



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

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Arkansas Basin Roundtable Meeting – Annual Meeting

Minutes and Recorded Decisions

Wednesday October 11, 2023 12:30 pm

Pueblo Community College, Student Center Building

900 W. Orman Avenue

Pueblo, CO 81004

Members and Guests Present:

Mark Shea	Abba Ahmed	Jeff Rodriguez	Jeff DeHererra
Lauren Duncan	Greg Felt	Scott King	Gracy Goodwin
Gil Ramirez	Al Tucker	Greg Teter	Doug Brgoch
Sandy White	Rena Griggs	Mannie Colon	Justin Kurth
Jeris Danielson	Steve Kastner	Rachel Zancanella	Will Landin
Ariel Hacker	Dwayne McFall	Lee Miller	Robert Sakata
Aaron Hilshorst	Dave Schneider	Tim Canterbury	Andy Klakulak
Jack Goble	Marlissa Essells	Bryce Ehrlich	Kent Ricken
Tom Tharnish	Alex Zipp	Rich Hildebrandt	Lauren Ris
Tom Verquer	Russ Sands	Brad Lubbers	Daneya Esgar
Krystal Brown	Seth Clayton	Garth Schaefer	Roy Cue
Chris Woodka	Dan Mikalian		

1. Welcome and Introductions -

- **Introductions** – Mark called the meeting to order with introductions.
- **Quorum** was determined present, meeting commenced
- **Agenda approval** by consensus
- **Minutes of September 13, 2023** approved by consensus
- **Public comment** – Lauren Ris introduced herself as Executive Director of CO Conservation Board (CWCBC). Justin Kurth, field representative for Congresswoman Petterson, announced that water advisory councils will be held quarterly.

Lee Miller of Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District gave a summary of updates for the SB23-295 Colorado River Drought Task Force. Initially, no representatives from the front range were proposed to serve on the task force, but there were protests by the eastern slope, resulting in a number of positions for front range representation. The task force can meet up to 12 times between July and December, the target being creating tools and programs, and providing of recommendations for state legislation. The Arkansas Basin has a number of tools that the task force can use for reference, such as the 2001 Water Bank Program. Lee stated his hopes for “do no harm” and concerns about power plays to control the Colorado River, as the Arkansas River receives trans-basin diversions. Greg asked what the anticipated final product from the task force would be. Lee responded that there is not necessarily a strong vision of the end product yet, but there will be a report with a selection of ideas that people can generally agree on. Task force meetings are live and recorded at crdroughttaskforce.com and include time for public comment. Lee informed the Roundtable



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that the task force has majority rules, which some members do not feel appropriate to represent the river, which is a statewide river. The Arkansas River would be significantly impacted if it did not receive water from the Colorado River. For the Arkansas Basin, the Roundtable, and users, the focus should be on interstate tools. Demand management tools require very good measurement programs in place in the basin and statewide. There are numerous benefits from these tools and tracking, which currently are not used in many areas. Another period of shortage will inevitably come, and how we handle that depends on what tools are available. Lee continued that there seems to be a problem with understanding concepts between basins – the same words may mean different things in different basins. The Arkansas and South Platte come to the task force with an administrative mindset, and the west slope basins do not, for example. Terry asked what we could do to educate our legislatures, and what legislatures can do to truly assist the Colorado River problem. Lee reminded the group of Commissioner Mitchell’s “We Can Do Better” speech, and reiterated that Colorado needs better tools in place to address water issues. The challenge has been identified as the lower basin usage. Lee believes guidelines should be decided by the 7 basins and DC, not the task force and legislature, because we have enough people to fight with without fighting each other in Colorado. He reiterated his hope for “do no harm”. Steve asked if there were water storage discussions for reservoirs in Colorado. Lee responded that this has not yet become a focal point for the task force, likely because it’s too big of a challenge for their limited meetings. However, it could be a post-January discussion. The Roundtable affirmed interest in receiving an update on the task force at a later date.

2. Reports –

- **Executive Committee -**

Mark reported on the Executive Committee meeting held previously.

New members were announced:

- Commissioner Esgar, Pueblo County Representative
- Dave Schneider, Custer County Municipal Representative

Today is the Annual Meeting, where members vote on executive positions. Mark stated that everyone filling chair roles is willing to continue serving in those roles, and no other nominations have come forward. The Roundtable voted for chair positions and approved the following positions by consensus:

- Chair – Mark Shea
- Vice-Chair (Consumptive) – Steve Kastner
- Vice-Chair (Non-Consumptive) – Bob Hammel
- Recorder – Al Tucker
- IBCC – Jeris Danielson
- Needs Assessment Committee – Gracy Goodwin
- PEPO Liaison – Ariel Hacker

Aaron Hilshorst, Manager of Land and Water Resources at Climax Moly Mine, introduced himself to the Roundtable, stating his interest in the Industrial Seat. Mark noted that he had received an appointment letter from Climax Moly Mine. Tom moved to appoint Mr. Hilshorst to the position, and the move was seconded by Dwane. No



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members opposed, the motion passed unanimously. Appointment will become official after approval by IBCC Director Becky Mitchell.

Mark summarized the C-9 Summit and mentioned his preference for having Gracy step in for him at the event. If anyone has specific issues or questions they would like the Arkansas Basin Representatives to raise at the C-9 Summit on November 14th, they are encouraged to send them to Mark.

