

Interbasin Compact Committee  
**Southwest Basins Roundtable Meeting-DRAFT**  
Hybrid Meeting from  
Dolores Water Conservancy District Cortez, CO  
January 23, 2025

**Members Present:**

Brandon Johnson	At-Large-Ag	Charlie Smith*	San Juan County
Buck Skillen*	At Large -Environmental	Larry Dozier	At-Large
Ken Curtis	At-Large	Ed Tolen	At-Large Domestic Water
Danny Margoles	At-Large	Aimee Tooker*	Montrose
Steve Harris	Legislative Appointment	Steve Wolff	SWCD
Stephen Mead*	San Juan Muni	Peter Butler	LaPlata County
Caroline Dunmire	At-Large-Recreational	Bruce Whitehead	Animas La Plata WCD
Geoff Burbey	LaPlata WCD	Jim Wells*	San Miguel WCD
Ryan Gray	DWCD	Adrian Bergere	At-Large
Candace Jones*	SJWC	Peter Nylander*	Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Letisha Yazzie	UMUT	Lorelie Cloud	CWCB

**Public:**

Laura Spann\* (CWCB), Jeff Rodriguez\* (CWCB), Wendy Weygandt (Recorder), Elaine Chick\* (PEPO), Mo Rock (SWCD), Ty Koppenhafer (Jones & De Mille Engineering), George Gavrieldes\* (S. Ute), Robert Sakata\* (Co Dept. of Ag), Mike Preston\* (UMUT), Cheryl Cwelich\* (River Network), Lisa Pool (Senator Hickenlooper), Jordan Dimick (SGM), Russ Anderson (Michael Baker Engineering), Brooke Laughter (UMUT), Dan Huntingdon (LPWCD), Ryan Unterreiner\* (CPW), Ed Millard\* (Representative Suckla), Nina Williams\* (Dolores Watershed Collaboration), Blake Mamich\* (CO Water Trust), Kelsey Ruehling\* (CDPHE)

\*Indicates Zoom Participant

**1. Introductions & Review Agenda**

- Roundtable Chair Ed Tolen called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**2. Public Comments.**

- Senator Hickenlooper Office updates (Lisa Pool):
  - The Inflation Reduction Act provided monies to be disbursed via the Bureau of Reclamation:
    - \$25 Million to the SWCD
    - \$16.7 Million Southern Ute Pine River Project
    - \$40 Millions Shoshone Water Rights Preservation
  - The proposed seven year extension for the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act passed Congress. This was a big win for the Upper Colorado's Fish Recovery Act.
  - Senator Hickenlooper convened the Colorado River Caucus in the Senate to support passage of the Energy and Natural Resources Development Act to authorize projects that address water management, flood control, ecosystem restoration, and long-term priorities. He is leading the Colorado River Caucus to support a seven state solution.

**4. Administrative Reports**

- **Review and approve minutes from the October 25, 2024 meeting**
  - Ken Curtis made a motion to approve the October 25 minutes; Steve Harris seconded the motion; all in favor to accept the minutes as presented.
- **Officer Reports**

