

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
October 8, 2024, at 2:00pm
Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Alamosa, Colorado

Call to Order

Amber Pacheco called the meeting to order.

The agenda was approved as presented.

Mike moved to approve the minutes of the September 10 Board meeting as presented. Keith seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Public Comment

Daniel Boyes, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, announced that the Rio Reels will be November 15, 2024 from 6-8 PM.

Rio de La Vista announced the Ditch Water Workshop will be October 25, 2024 at the Ski Hi Complex.

Nathan Coombs, Conejos Water Conservancy District, announced that the Conejos Tour will be October 11, 2024.

Crain Cotten, Colorado Division of Water Resources, gave a report. The end of irrigation season is usually November 1. 73% of normal was delivered on the Rio Grande and 80% on the Conejos River. Currently, there is a 5% curtailment on the Rio Grande and 0% on the Conejos to meet compact obligations. The Compact lawsuit is ongoing with a new special master. The Division will also be participating in several court cases with Subdistrict No. 1, including SWAG and a few smaller cases. There will be a hearing on the petition to start a new water conservancy district on October 17 at the Alamosa Court House.

Jeff Rodriguez, Colorado Water Conservation Board, gave a few updates. The reimbursement deadline for the C9 summit is November 15. Jeff reviewed grant deadlines and the Turf Replacement deadlines. The CWCB board meeting will be November 21 and 22 in Denver area. IBCC Board meeting will be February 26.

Education Committee – The deadline to RSVP for the Conejos Tour is October 9.

Jim Loud, Committee for a Healthy Rio Grande, explained that the Committee was formed about 6 months ago and one of their main concerns is the lack of winter time releases from the Rio Grande Reservoir for a healthy Rio Grande. He explained their perspective about the outlet project and felt there were promises made to the community that were not met.

Mike Gibson commented he agreed there were verbal promises that weren't met. Mike suggested that a letter be written to the irrigation district explaining this position and asked that CWCB write a similar letter.

Cole Bedford, Colorado Water Conservation Board, explained that the Rio Grande Cooperative Project began in 2010 and included the project with the Rio Grande Reservoir. The funding included a \$5 million grant, \$10 million loan and a \$15 million grant for all projects within the scope of this project. He noted that CWCB has reviewed the agreed upon design, timeframe and deliverables included in the contract with CWCB. Those commitments were met in accordance with CWCB guidelines. He noted that CWCB would be interested in discussing with the irrigation district how to improve winter releases for an instream flow program but at this time, the project was completed as promised.

Kevin Terry, Trout Unlimited, noted that the dam did deliver water in the Valley, but then two years ago everyone learned that 1900 AF feet wasn't available for winter release during the winter to use for compact obligations. Keith Holland recommended sending a letter promoting a solution for winter time releases.

Keith Holland, Ag Water User, noted that the cone valves are not designed to release in the winter. He also noted that the dam's primary use and purpose when it was built was for irrigation and to be able to store from November 1 to March 31.

Mike Gibson moved to carefully draft a letter recognizing the dam's historical usage in the Valley and requested that the irrigation district find a way to meet the commitments made when the Cooperative Project was approved. Kevin Terry seconded that motion. Virginia Christensen commented that in her opinion the letter shouldn't include commitments to the roundtable because they weren't included in the contract for those funds. There were several people that felt there were verbal commitments. Greg Higel, Ag Water User, noted that the irrigation district is on the fight already and this letter will not help move this project forward. He noted that relationships between interests have come a long way in the Valley and we need to continue to be cooperative. Greg also noted that it is an irrigation reservoir and the subdistricts need winter releases as well but at the time of the project, no one caught this design flow. Mike withdrew his motion.

Heather Dutton, SLVWCD, noted that there are a lot of complexities with this dam and many of us are disappointed. CWCB has committed to helping with this discussion moving forward. All documents surrounding this project are on the CWCB website. She recommended that we find a path forward and work with the irrigation district to meet multiple benefits.

Nathan Coombs commented we, as a water community, can't let the basin fall backwards in relationships. He volunteered to go with a few others and talk to the board to find a path forward. Amber also volunteered. Karla moved to appoint Nathan and Heather to go discuss this issue with the district board. Virginia seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The group will report back to roundtable. Craig Cotten noted they are willing to try to get this fixed and have discussed solutions with their engineers.

The Education Panel included: Taylor Chick, Subdistrict 1; Dirk Rasmussen, Colorado Open Lands; and, Madeline Wilson, Colorado State University Extension Office. The panel was moderated by Sally Weir, Colorado Open Lands. The panel discussed their work around revegetation efforts on lands under groundwater conservation programs.

Funding Request Previews were presented.

Heather Dutton and Karla Shriver presented their grant proposal for the Del Norte Hospital and Town of La Jara Water Wise Landscaping Project. The project is supported by the SLVWCD, CWCD, and RGWCD. Draft Project cost is \$360,000.

Heather Dutton presented the SLVWCD and the CWCD Rio Grande Basin ASO Flights project. This has been an ongoing project. She noted this is truly a multi-benefit project with all boxes checked: Ag, Municipal & Industrial, Environmental, Recreation, and Water Admin. Matching funds will be from the projects bill. The project will cover flights in 2025-2027.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 pm