The most recent revision of the Bylaws are from 2016, so it may be time to update them, particularly regarding virtual attendance and other post-quarantine conducts. The DNR and CWCB may provide guidance for consistency across different guiding Roundtable documents. Doug requested that the Bylaws be distributed (available on “About Us” on the website, bottom of the page). Mark has contacted some consistently absent members and reported that Karen Salapich is stepping down.

Discussed the desire for a more streamlined approach to grant applicants and projects, to stay aware of what is happening in our basin, and for projects looking for funding aid. There is a request for clarity regarding managing water plan program grant updates.

- **CWCB Report – Jeff Rodriguez, Greg Felt;**

Jeff gave an overview of the C-9 Summit. The CWCB can reimburse for mileage and lodging for up to 10 roundtable members, including IBCC members. “Plus Ones” will be allowed, but please let Jeff know in advance. A draft agenda is available on the C-9 Website. C-9 Summit will double as November CWCB meeting.

The CWCB Deputy Director is now Anna Mauss.

WSRF Update: updated balance sheet is posted on the WSRF website. The allocation to basins was below the cap (a bit of extra money to distribute around the state, some basins did not meet goals), and additional funds are available statewide (\$9M total reserve, \$9.2M available in statewide fund now).

- WSRF Deadline – December 1
 - WPG Deadline – December 1
 - Wildfire Ready Watersheds still accepting applications
<https://www.wildfirereadywatersheds.com/> or contact Steve Reeves (steven.reeves@state.co.us) if interested in learning more. Need to be awarded 12/31/24 because of ARPA Funds
 - C9 Summit November 14th <https://forms.gle/mkn2mSLWrgxJFKZe6>
 - Technical Assistance Awarded 12/31/24; if interested contact Michael Regan (michael.regan@state.co.us)
 - Climate Change in Colorado Report <https://climatechange.colostate.edu/>
 - Colorado River Issues <https://cwcb.colorado.gov/colorado-river-commissioners-corner>
- Greg discussed the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP). The CWCB was approached by the Colorado River District, which proposed acquiring the Shoshone Powerplant water rights, which are senior non-consumptive water rights at approximately \$99million, and lease the



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Shoshone Powerplant for the remainder of its lifecycle. Mark asked the CWCB to consider that if that much state money is to be spent on water rights, it should be owned by the state of Colorado. Greg responded that many board members considered that the water right should be managed by the state and benefit the state, vs a single conservation district. Greg moderated 4 panels at CO Counties Conferences, and Greg and Terry joined WECO board meeting; will have CCI conference in winter where WECO will provide county commissioners water education, similar as they do to legislatures.

75th anniversary celebration Oct 21st at John Martin Reservoir, more info at John Martin Reservoir facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/JohnMartinReservoirUSACE/>

- **IBCC Report – Jeris Danielson**

The IBCC meeting will blend into the C-9 Summit. Becky Mitchell is now the IBCC Director.

- **Needs Assessment Committee – Gracy Goodwin**

Funding allocation is rebalanced. The Arkansas has succeeded as a basin in using the full allotment of funds. \$750,000 in basin funds were replenished on October 1st. The deadline for WSRF grants is December 1st. The Roundtable would like an overview of projects before then if they would like a support letter. For WSRF grants, project statements and requests are due to Gracy by February 14th.

- **Ag/Muni Committee – None until after irrigation season.**

- **Enviro/Rec –Rena Griggs**

Salida Low-Head Dam removal scheduled for October 23rd. Mark requests pictures.

Rena reported that Barbara Biggs lost the battle with cancer, expressing sorrow for the loss of her as a person and to the water community.

- **Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative –**

Jonathan is excused absence; California Gulch in Lake County reimbursements sent out last week for forestry and mine land reclamation and culvert project. Working on funding through NFWF America the Beautiful Program. Hired Bryce Ehrlich at ARWC Staff for project/initiative support. Continuing to work in La Veda, Wildfire Ready Watershed grant considered for mitigation projects. Chasing community wildfire defense grant with Beulah Fire Dept. Bob stated that Community Outfitters will fund again, and that this will be presented in November.

- **PEPO – Ariel Hacker**

Met October 5th, multiple roundtable liaisons, CWCB members, and some groups with education/outreach projects such as WECO were in attendance. One group led by Stacy Beaugh and Carrie Padgett will be providing outreach materials to roundtables as a part of the first phase of their education and outreach campaign. There will be a PEPO breakout session at the C9 Summit and discussed having a separate annual workshop for PEPO collaboration. If anyone has PEPO ideas, discussions, topics, questions, email or talk to Ariel for collaboration at C-9 Summit. Bob mentioned that the Colorado River has partnered with organizations for physical PEPO centers and likes the idea for the Arkansas Basin to further develop PEPO or have “storefront” physical locations, with the theme being water in the Arkansas Basin.

3. Upcoming Meetings –

- Arkansas Basin Roundtable – November 8, 2023



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- Executive Committee – 10:30am
 - Roundtable – 12:30pm
 - Committees
 - Needs Assessment – As necessary
 - PEPO – October 19th
 - Environmental/Recreation Committee – TBD
 - Agriculture/Municipal Committee – TBD
 - IBCC – at C-9 Summit
 - C-9 Summit, November 14, Westin Hotel in Westminster
- 4. Adjourn; Mark, 2:53pm**