- The regular officer election will be held in July.
- There are three At-Large Positions that will open in October: Ken Beegles-Industrial, Carolyn Dunmire-Recreational, and Ed Tolen-Municipal. Please encourage possible candidates that might be interested in those positions to submit their letters of interest.
- **WSRF Basin Roundtable Fund Balance \$637,671.** Statewide WSRF funds are used up. Grant funding will now come from the Basin funds.
- **PEPO Liaison Report-Elaine Chick**
  - Elaine Chick asked for funding to extend the 2024 grant to finish the video on agriculture. This extension was denied.
  - CWCB awarded a \$25,000 grant to PEPO to focus on an education action subcommittee that will address the PEPO mission and projects. These funds will support educational videos, developing a PEPO Brochure, and create a handbook that will help new Roundtable members.
  - Elaine is meeting with Christi Bode on February 3 to work on the new release of the ag video.
  - The Water Seminar will be held March 28 at the Sky Ute Casino in Ignacio. Registration will be available within the week.
- **CWCB Update-Jeff Rodriguez**
  - WSRF - statewide funds must be fully allocated at the March Board meeting. The end of these state funds was planned and is not related to the current budget activities.
  - CWCB Guide has been finalized and will be available next week. It can be found on the CWCB website: <https://engagecwcw.org/cwcb-guide>. Printed copies may be requested and Jeff Rodriguez can have them available at the next roundtable meeting.
  - The Water Plan Progress Report will replace the Ripple Effect Document. Formerly the Ripple Effect Document was published in the middle of the water plan project update cycles. The Water Plan Progress Report will focus on the Water Plan as it is now. This report highlights projects through case studies to advance agency actions on CWCB funded projects.
  - Ten Strategies to Protect Irrigated Agriculture Projects identifies the value of agriculture within the state and lists strategies and tools for CWCB and local governments and stakeholders. It lists direct and indirect impacts and identifies strategies that show the advantages impacts on reduced irrigated acres. Printed copies will be available at the Colorado Water Congress.
  - The next WSRF deadline is February 1, 2025. No statewide applications will be accepted.
  - Regional Water Plan Grant -All documents must be submitted with the application by the deadline. This includes any letters of support. No late documents will be accepted.
  - ARPA funds have all been allocated to projects before the December 2024 deadline. Money must now be spent within the next two years.
  - Future of Grant Funds
    - Interest from the general fund: DOLA will cap interest for the future; and WSRF funds should not be included in the cap.
    - July 1 starts the new fiscal year. Three years of funding is set aside and already available even if severance tax goes to zero. Basin funds are good for up to a \$300k annual allocation.
    - The severance tax is questionable. An increase to sports betting revenue goes to the Water Plan Implementation. The cash fund will add an additional \$1.4 million. This will be available after the December 2025 deadline.
    - Organizations are advised to utilize Laura Spann's expertise to focus on multi-benefit grant requests.

## **5. IBCC Update-Ken Curtis**

- The next meeting is scheduled in late February in Westminster, CO.
- The earlier meetings held in 2024 with Commissioner Mitchell focused on regrouping.
- The Low Regrets documents will continue to provide scenarios for snow making and snow monitoring to improve water use efficiency in agriculture and water conservation practices.
- IBCC can support topics the SWBRT wishes to support.

## **6. B2E Funding - Steve Wolff**

- There are not a lot of remaining B2E funds.
- SWCD received a grant that will support 17 individual projects and 11 sponsors for aquatic restoration. It will take 6-12 months to receive funds contracted from the Bureau of Reclamation, if the money comes through.

### *Short Break Announcements:*

- Water Education Colorado (WECO) will be providing summer tours in the Southwest Basin.
- Water Information Program (WIP)-Elaine Chick
  - Ed Tolen was the former chair of the WIP Steering Committee. Steve Crest is the current chair.
  - The Children's Water Festival is planned for May 14. Volunteers are needed. The volunteer application can be found on the WIP website: <https://www.waterinfo.org/volunteer-for-events>
- The Governor's Budget proposal is changing quickly. The impact is not immediate and it is on a future upside. Severance tax infusions are volatile. There is not an annual allocation and it is not expected to be refreshed. Basin funds are secure for up to \$300,000 annual allocation available each July. All sports betting goes to the Water Plan Implementation cash fund. An additional \$1.4 mil will be available December 2025. Recent changes may potentially push more money and close a loophole in sports betting. Applicants are encouraged to utilize Laura Spann, CWCB, skills to improve WSRF grant projects. The Water Plan Grant will go forward with a focus on integrated and combined multi-benefit projects.
- Mo Rock reported Growing WaterSMART will have a 2 ½ day workshop at the end of April in Montrose supporting municipal management. Workshop participants will be eligible to apply for a \$10K grant.
- Laura Spann recently toured the Gunnison Tunnel that brings water to the West Slope. This tunnel is well over a hundred years old.

