

IBCC Colorado River Basin Russ George

January 27, 2025 CBRT Roundtable Minutes.

1. Upcoming Meetings & Deadlines.

- a. CWCB January 27-28, 2025
- b. Water Congress winter meeting, Jan 29-31, 2025, Denver.

2. 2025 CBRT Meeting Schedule

- a. January 27
- b. Grant committee meets in February
- c. March 24
- d. May 19
- e. July 28
- f. Grant committee meets in August
- g. September 22
- h. November 17

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

4. Today's January 27, 2025, meeting was **conducted by Zoom and held in person at the Colorado River District Office.**

5. **CBRT Roundtable Members Present** Jeff Bandy Denver Water non-voting CBRT member, Nathan Bell Garfield County Rep, Peggy Bailey Summit County municipalities rep, Abby Burk, Audubon Rockies & Vice Chair of CBRT, Kate Collins Middle Colorado Watershed Council, Roger Day Silt Water Conservancy District, Vicky Flynn Eagle River Watershed Coalition, Diane Johnson Eagle River Water & San District, Ty Jones Clifton Water, Randi Kim City of Grand Junction, Kathy Kitzman Aurora Water non-voting CBRT member, Kirsten Kurath Vice Chair and represents water rights owners, Kelly McNicholas Kury Pitkin County Com'r, Brandon Langenhuizen Colorado River District, Merrit Linke Grand County Com'r Ag At large member, April Long CBRT Chair and Ruedi Water & Power Auth. general manager, Ed Moyer Grand County Manager, PJ Murray City of Aspen, Maria Pastore Colo Springs Utilities non-voting CBRT member, Katie Randall Middle Park Water Conservancy District, Ken Ransford Secretary and Recreation member, Charlie Spickert Basalt Water Conservancy, Chris Treece West Divide Water Conservancy District, Richard Vangytenbeek Env't Rep, Nina Waters Summit County Com'r, Greg Williams Ute Water, Tom Wood Grand Valley Water Users Association (Agriculture at large), Jeffrey Woodruff Pitkin County Comm'r

- a. **There were 30 persons in the room, and 35 online**

6. **Guests:** Tyler Benton Colorado Springs Utilities, Caroline Bradford interested citizen, Rebecca Briesmoore Colorado River District, Laura Bohannon Eagle County Conservation District, Perry Cabot CSU, Stan Cazier former rep for Middle Water Conservancy District with spot now taken by Katie Randall, Thomas Cech CSU, Ken Curtis, Lucy DeFrates Colorado River District Public Relations, JJ Fletcher Mesa County Com'r, Kayli Foulk Water Quality Specialist with Grand County, Russ George former Exec Dir. of Colo Dep't of Nat Resources, Marcia Gillis director of Eagle County Open Space, James Heath Division Engineer in Div 5 in Glenwood Springs a non-voting liaison to the CBRT, John Hildebrandt Bluestem Water Ditch Co. at top of Debeque

Canyon, Aaron Hilshorst Climax Mine, Hannah Holm American Rivers, Hattie Johnson American Whitewater, Karen Johnson, Castle Rock interested citizen and former Castle Rock Town Council member, Kathy Kitzmann Aurora Water, Eric Kuhn author of *Science be Dammed* and former Colorado River District General Manager, Bailey Leppak SGM and CBRT BIP coordinator, Heather Lewin Science and Policy Director at Roar Fork Conservancy, Vanessa Logsdon Blue River Watershed Group, Joshua Mattson Denver Water, Dave Merritt AECOM water resources engineer and former CBRT Chair, Andy Mueller Colorado River District General Manager, Amy Ostdiek CWCB, Kallie Rand Eagle County Natural Resource Director, Jeff Rodriguez CWCB, Wendy Ryan West Divide Creek Water Conservancy District, Heather Sackett Aspen Journalism, Judy Sappington consultant with Bluestem Water Conservancy District, Audrey Seery Water Resources Scientist with Brown & Caldwell, Paula Stepp CBRT PEPO Coordinator, Lisa Tasker Pitco Healthy Rivers, Christina Welch CSU Student,

