ASO monitoring program in CO: www.coloradosnow.org
Jeff Deems: deems@airbornesnowobservatories.com
Dave Gochis: gochis@ucar.edu

- 12. Announcements:** Jeff Rodriguez announced that the location of the CWCB board meeting changed to the Elevation hotel in Crested Butte. Callie Hendrickson shared that the White River Conservation Districts Natural Resources meeting will be August 26th and they also have a forest coordinator position open. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please contact Callie for more information.

13. Dates and Tentative Agenda Items for Future Meetings:

- a. Next YWG BRT Meeting September 13, 2023 @ 6:00 PM CNCC Craig, Colorado

- 14. Adjourn** at 9:15