

July 22, 2024 CBRT Roundtable Minutes. Update on **stream management plans** funded by CBRT grants; **Upper Basin Alternative** submitted to BuRec in 2026 Colorado River negotiations; 2024 upper Colorado River hydrology report.

1. **Upcoming Meetings & Deadlines.**

- a. CWCB meeting July 17-18 in Walden in the North Platte Basin.
- b. Sep 20 Colorado River District Annual State of the River Seminar CMU.
- c. September 23, CBRT Roundtable Meeting, Glenwood Springs, CO
- d. Oct 1-2 C9 Summit in Crested butte.

2. Recorder: These minutes were prepared by Ken Ransford, Esq., CPA, 970-927-1200, ken@kenransford.com.

3. Today's July 22, 2024, meeting was **conducted by Zoom and held in person at the Colorado River District Office.**

4. **CBRT Roundtable Members Present:** Peggy Bailey, James Dilzell, Randi Kim, Kirsten Kurath, Brendan Langenhuizen, Merritt Linke, Ed Moyer, Ken Ransford, Charlie Spickert, Greg Williams Ute Water

5. **Guests:** Matt Aboussie Colorado River District Communications Director, Jeff Bandy Denver Water, Abby Burke, Paul Bruchez, Nathan _____ Denver Water, Jeff Rodriguez CWCB, Clayton Colbert MCWD, Jackie Fisher Orchard Mesa Irrigation Dist, Brent Gardner Smith independent journalist, Ashley Garrison CWCB, Virginia Harrington Holy Cross Cattlemen's Association, Heather Lewin Roaring Fork Conservancy, Vanessa Logsdon BRWG, PJ Murray Aspen, Carl Neureuther NRCS, Amy Ostdiek CWCB, Maria Pastore, Dave Payne Ute Water, Wendy Ryan, Heather Sackett Aspen Journalism, Robert Sakata Colo Dep't of Agriculture, Russ Sands CWCB, Holly Leppak SGM, Doug Winter Middle Colorado Watershed Council

6. **Summary of decisions made at the meeting; more detail below on the discussion.**

- a. The CBRT agreed to provide a letter of support for CWC B and BuRec grant proposals to build the Jones Pond, holding 20-50 acre-feet, along the Fraser River near Tabernash.

7. **River Forecast.** The Colorado River flows at the **Dotsero gage on July 22, 2024**, is **1,790 cfs**, compared to its median flow of 1,950 on this date, expected excepted to drop to 1,400 by the end of the week.¹ The Colorado River is flowing **3,200 cfs at Cameo** compared to its median flow of 3,600 on this date.²

8. **March 25, 2024 minutes were approved.**

9. **IBCC Report Russ Sands, CWCB.**

¹ Dotsero forecast: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/uv?site_no=09070500.

² Cameo forecast: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/co/nwis/uv/?site_no=09095500&PARAMeter_cd=00065.00060

- a. **New Low Regrets strategy.** The CWCB has revised the **Low Regrets strategy to emphasize issues the IBCC would like to focus on.** The IBCC wants input from the Roundtables to identify topics to address further. The following issues were discussed at the IBCC meeting for example.
 - i. **Should the IBCC stabilize funding for CASM Colorado Airborne Snow Measurement?**
 - ii. What should IBCC explore as part of its Drought Resiliency Action Plan?
10. **CWCB Hydrology Update, Dave Kanzer, Colorado River District.** Colorado had an average snowpack except for Grand Mesa which was below average. Inflow into Lake Powell was about 85% of average.
- a. **Glen Canyon is in the middle release tier and will release 7.48 maf in 2024 and 2025 water years,** but may release 9 maf in 2026.
 - b. We started the year with high reservoirs, from rainfall in early spring, and a lot of maintenance that caused reservoirs to release.
 - c. La Nina conditions are developing.
 - d. **Lake Powell is 40% full** on July 1, 2024, the same as a year ago; **Blue Mesa is 76% full,** and **Flaming Gorge is 84% full.** Outflows from Lake Powell are lower.
 - e. **Temperatures have been very warm the past 12 months;** precipitation has been normal. Colorado Basin SWE was near average, and similar to 2016.
 - f. The Colorado River peaked at 18,000 cfs, bolstered by the Coordinated Reservoir Release Operations.
 - g. **Mismatch between Snotel and Airborne Snow Observatory ASO predictions.** We had average snowpack but more water came through in the Roaring Fork and Eagle River districts due to mismatch between **Snotel sites, which predicted less, and ASO which predicted more. The opposite occurred in some Southwest basins,** where Snotel predicted more would runoff than actually occurred.
 - h. Colorado River flow at Kremmling has dropped below 1,000 CFS and we are phasing into a drier season. **The forecast is for drier than normal conditions.**
11. **CWCB Report Jeff Rodriguez.**
- a. C9 Summit is Oct. 1-2, 2024, in Crested Butte. Three tours are scheduled in the afternoon from 1-4 PM on Oct 1. Early registration is now open for roundtable members; Roundtable members are encouraged to register and select a tour; see the QR Code at the CWCB website. The CWCB can reimburse up to 10 members per basin for lodging and mileage.
 - b. **The CWCB Guide has been released;** review it at CWCB.org; send comments to Jeff Rodriguez no later than October 1; it will be finalized this fall.