7. **Summary of decisions made at the meeting; more detail below on the discussion.**
 - a. The CBRT unanimously approved April Long as the legislative appointee to the CBRT.
 - b. The CBRT unanimously approved Abbey Burk to fill the At Large seat.
8. **River Forecast.** The Colorado River flow gage at the **Dotsero gage on January 27, 2025**, was ice-affected. On January 31 it flowed between 1,600 and 1,800 cfs, compared to a flow of 1,000 cfs on this date.¹ The Colorado River **at Cameo was ice affected.**²
9. **The November 18, 2024, minutes were approved unanimously with the following recommended change:**
 - a. Kirsten Kurath recommended amending the minutes in 11.b. Kurath would like to serve as vice chair, but does not want to serve as chair.
 - b. Greg Williams recommended approval, JJ Fletcher seconded, and the minutes passed without objection.
10. **April Long Director Comments.** April recommended that the CBRT Roundtable focus on:
 - a. **Capital projects and funding**
 - b. **Big River negotiations** on Colorado River
 - c. Reconvene the Next Steps Committee to craft **committee topics for the next year**
11. Jeff Rodriguez CWCB update.
 - a. **Paul Bruchez reports that he will not pursue a second term as the CWCB board member representing the CBRT;** the CWCB is seeking recommendations for the CBRT representative. April encouraged roundtable members to apply. **The CBRT does not make a recommendation for the CWCB representative.**

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

- b. WSRF statewide grant program. **If everything is approved by the CWCB at its March board meeting, all statewide funding will have been allocated.** This means that **only basin WSRF funding is available for grants applications.** \$17.9m will have been awarded in 2 years by the CWCB through the March meeting.
 - c. **Will the statewide WSRF account be replenished?** The governor, legislature, or CWCB board have to allocate funding since there is no established annual funding. In 2022 the CWCB expected \$0 funding, but there was significant funding in 2022. In a budget year like 2025, the funding is less likely since severance tax funds would more likely replenish the General Fund.
 - d. **The CWCB has 3 years of funding, so annual allocations are secure for 3 years** through 2027. The CWCB is still anticipating the CWCB budget will fund WSRF grants so the 3-year reserve funding won't be tapped.
 - e. The Colorado Water Plan grant program could be impacted, but not immediately. \$25m was requested in the Projects Bill. Project JJ will add \$1.4m to this, if approved, there will be funding for Colorado Water Plan grants.
 - f. April said there is **\$570,000 in the Basin WSRF account**, and \$300,000 more is expected on July 1, 2025. April requested grant applications. **The deadline is February 17 to deliver grant applications to the CBRT Grants Review Committee;** the Roundtable will vote on them at the March 24, 2025 meeting.
 - g. **The CWCB Guide has been completed.**
 - h. **The Water Plan progress report was issued by the CWCB,** designed to take the place of the Ripple Effects Report. It **updates progress on the 50 CWCB agency actions.** Most of the report focuses on Water Plan grant progress.
 - i. **10 Strategies to Protect Irrigated Agriculture**, re Agency Action 2.6, to assess the value that agriculture contributes to the Colorado economy. **The report addresses the impact of reducing irrigated acreage.**
 - j. **Letter of Support from Roundtables must be submitted with the grant applications** before the CWCB grant deadline; there's no guarantee they will be considered if not included with the grant application.
 - k. **All Wildfire Readiness Grant funds and Technical Assistance Grant funds have been expended.**
12. IBCC Report by Stan Cazier. **Stan is stepping down as IBCC representative.** An IBCC meeting is coming up in February. IBCC reps do not have to be CBRT members; one must hold water rights. Goal is to serve a 2-5-year term, April recommends that we **elect a new IBCC rep and have Carlyle serve one more year**, and then replace him so we have new IBCC representation. Both have served for 20 years since 2005. There are two IBCC meetings in February and June, each are 1-2 day meetings, one in Denver, and one elsewhere in the state. **We will vote on the new IBCC representative at the March 2025 meeting.**
- a. CWCB guide has good background on what makes a good IBCC representative.

