

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
January 14, 2025, 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

Judy Lopez moved to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2024 meeting. The motion was seconded and passed.

Public Comment:

Regan Velasquez announced that the Conejos County Conservation District held it's reorganizational meeting and a new board was elected. He also mentioned that Congresso will be held March 8th at Centennial High School from 9am-3pm.

Christi Bode announced that the 2-3-2 Partnership Meeting will be held February 28th.

Paul Formisano announced that the State of the Basin Symposium will be held March 29, 2025.

Heather Greenwolf, Headwaters Alliance, thanked the group for the support for their project as they received full funding for the project on the Upper Rio Grande which will be completed in 2025 and 2026.

Election of Officers were held.

Office of Chair: Charlie Speilman nominated Amber Pacheco. Mike Gibson seconded the nomination. Amber was elected as Chairman. Office of Vice-Chair: Amber noted that Kevi Terry is stepping down as Vice-Chair but would like to stay on the roundtable as Wildlife Representative. Amber thanked Kevin for this work in that position. Judy Lopez nominated Cassandra McCuen. Heather Dutton seconded the nomination. Cassandra was elected Vice-Chair. Office of Secretary: Heather nominated Nikita Cooper. Judy Lopez seconded the motion. Nikita was elected Secretary.

It was noted that the Recording Secretary position is a paid position and can be separate from the elected Secretary position. Meghan Stalzer introduced herself and expressed interest in the Recording Secretary position. Mike moved to appoint Meghan as recording Secretary. The motion was seconded and passed.

Jeff Rodriguez gave an update on the WSRF statewide balance which will be zeroed out as of March Board meeting. Basin funds will still be funded at \$300,000 every October for at least the next 3 years. Jeff also noted that the Ripple Effects document will be available after the next CWCB board meeting. They will also have 10 Strategies to Protect Irrigated Agriculture available at Water Congress. Jeff clarified that Water Plan Grant letters of support need to be submitted with applications.

Alex Funk, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, gave an update on IRA funds. \$25 million in federal funds were awarded to the Upper Rio Grande Proposal. Alex shared some of the projects that

are involved in the project. TRCP, CWCB, and others will continue to engage with the Bureau of Reclamation to move funds toward obligation.

John Miller, Colorado Department of Agriculture, discussed the new Ag Stewardship Tax Credit. This was House Bill 24-1249. He explained that this is a fully refundable tax credit, but the practices cannot overlap with existing grants/tax credits. The first year of the program will be 2026 and will run through 2030. The Qualified Stewardship Practices include annual practices (cropland), perennial practices, and other practices (invasive plant management, irrigation water management, nutrient management). Producers can qualify for multiply practices on same acreage. Tax credits available up to \$300,000 and producers can qualify for 3 out of 5 years. Applications will open in the Fall of 2025.

Julie Zahringer and Annette Quill, Colorado Dredge and Fill, gave an overview of HB 24-1379 that came into effect last July. Kelly Morgan, CDPHE Compliance and Enforcement, reviewed the implementation of the program including dredge and fill. They encouraged the group to stay involved in the stakeholder process by attending virtual meetings.

Town of La Jara gave a preview of their Town of La Jara Water Project. It was noted that this project is of critical concern for the Town of La Jara because their water system serves 400 customers including the Conejos County Hospital, nursing home and East La Jara. The project would include new piping throughout town, a 300,000-gallon water tower, and new fire hydrants. The town has received \$60,000 grant from DOLA however the total project cost is expected to be \$10-12 million.

Nikita Cooper, Alamosa La Jara Water Conservancy District, gave a preview of their project, Alamosa River Water Delivery Improvement Project Phase II. The project includes replacing multiple measurement devices and adding telemetry to diversions off the Alamosa River that have been identified by water users and the water commissioner.

Steven Romero, San Luis Peoples Ditch Rehabilitation Study Project Phase I Planning shared history of the San Luis Peoples Ditch and farming in the community. The project consists of 3.5 miles of ditch, concrete lined in the 1960s with a 25-year life. The project will be a ditch survey, structural analysis, and final report. The basin roundtable ask is \$28,000. The motion was made to approve the project. The motion was seconded and passed.

Emily Wolf, American Rivers, reviewed funding opportunities and reviewed the funding database that is now living on the Basin Roundtable website.

The meeting was adjourned.