- c. **Water conditions meeting** is July 23, 2024, at 9:30 AM; it discusses snow and water conditions on a statewide scale. These meetings are recorded and posted on the CWCB You Tube page.
 - d. **August 8, 2024, Colorado River Webinars.**
 - e. **July 1 was the deadline for fall Water Plan Grants; 41 grants were submitted requesting over \$11 million funding.**
 - f. **Wildfire Readiness Grant Applications are still being accepted;** they need to be contracted for by December 31, 2024, and September 30 is the contract deadline to submit applications.
 - g. The **WSRA account balance is \$369,000;** the CBRT is on track to receive the full **\$300,000 allocation in October 2024.**
12. Amy Ostdiek, CWCB, Interstate Water Commission Update.
- a. Post 2026 Interim Guidelines update. The Upper Division alternative was submitted to BuRec in March 2024. **Reclamation is developing a range of alternatives for the NEPA analysis.** Until this is released, it is not clear what will be needed to reach agreement on the 7-state alternative.
 - b. **The No Action Alternative** serves as a baseline against which the other alternatives will be measured. **This continues the prior protocol in effect since before the 2007 Interim Guidelines** since they expire in 2026.
 - c. Update on 602(a) guidelines. Colorado’s view is that BuRec should be looking at implementing the Long Range Operating Criteria implemented pursuant to the 1968 law. Colorado and the Upper Basin states need to store water in Lake Powell and the Upper Basin reservoirs to meet downstream obligations. **The Upper Basin should control when reservoirs release** as a component of the No Action Alternative. The CWCB recommends an analysis of how much water is needed to be stored to meet 602(a) storage requirements: **How much water should be stored, and how do release decisions get made?** Reclamation made an imminent need release. The Upper Basin states believe that releases should be made in coordination with the four Upper Division states, and also include full recovery of these reservoirs.
 - d. **BuRec has not released a Lower Basin Consumptive Uses and Losses report since 2005.** In June, BuRec released uses; the **Lower Basin continues to use 10 to 11 million acre feet per year** while the **Upper Basin is using about 4 maf** per year.
 - e. June 2024 UCRC meeting highlights. **\$800,000 was spent on the CASM Airborne Snow Observatory program.** The commission will next focus on stream gages.
 - f. The UCRC Commission directed staff to explore **how to get credit to irrigators** who reduce consumption through **the SCPP System Conservation Pilot Program since it cannot be shepherded downstream.** Demand Management is very prescriptive, and is dictated by federal and state law. The CWCB is preparing a report on this due to the UCRC on August 12.

- g. CWCB staff’s focus is to gather more information and “lessons learned” about demand management from the 2023-2024 SCPP programs. Amy is requesting personal anecdotes from SCPP participants.
 - h. **Bailey Leppak asked how Colorado could get credit for SCPP that has already been done; Amy Ostdiek said the CWCB is focused on the future.**
 - i. See the **Commissioner’s Corner** for updates by Becky Mitchell.
13. Colorado River District Report. See video recording of last week’s board meeting.
- a. The Colorado River District has hired **Matt Aboussie as its new communications director.**
 - b. 10 State of the River meetings were held this spring with over 750 people attending.
 - c. **The SCPP re-authorization bill has been introduced in the US Congress.**
 - d. Shoshone water right purchase. Middle Park Water Conservancy district just contributed \$100,000, and the **Colorado River District has raised over \$54 million** toward the purchase. **They are preparing to file for a Change of Water Right once an Instream Flow Agreement has been reached with the CWCB.**
 - e. James Dilzell asked how the roundtable could help; Brendan Langenhuizen recommended that **roundtable members report back to their boards and constituents, and to request letters of support.** The Colorado River District is not yet ready for public outreach. The Colorado River District will let the Roundtable know how it can support this in the future.
 - f. Abby Burke asked about **Zebra Mussels** which have been found in the Government Highline Canal and in the Colorado River up to DeBeque; Brendan **does not have an update.**
14. PEPO Update, James Dilzell, standing in for Amy Drexler-Dries.
- a. We have \$625 for website updates; Ken Ransford suggested this be spent on putting new minutes on the website.
 - b. **Paula Stepp has been selected as the new PEPO coordinator** beginning in October.
 - c. Greg Williams of UTE Water would like to **have the CBRT Website reference the CWCB Commissioner’s Corner.**