- b. Jeff Rodriguez said there is a lot of **new energy in the IBCC**.
13. Member comments.
- a. The **West Divide Water Conservancy District** purchased Flannery Reservoir in 3 Mile Canyon south of Glenwood Springs, and is looking at consolidating reservoirs in 4 Mile Canyon as well. It is also discussing with Colorado Parks & Wildlife releasing water in Beaver Lake near Marble to avoid a call lower down on the Crystal River.
- b. Lisa Tasker reported that **Pitkin County Healthy Rivers and Streams Board hired LRE Water to research acid mine tailings in Lincoln Creek**. A work group of 16 participants has formed to address high levels of aluminum, iron and other metals that were released down the Roaring Fork River from Grizzly Reservoir in July 2024, causing a fish kill and impacts to drinking water supply.³ It is not just coming from the **Ruby Mine**, but possibly from the **natural soil in the basin which may be releasing more minerals through oxidation with warming temperatures**. **LRE discussed 3 potential treatment options** including (1) sulfate-reducing bioreactors, which use **microbes to strip the metals** from the mineralized tributary; (2) upstream chemical amendment. This option would add an alkaline element to the mineralized tributary, such as **lining the channel with limestone**, to counteract the acidity; and (3) toxicity management, which entails **increasing the “hardness” of the water with calcium and magnesium to cancel out the toxicity** of the aluminum and copper,
- c. Bailey Leppak of SGM Engineering requested that **CBRT members update her with progress on projects identified in the Basin Implementation Plan**.
- d. Richard Van Gytenbeek reported that Trout Unlimited has managed \$3-4m in **ditch diversion upgrades in Elk Creek upstream of Newcastle**, as well as projects identified in the Blue River IWMP water plan. Peggy Bailey is working on wildfire readiness project.
- e. Tom Wood said the **Grand Valley Water Users Association** is concerned with big river issues like **meeting a Compact Call and the 2026 Colorado River negotiations**.
- f. Diane Johnson said the **Eagle River Water and Sanitation District** is concerned with Capital Projects funding, and **meeting regulations re. nutrients and PFAS**.
- g. Kathy Kitzman Aurora Water reported that **Aurora receives about 25% of its water supply from the Colorado River Basin**.
- h. **Perry Cabot CSU Extension** based in Mesa County. Colorado Water Center at CMU, has been involved with **studies of deficit irrigation on the West slope**.
- i. **Ed Moyer** reported **Grand County’s** interest in maintaining relationships with Denver Water and Northern Water to **keep water flowing down the Colorado River**.

³ For more information, see “Lincoln Creek workgroup has decisions to make,” Sackett, H., Aspen Journalism, Oct 18, 2024, <https://aspenjournalism.org/lincoln-creek-workgroup-has-decisions-to-make/>

