

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
April 9, 2024 at 2:00pm
Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Alamosa, Colorado

Call to Order

Kevin Terry, Vice Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

A quorum was determined to be present. The agenda was approved.

Public Comment:

Connor Born announced that the Restoration Project is doing a work day on the Alamosa Refuge (sign up on Restoration website), April 20.

The Habitat Steering Committee will be meeting on Earth Day.

Jeff Rodriguez, CWCB Staff gave an overview of the CWCB Guide and CWCB updates. A Water projects bill was introduced last week requesting \$23.3 million for Water Plan Grant program. \$2 Million for Turf Program, Tech Assistance and Capacity Programs. The Water Conditions Committee meeting will be April 23, 2024, 9:30 am. Next deadline is June for WSRF Grant deadline.

CWCB Guide is in working draft form currently. This will be a guide for the roundtables, IBCC and CWCB and how they coordinate together. The guide will serve as a manual on conflicts of interest, code of ethics, CORA, COML, public comment, and accessibility. The draft will be provided at the May State board meeting and will be open for public comments.

Daniel Boyes asked for a letter of support for a Bureau of Reclamation Grant for several ditches from South Fork down the Rio Grande to Alamosa. This is a grant for planning and design of these projects. Judy moved to approve the letter of support. Virginia seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Craig Cotten, DWR Division 3 Engineer noted that the irrigation season started April 1 with low stream flow. 15% curtailment on the Rio Grande and 20% on the Conejos River. A Supreme Court of the United States hearing was held March 20th concerning the Texas vs New Mexico, and Colorado lawsuit. The Rio Grande Compact meeting will be held April 26, in El Paso. The annual Costilla Creek Compact meeting is tentatively set for May 3rd in San Luis. Craig noted that a new state engineer, Jason Ullmann was appointed.

Education Committee- Cassandra McCuen announced an upcoming Baca National Wildlife Refuge Tour that will be held May 17th at 9 am, and an Alamosa Refuge Tour is tentatively planned for June 7th. A Colorado River District tour is planned for June 13 and 14. The Ed Committee is working on details for the PEPO Grant. Cassandra also noted that the Education Committee is sponsoring the Rio Trio.

Kevin noted that there are several project previews for funding requests on the agenda. He noted that the basin fund balance is \$440,000. Jeff noted the normal annual \$300,000 allocation should be received after the September State Board meeting.

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and Trout Unlimited – Ventero Creek Restoration Project was reviewed. The project will install Auto-tarps, monitoring equipment, and repair a diversion structure. It was noted that it was a senior water right downstream of Sanchez Reservoir that currently cannot divert its allotment at low flows. The Basin request ask is ~\$35,000-\$45,000 range.

The Great Outdoors Fund, Lobatos Bridge Outdoor Classroom and Recreation Enhancement Project was reviewed. The project includes a Boat ramp, picnic tables, and bathrooms installed at the recreation area. It will also have an “Outdoor classroom” with 14 educational kiosks with a variety of ed topics. The budget is still being finalized. BLM will maintain the area and there may be an opportunity for a “Friends of the Lobatos Bridge” group to help with upkeep. Security will also be included to help preserve the cliffs and archaeological sites.

Colorado Malting Company presented their project for Malting Infrastructure upgrades. The project was developed after the Rye Resurgence project was funded last year. The ask is for \$75,000 from basin, and remainder from State. The project will scale the processing and grain market in the basin with the hope to offer a market for diversification of crops. Jason Cody noted that the price point on the commodity will be at a higher level. He noted that Laws Whiskey has a popular product made from SLV Rye. There were several roundtable members with a concern with providing money for a “for profit” organization. Mike Gibson noted that he is opposed to the project. There were multiple comments about the long term, creative benefits of the project. Nathan Coombs noted that the infrastructure to the valley is a benefit. Keith Holland noted that he has grown Rye on his farm and the water savings is not much better than other grain crops when growing a malt quality crop. There was concern that this group might not be the best financial source for this project. Jeff clarified that “for profit” companies are eligible for these funds. Heather noted that water use for malt barley is around 18 in, and Rye takes 10-12 inches.

Greg Peterson, CAWA previewed his Master Irrigator Implementation Project. He noted this was the 3rd year of the program in the San Luis Valley with 100 participants. The implementation portion of this project will purchase soil moisture probes and help participants with irrigation scheduling. 25 participants would like to cost share soil moisture probes on farms. Technical support will also be provided in the local area for training and education on soil moisture probes.

Ranching in the SLV Education Panel included Sherry Haugen, James Henderson, Sam Smidt, and Jim Payne. They discussed challenges and opportunities in Ranching in the San Luis Valley.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm.