Update on Stream Management Plans

15. Grand County Watershed Plan. Amy Foulk, Learning by Doing, updated the Roundtable on this program.
- a. **“Collaboration happens at the speed of trust.”**
 - b. **Learning By Doing has been collecting data since 2017** to make better water management decisions to improve the upper Colorado River.
 - c. Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Denver Water, Northern, Grand County, Colorado Trout Unlimited, TNC, Colorado River District, American Rivers, are members.

- d. **\$10m was earmarked for stream restoration** as a condition of approving the 30,000 af Windy Gap and 18,000 af Moffatt Firing Projects. This will **only be released when the projects have been completed.**
 - e. The goal is to **restore and enhance aquatic environments upstream of the Williams Fork** in Grand county, in over 100 river miles. The initial Stream Management Plan was prepared in 2010, but limited to the fisheries and there was limited stakeholder involvement. It is a large document that is hard to understand, it has not been updated.
 - f. **Phase 1** watershed assessment update. **Research collected 8 million data points** of fisheries, stream temperatures, macroinvertebrates, silt, etc. They established a stakeholder advisory committee. The cost of Phase 1 was \$326,517.
 - g. **Phase 2 updated to Stream Management Plan, 2024 to 2026.** They hope to develop a website. Yampa River Scorecard is a model. They will break up the project into smaller RFPs.
 - h. **Ed Moyer said the 2010 Stream Management Plan was awesome.**
 - i. **1,000 acre feet will be available for release when Gross Reservoir is operational.** Denver Water is doing a voluntary pilot project to study how much releasing water cools water temperature. They've been releasing 200 af down Ranch Creek. **Extra water released down Ranch Creek by Denver Water lowered stream temperatures** and made a difference. It worked at the farthest point upstream but did not make a difference lower down. **The higher the release the better.**
 - j. **The First Learning by Doing project was on the Fraser river.** All river channels need to be resized and narrowed with lower future flows. Other projects include **restoring the stream in 2 miles below Willow Creek Reservoir**, and in Kaibab Park, narrowing and **deepening 700' of the Fraser River outside of Granby.**
 - k. Learning by Doing was not supposed to form until Chimney Hollow and Gross Reservoir expansions were completed, but Denver Water has done voluntary river releases since 2014.
 - l. **The LBD Operations Committee meets on a weekly basis from May through September** and they monitor 10 different sits and discuss with **Denver Water and Northern how they can adapt operations.**
 - m. They have an app to report zebra mussels and non-native fish, but **Colorado Parks and Wildlife does not want to list where the zebra mussels are** for political reasons.
16. **Crystal River Watershed Report, Heather Lewin**, Water Policy and Science Director, Roaring Fork Conservancy.
- a. The Crystal River is the lowest large tributary in to the Roaring Fork River. **The Stream Management Plan starts in Coal Basin, a heavily mined area** significantly impacted until the mines shut down in the 1990s. **Runoff from Coal Basin into the Crystal River carried heavy sediment loads.** There has been significant watershed improvement efforts here. There are some pretty significant geological formations that will deposit a lot of sediment regardless of restoration efforts.
 - b. Snapshot assessment was done **in 2012**, a low water year. **The Crystal River dropped to 4 and 2 cfs at different locations upstream of Carbondale.** The **In Stream Flow on the Crystal is 100 cfs in the summer, but this is rarely met in low water years.** Stream Management Plan asked what flow would make a significant benefit.