- j. **Kayli Foulk** said Grand County is wrapping up a revision to its stream management plan, and that **2 stream restoration projects** are in final design. Grand County received funding from the **BuRec WaterSMART grant program but the Trump administration has put that on hold.**
 - k. New CBRT member Nina Waters of the Summit County BOCC said the County is interested in funding for water projects.
 - l. **Stan Cazier** said, “The big-picture issue is the **roundtable should be ready to react to** issues coming along such as the **Colorado River negotiations** as the Compact and flows down the river are negotiated in 2026. **The CBRT is in the best position to advise the Colorado River District and the CWCB of what position the State should take.**”
 - m. **Kirsten Kurath** recommends that the **CBRT play a role in the Shoshone negotiations.**
 - n. **Kelly McNicholas Kury**, Pitkin County BOCC, is encouraged to hear the **National Forest is conducting a beaver habitat study.**
 - o. Kelly also reported that the **CWCB voted at its January 2025 meeting to fund the 3 Mile stream restoration project.**
 - p. Hannah Holm of American Rivers is working on the Grand River Corridor Initiative, Wildfire Readiness Project on Grand Mesa, Alternative Forages work
14. **Russ George discussed why the Roundtables were established**, and where they should be going. He was chairman of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources in 2004 when the roundtables were created and passed into law. He grew up on a ranch in Rifle, and was elected 4 times to the Colorado House of Representatives and served as Speaker of the House before becoming the Executive Director of the Colorado Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources, and Colorado Parks & Wildlife, and President of Northwestern Community College in Rangely.
- a. **The key element of the roundtables is communication.** The members present are the future.
 - b. Russ’s relationship to water began 70 years ago. **His family were irrigating farmers in Rifle with an 1889 priority date.** Russ grew up on the ranch, rising at 4:30 AM. His father Walter said:
 - i. **Maintain the irrigation ditch so it diverts its full amount every year and every user on the ditch gets all the water to which they were entitled.** He was the president of the ditch company for 40 years.
 - ii. Denver Water and LA County concerned Walter George. **Denver Water makes decisions that affect us upstream, and LA makes decisions that affect us downstream.**
 - c. The roundtables were created because they addressed people making water decisions that affected others without asking their opinions. **Decisions were formerly made in a centralized way.** Counties, ditch companies, soil conservation districts, and conservation districts are local. At the higher level, **water decisions were made elsewhere** by people

with a competing interest, often **without asking the opinion of the locals and how it affected them.**

- d. What drives water decisions is the **explosive increase in water demand.** A generation ago, the fear that there would not be enough water to go around was not present.
- e. ***The Silver Fox of the Rockies***, written by Dan Tyler, CSU Professor, **about Delph Carpenter** who represented Colorado in the Colorado River Compact negotiations, **spurred Russ and others to consider creating an inner-Colorado compact.**
 - i. **People who like each other get more accomplished** than people who don't like each other. If you like somebody, you listen better when you disagree, and maybe you can come to a compromise. **Search for compromise, support it and then defend it.**
- f. The Statewide Water Supply Investigation, SWSI, meetings came about at the same time. The roundtable idea formed itself because water decisions originate in and affect basins. **People who are affected by decisions should participate in the decisions.** How do we define everyone who should be there.
 - i. This could not be informal, it **had to be built into law, but not be too bureaucratic.**
 - ii. The **Open Meetings law applies** so the public can participate.
 - iii. **The roundtables envision fact finding, teaching, and learning all the time for anybody who cares.**
- g. In government you can pass a law, but if you can't enforce it, what's the point? Russ heard from constituents, many of whom became roundtable members, "We can't affect people in government because they are in Denver, and we're here." Russ said, "Talk to me." **People had never had access to governing as the roundtables presented.** Local buy-in occurred quickly. The roundtables did not dictate anything, other than to list the categories of the people that should be involved. Roundtables make their own bylaws (Ken Ransford noted that **Stan Cazier, who is retiring from the Colorado Basin Roundtable, wrote the CBRT bylaws in 2005.** They have not been amended since).
- h. **The CWCB is a liaison to the roundtables,** a very important feature. The CWCB and DNR staff participate. Regular attendance is better.
- i. The IBCC was designed as a tool to get the statewide pool of water users and uses involved. **Water is a statewide issue from the first drop to the last.** What do decisions in one basin have to do with any other basins in the state?
- j. **In 2005, a major concern was a new transmountain diversion, or TMD.** The roundtables were intended to have the two basins talk together. "If there's anything **I feel unfulfilled about** the roundtables, it is **the lack of meetings between the roundtables.**"
- k. What I envision for the future: We are in an **era of very hot politics.** The **roundtables should stay away from that third rail,** it is too hot. Stay on the other 2 rails. RTs should participate on where those rails are going. Water legislation is contentious. It's harder to

get compromise today. The lobbyists and the bigger players on the third rail – we cannot get into that as roundtables.

