

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

Call to Order

Heather Dutton, Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Introductions were made.

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

Heather opened the floor for nomination for Roundtable Chair. Casandra McCuen nominated Amber Pacheco. The nomination was seconded, and Amber was elected unanimously.

Minutes of the June 11, 2024, minutes were approved as presented.

Public Comment

Rio de La Vista thanked Heather Dutton for her service as Roundtable Chair.

DJ Enderle, City of Monte Vista requested a letter of support for the City of Monte Vista for Community Change project. The letter of support is for a \$12.9 million grant through the EPA. It includes 11,200 feet of pipeline through town on the Lariat ditch with a trail system placed on top of the pipeline. Gigi Dennis noted that the Lariat Ditch Board is in favor of the project. Heather moved to approve the letter of support. Pete seconded the motion and the motion carried. Charlie Spielman stated that he was opposed to the project. Karla Shriver abstained from the vote as a Lariat Ditch Shareholder.

Anna Greenburg invited everyone to an after meeting social at the Spare Keg.

Robert Sakata, Colorado Department of Ag, noted that the Commissioner of Ag is in the Valley today and they are holding an open house from 5:30-6:30 at the Farm Park.

Pat McDermott, Colorado Division of Water Resources noted that the Rio Grande is at 76% of average water flow at the Del Norte gauge with 13% Curtailment. The Conejos River is at 82% of the long-term average with 12% curtailment. Pat shared snowpack and precipitation compared to last year.

Russ Sands, Colorado Water Conservation Board, gave an update on the Inter Basin Compact Committee meeting. Drought Resilience Action Plan was discussed at the last meeting which addresses 740,000 AF/year gap in the 2023 Water Plan, identifies strategies to make Colorado thrive, buffering Colorado from drier, warmer, and drought conditions, and build cross basin collaboration and momentum. The Colorado Airborne Snow Measurement Program is one concept that IBCC is discussing.

Jeff Rodriguez, CWCB reminded the board about upcoming events. The C9 Summit will be October 1 & 2 in Crested Butte at the Arts Center. CWCB Guide draft is out and will be finalized this fall. CWCB deadlines include Water Supply Reserve Fund Grant (August 1), Wildfire ready accepting applications, and the Technical Assistance and Local Capacity grants need to be contracted by December 31, 2024.

Casandra McCuen, Education Committee, gave an overview of the Colorado River Basin Tour that roundtable members attended.

The education committee organized a WaterWise Panel Discussion. Gigi Dennis (City of Monte Vista), Catherine Moravec (Colorado Springs Utilities, Water Conservation), DJ Enderle (City of Monte Vista City Planner), Senator Cleave Simpson (RGWCD, Colorado Senator) were the panelists. The panel discussed how they are conserving water and planning for the future in their communities.

Funding Requests

Daniel Boyes, RGHRP, presented the Rio Grande Teacup River and Flood Irrigation Project. The project includes 6 ditches between SF and Del Norte which include the Anaconda, Meadow Glen, Independent, Minor Ditch, Ehrowitz and Bauer Ditch. Aging and inefficient irrigation infrastructure on river and down ditch is a major concern for this project. Many of the ditches cannot get access to their full priority due to aging diversion dams and inefficient headgates. This project will survey flood irrigation, river diversions and complete 60% of designs and permitting requirements for construction. Danial shared the basin and CWCB goals that the project would meet. The total project cost for this phase is \$481,866 with a \$88,500 WSRF request (48,500 Basin Fund). Virginia moved to approve the request. Cindy seconded the motion and the motion carried. It was discussed that partners may abstain from voting if they feel they have a conflict of interest. Heather stated she felt she had no conflict of interest because she has no financial gain from the project. Cary Aloia and Casandra McCuen abstained from voting on the project. Tim stated that he is opposed to the project.

Jason Cody with Colorado Malting Company presented their project, Colorado Malting Company Expansion. Jason outlined the vision and operations of Colorado Malting Company. He noted that one of their goals is to provide an alternative market for grains grown in the San Luis Valley. Jason stated that the quality and variety of rye that they need takes less water than alternative crops. The project is combining this grant, if awarded, and a private loan to expand to the Malting capacity to 1,700 tons annually. He noted that the funding will allow the Malting Company to offer more reasonable prices to the farmers within the Valley. An increase the market for SLV Rye will improve soil health, wind erosion, and support sustainable ag with improved prices and aquifer health. Heather explained that she predicts that the 750 acres of rye grown will yield a 500/acre feet water savings per year. Heather shared a spreadsheet outlining the water savings calculation. The project cost is \$638,000 with \$111,500 basin request and \$526,500 State WSRF request. Cindy Medina noted that she didn't feel like the project showed a significant water savings and it wasn't a good fit for roundtable funds. Judy shared that she felt any water savings is significant and we need to create new markets for the agricultural communities. Judy moved to fund the project. Michael seconded the motion. Derek Schreck noted he will have to cast three separate votes as he held two proxies for Jim Ehrlich and Keith Holland. Mike Gibson left a written comment as he had to leave the meeting early. He noted that he is opposed to the project as it is a for profit ag business and even if guidelines allow for profit businesses, he feels it opens the roundtable up to different funding requests. It was noted that Jim Ehrlich abstained from the vote. The motion was carried with fifteen in favor (3 by proxy), three opposed (1 proxy).

Sue Swift Miller, Great Outdoors Fund presented the Lobatos Bridge Outdoor Classroom and Recreation Enhancement project. Sue outlined the project and explained changes to the project since the last roundtable meeting. The project includes a boat ramp and educational signs. The Basin request is \$101,928. The estimate for the boat ramp is \$60,000 and \$41,928 for water education signs. Additional

project funds that have been raised to date amount to \$242,927. Judy moved to approve the project. The motion was seconded, and the motion carried.