- c. First step was getting stakeholders together to enhance the ecological integrity of the river. **Water quality is still significantly impaired below Thompson Creek.**
 - d. Several ditch efficiency projects have been developed out of the Stream Management Plan. Invasive removals, some flow enhancement. One current project is at the River Valley Ranch subdivision, where the **Weaver ditch** is being improved. The Weaver Ditch pulls off the Crystal River and flows through the town of Carbondale where it is **known as the Carbondale ditch**. This project enhanced the riparian vegetation. This was previously a cobble push-up dam that inhibited passage through the stream. Now there is a graded structure that allows fish passage at different levels. Non-native grasses have been replaced with native shrubs. **The river now has a low-flow channel that is deeper than the former river-wide channel.** Carbondale provided leadership in the project.
 - e. **Cobbles were coming in from the push-up damage; by creating a new structure, the cobble flow patterns changed.** Carbondale, Pitkin County Healthy Rivers, GOCO, and a CWCB Watershed Grant all helped support. **The total budget was \$2.3m, in part this reflects the high construction costs from Covid. Redoubt Restoration from Utah was hired to do the work.**
 - f. No other watershed restoration projects of this scope are planned.
17. **Doug Winter, Middle Colorado Watershed Council.** The Integrated Water Management Plan was published in **February 2021**, covering the Colorado River from **Glenwood Canyon to DeBeque Canyon**. The Middle Colorado Watershed Council led a portion of the plan, and the local **agricultural conservation districts managed the consumptive use portion of the plan**. There were **65 stakeholders** including Colorado Trout Unlimited, Garfield County, and the cities of Glenwood Springs, Rifle, Silt, and Newcastle. The plan identifies stakeholders and “Recommended actions” to inform and marshal support for future projects and has been used for funding requests.
- a. Sample projects include:
 - i. **Post fire watershed management** after the 2021 Grizzly Creek Fire in Glenwood Canyon and Pine Gulch fire near Grand Junction.
 - ii. Produced a **Recreational River Guidebook**
 - iii. Helped secure Shoshone water rights.
 - iv. Best practices for **gravel pit reclamation**.
 - v. Infrastructure upgrades such as **fish passage structures**.
 - b. A key takeaway is the Middle Colorado Watershed Council strives to collaborate agriculture consumptive use stakeholders with other user groups, such as replacing low head structures with fish-passage structures. Collaborative use projects also are better at obtaining funding.
 - c. Ken Ransford asked if landowners support these improvements. Winter said that some ditches are now operating better, and a key factor in **success has been upfront engagement with landowners**. In Roan Creek the landowner has been a key proponent of the project.
 - d. Shoshone flows is a water quality project.
 - e. The **agricultural community asked for a separate plan**.

18. **Blue River Watershed Council**, Peggy Bailey. This group has been around for a long time, starting with a mine site restoration plan, but it focused on the big picture when it developed an Integrated Water Management Plan starting in 2019. Richard Vangytenbeek and Colorado Trout Unlimited were big supporters.
- a. CWCB provided funding, Silverthorne, Gore Range Anglers, and others helped fund the Integrated Water Management Plan. **The watershed is small, 699 square miles, but 35% of the flow is lost through transmountain diversions.** The Blue River was also impacted from **hard rock mining and dredge mining which turns riparian corridor upside down.**
 - b. **In 2016 Gold Medal Trout Status was removed.**
 - c. The Integrated Water Management Plan identified projects and focused on issues such as water quality in the **Snake River** that did not yet have a champion. It focuses on the **fishery below Dillon Reservoir.** Dillon's outlet is through Roberts Tunnel. **50 cfs is the standard year-round flow below Dillon Reservoir.**
 - d. The Integrated Water Management Plan did **2 watershed habitat assessments in 2022 and 2023.** The water is **very shallow and clear and cold,** the same temperature all year. It is **too cold in the summer and too warm in the river. This is the next objective.**
 - e. They are **focusing on improving the physical habitat.** They've secured the next phase of funding, and got a Watershed Grant for **river restoration for 12 miles from the reservoir down to the campground at Green Mt. Reservoir.** There are enough tributaries lower down that they have improved the river. The first 3 miles is the current focus through the town of Silverthorne. Below this there is a lot of gravel pit mining, the miners would force the river into tributaries.
 - f. The challenge is there's a lot to do to restore the after effects of dredge mining.
 - g. They are **constantly fundraising,** and always a big lift to do these projects. Blue River Watershed Council **now has staff, and this has made a big difference.** This started because national Trout Unlimited and Colorado **Trout Unlimited devoted a lot of time and money to get this launched.** The Colorado River District and CWCB have been big funders as well.
 - h. The **goal is to narrow the river and to get better riffles and runs.** The master plan is completed and they have bids out for construction. Blue Valley Ranch is a funder. Their **focus is on temperature and nutrients (adding them into the river).**
 - i. Summit County has been very supportive of the Swan River restoration. **Silverthorne is the biggest player below Dillon Reservoir,** it has a water quality master plan.
19. **Eagle County River Watershed Plan, James Dilzell,** Exec Director of the Eagle River Coalition, formerly the Eagle County Watershed Coalition.
- a. There are 1,200 miles of named streams and rivers that contribute **3% of annual flow to the Colorado River** in Eagle County, covering 970 sq miles.
 - b. The Water Plan **received funding in 2018, and it took 6 years** (anticipating it would only take 2 years). Covid was part of the delay. They **hope to hire a staff person** to get projects funded and launched. How to correct historic degradation and add resiliency to the stream.