- l. Roundtables should be reaching out to local officials more so no state representative would take a position on a bill without first finding out what the roundtables say. It is **ok for roundtables to inform legislators; the third rail is politicking to count votes.**
 - m. Roundtable Chair **April Long suggested the roundtables were created** to begin conversations of issues with more time to consider them **in hopes of crafting better legislation** before they might come before the legislature. Russ said, “Use the information base at the roundtables.” Roundtables should not compete with other roundtables. That’s the IBCC that Russ envisioned. It isn’t just a big river issue, it’s bigger.
 - n. **The big river negotiations are not going to solve our problems. Drought, climate change, and population growth are our problems** and they are not going to be solved by the 7-Basin State negotiations. They must be dealt with locally.
 - o. April said the CWCBC suggested at the C9 summit that the roundtables should not weigh in on legislation.
 - i. Russ, speaking for himself, suggested Chris Treece, former legislative affairs director for the Colorado River District, would be better able to answer this. But, Russ said, it is **appropriate for roundtables to express their opinion about how legislation could affect them.**
 - p. Chris Treece asked about the **Roundtable legislation**—there were **2 goals**, public **education and outreach, and the interbasin compact committee designed to craft legally enforceable agreements between the roundtables.** “It’s hard to envision the latter. Is it still a goal, or are gentlemen’s agreements between basins all we can hope for?” Russ was trying the **leverage the public into a position that could affect inter-basin water agreements.** Russ believes that **if the roundtables got close enough to make a decision, it would happen anyway** without a legally enforceable agreement.
 - q. Human nature has not changed; **what has changed is the body of knowledge** that we use.
 - r. **Dave Merritt said** the 1922 and 1946 Compacts were designed to get past First in Time, First in Right. **The Roundtable process is another method of getting pas prior appropriation.**
 - s. We’re here because, “You care about my water, and I care about your water, and this is how we are going to meet our joint needs.”
15. **Colorado River Basin Hydrology report** Brendon Langenhuizen. **After the Thanksgiving snowfall, there has been little precipitation, and the farther west the drier it is** in Colorado. **Lake Powell inflows are projected to be 82% of average**, lower than before. Lake Powell will receive 7.84 maf. Lower basins in Tier One shortage. **9.6 maf is the 30-year average, 7.83 is the most probable inflow into Lake Mead this year through 9-30-25**, below average.
- a. **Lake Powell is in the 10 percentile of storage.**

- b. Southern Colorado is dryer than average.
 - c. **Soil moisture is very dry in the north-central part of the state.**
 - d. Colorado River District director reports say that **lower elevation snowpacks are very low.**
 - e. 28-day average watershed precipitation are particularly low in Republican Basin, Roaring Fork Valley, and Animas and San Juan drainages.
 - f. Seasonal projections for precipitation are below average over the last 3 months, but equal temperatures.
16. **Hutchins River Center grant update** by Freddy Witorsa, 970-248-2037, fwitorsa@coloradomesa.edu, faculty director of Hutchins River Center and faculty director of Environmental Science Program at CMU.
- a. The Hutchins Water Center became part of Colorado Mesa University in 2011, with a **mission to address water issues facing the Upper Colorado River Basin and Western Colorado.** Supporters include the **McDonough Law Group** (for whom CRBT Member Kirsten Kurath words), **Mesa Conservation District, Ute Water, City of Grand Junction, Colorado River District, and the CWCBC.** Its programs include:
 - b. They hire a summer research intern.
 - c. Upper CO River Basin Forum. Help to meet CBRT's PEPO education objective.
 - d. The Hutchins Water Center **received \$110,000 for 2 years of funding from CWCBC.** Address gaps between water workforce and curriculum for students are more prepared for water careers.
 - e. **Weekly seminar series** with Env Science Program. This week's discussion is about how to use DNA testing to identify the source of fecal contamination. Witorsa will try to make this available to attend virtually.
 - i. Zebra mussel infestation is an upcoming topic.
 - f. **Spring Water Course.** Three 3-hour sessions, Foundation of Water concepts. The **public can join.** This offers training certification units for water and wastewater operators. April encouraged Paula Stepp to follow up on this to **publicize it to Roundtable members.**
 - g. Educators Workshop for Highschool educators
 - h. CMU Summer student and faculty research
 - i. **River-related certification programs.**
 - j. **CMU Hutchins Water Center can act as an educational channel for CBRT.**
 - k. **Colorado River District just approved a \$300,000 grant to hire a full time executive director of the Water Center.**
17. Colorado River District Report, Brendon Langenhuizen. The CRD Board meeting Jan 21-22 agenda is online.
- a. The CRD has weekly legislative updates; email Stephanie Moore smoore@crwcde.org to be placed on the email list.

- b. **Zane Kessler is providing a legislative update at the March CBRT meeting.**
- c. **119th Congress passed funding for Upper Colorado and San Juan Endangered Fish Recovery program and Zebra mussel control.**
- d. **The SCPP System Conservation Pilot Project** which pays irrigators for reducing irrigation diversions **did not get authorized for funding in 2025.**
- e. **Airborne snow Observatory ASO flights are being scheduled;** they will include the Roaring Fork drainage.
- f. **Shoshone Water rights preservation** project. The **\$40m award** from the federal government was approved orally, but **frozen by the Trump Administration.** The Colorado River District has been told funding is still possible, and that many projects have had their funding frozen. **The hope is that the Shoshone purchase will not be viewed as political.** New 4th Congressional District Representative Jason Hurd is supportive. If the funding comes through the Colorado River District will have raised \$96m toward the \$98.5m budget.
- g. **The next step is to present an instream flow application to the CWCB;** they will present this in May for voting in September. Brendon is working on this currently, and expects the roundtable can support this.
- h. **Lower Colorado River negotiations: Bureau of Reclamation issued 5 alternatives,** and the **Colorado River District is preparing comments** on this.
- i. **Growing WaterSmart. Applications for city planners** are being accepted for how land and water use get connected in policy and practice. This program will be in **Montrose on April 28-30; applications are due February 28, 2025.** It is for a team of water utility managers, city planners, and city council members to learn about this issue.

18. **PEPO update**

- a. **March 1 deadline for funding for water festivals;** \$2,500 will be available for funding.
- b. How to expand on Facebook; Paula **encouraged members to Follow on Facebook.**
- c. How much are we willing to budget to expand this outreach? April encouraged members to communicate to Paula how important this is.
- d. CBRT members are encouraged to **submit photos of projects that have been funded** together with a photograph of person administering the grant.
- e. Paula **encouraged members to send information to Paula so she can send it out through MailChimp to CBRT members.**

19. Membership Updates: April Long **welcomed new CBRT members:**

- a. Summit County **Nina Waters**
- b. Eagle County **Marcia Gillis**

- c. Mesa County BOCC Commissioner **JJ Fletcher**
- d. Mid Colorado Water conservancy **Katie Randall**
- e. Eagle County Muni Rep is **Vicky Flynn**
- f. Pitco Municipal Rep is **PJ Murray**.
- g. Silt Water Conservancy District rep is **Roger Day**
- h. **Abby Burk** is the CBRT Vice Chair. She can **fill an At Large seat**. April nominated this, Chris Treece seconded, it was **approved unanimously**.
- i. **April Long**'s seat is the **legislative appointee**. She needs to be renewed. Tom Wood motioned to approve, Chris Treece seconded, it was **approved unanimously**.
- j. **Open CBRT seats** include:
 - i. Battle Mesa Water Conservancy District
 - ii. Gunnison County & Gunnison municipal reps
 - iii. Bluestone Water Conservancy
 - iv. Grand County municipality
 - v. At large industry seat.