- c. Survey participants valued clean water and fish. Lotic Hydrological was hired, and also Climax Molybdenum, Vail Resorts, American Rivers, and the Towns of Edwards, Vail, Avon, Gypsum, and Minturn. They had a web-based survey.
 - d. The Integrated Water Management Plan has a **scorecard online at Waterplan.eagleriver.co.org that shows existing conditions** in the left column, **and future conditions** on the right including impacts from climate change, **future transmountain diversions (the Eagle River MOU)**, and municipal growth. Dilzell considers the objectives are the most noteworthy part of the plan.
 - e. Management strategies
 - i. Instream flow management and habitat restoration
 - ii. Climate studies
 - iii. Recreation infrastructure and use limits
 - iv. Turf reduction and landscaping
 - v. Water block rates to encourage lower use
 - vi. Education and community outreach
 - f. They have a **\$5m endowment fund goal**, and have **raised \$1m already**, to generate annual revenue of \$200,000 per year to manage the organization and future projects.
 - g. The **watershed plan is online**. It has a **Reach Scale Assessment so that users can analyze different river reaches** that interest them. The report card rates various stream attributes. Town of Redcliff and Minturn attorney Scott Hunn said that the online plan was easy to use and effective.
 - h. Management objectives include a wish list of projects for different communities.
 - i. How did you **develop the grades and scoring**? The Yampa took 2 years to do this; the Eagle River plan **took 8-12 months for a cost of about \$42,000** (not including data gathering). Learning by Doing is planning to do this and has scheduled 10 months to accomplish it.
 - j. Brent Gardner Smith asked if they are looking at **leaving more water in the river**. Dilzell said they were looking into this but **do not have specific targets** such as targeted flows below the Homestake diversion.
 - k. What delayed the plan? **Colorado Springs and Eagle River Water and Sanitation could not agree upon the river flow model to predict the impact of the Eagle River MOU**. One concern was that **the model was not peer-reviewed**, and this led to 2-3 years of delays. It was difficult to obtain data from Camp Hale and the Upper Eagle River.
 - l. Seth Mason of Lotic Hydrological developed a formula to rank projects, based on how cost-effective they would be and how likely they could be funded.
 - m. One priority project is to **add a tree canopy in Edwards to lower stream temperature** and to **improve ditch diversion structures**.
20. **Virginia Harrington of Cattlemen’s Association said that it feels like agriculture is being left out**, saying that the ag community provides a lot of benefits such as wildlife connectivity and that it would like to have a bigger part in this conversation. It is providing a lot of the habitat and does not feel that it is being heard. It hopes to be involved more in this and to have a real seat at the table in working through these issues.

- a. Virginia thinks there's an urban-rural divide and the ag community is not as involved as it would like to be. They appreciate being asked to participate and wish there were more of this.
- b. Virginia just made some presentations at the Glenwood Public Library but they were poorly attended by the public.
- c. Lisa Tasker wants to hear from Virginia how to be more involved.

21. CBRT Committee Update

- a. Grants committee—James Dilzell, Richard Vangytenbeek, and Peggy Bailey will be reviewing a grant in August. Dilzell requested more participation in this committee, and also requests CBRT members to get the word out to solicit grant applications.
- b. Website committee—Bailey Leppak, Ken Ransford, Rick Lofaro, Ken Neubecker
- c. Ambassadors—Attend a roundtable meeting.
- d. Membership—We have **25% vacancy among roundtable members.**