## **7. Colorado River Updates-Amy Ost diek**

- SCPP has not been reauthorized at this time. Legislation is pending.
- The Bureau of Reclamation released a matrix with five potential alternatives in November 2024 and a more detailed report on January 17, 2025. They are re-upping communication with other Basin States focusing on areas of consensus.
- Colorado and other Upper Basin States continue to stand by the UDS alternative with refinements
  - Post-2026 Alternatives
    - Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming's alternative provides for a sustainable supply driven operation that is aligned with hydrological conditions which will help to rebuild storage and operate within the Law of the River.
      - Lake Powell releases are aligned with hydrological conditions, which helps re-build storage and adapts to variability. Lake Powell's elevation is an indicator providing hydrological conditions influencing decisions.
        - Refinements included low end going lower: 6 MAF reduced to now 5 MAF release.
        - Upper Basin with refinements kept Lakes Mead and Powell out of critical elevations.
      - Lake Mead Operations are adapted from a concept first proposed from the Lower Division States. They call for reductions in use depending upon reservoir conditions, with Lower Basin reductions of 1.5 million acre-feet under most conditions. The Upper Basin adopted the Lower Basin suggestion of combined

storage. The adjustment is different from reduction. Under most conditions that adjustment only includes evaporation and system losses.

- Activities-Under agreements separate from the Post-2026 NEPA process, Upper Basin actions could include Colorado River Storage Project Act initial units and voluntary conservation, and acknowledgement of underdeveloped settled tribal rights.
  - Continued Collaboration-The Upper Division States are committed to continued collaboration with the Bureau of Reclamation, Basin States, Tribal Nations, water users and environmental and recreation groups.
  - UDS Alternatives: Lower Basin reductions determined by rule curve based on combined storage of Lakes Powell and Mead.
    - Additional points of consideration:
      - Parallel activities should be modeled within a reasonable range.
      - Consideration of underdeveloped settled Tribal water rights.
      - Hydrologic shortage is a contribution from the Upper Division States
      - Upper Basin hydrologic shortages average 1.2 MAF, but may be more in dry years
      - UDS Alternative calls for Lower Basin reductions proportional to Upper Basin reductions:~30% relative to current, demonstrated uses (Lower Basin still would be using significantly more because uses are higher to begin with).

## **8. Water Plan Grant Update**

- Christi Bode is working with the San Juan Water Conservancy District on creating a series of educational videos. The first few videos are posted on sjwcd.org. The SWBRT wrote a letter of support for a Water Plan Grant that she submitted. One of her videos on agriculture will be released February 3, 2025.

## **9.WSRF Grant Requests**

- Seed Bank for Heat and Drought Tolerant Grains & Legumes-Dan Hobbs-\$100,000
  - Dan Hobbs was not present to speak about his project. The SWBRT had numerous questions that were left unanswered.
    - Has he coordinated with CSU?
    - Can he clarify the benefits to New Mexico and Colorado?
    - What is he using for matching funds?
    - Are CAWA funds a possibility?
    - Since there is a shortage of funds available, can he directly tie a correlation between his project and direct use of water? Perhaps add soil monitoring?
  - Steve Harris made a motion to table discussion; Brandon Johnson seconded the motion; all in favor.
- La Plata County Water Conservancy District-\$22,500
  - There are two big releases from the Long Hollow Dam into the LaPlata. The goal is to satisfy the New Mexico state compact, LaPlata irrigators, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to keep fish alive. A measuring device is needed closer to the river to satisfy compact requirements. Bruce Whitehead indicated the importance of addressing the New Mexico compact compliance issue and suggested expediting this project if approved.

- Steve Harris made a motion to approve; Bruce Whitehead seconded the motion; Geoff Burbey recused himself; all in favor.
- Ken Curtis asked Geoff Burbey to provide an update to the SWBRT after the installation, to follow up on how compact issues have been addressed.
- The question of how long it would be before funding is received was raised. Jeff Rodriguez summarized if the application is submitted by February 1, then the funding request will go to the May CWCB meeting. CWCB can provide support that could potentially avoid setbacks if they are contacted early. The answer is one to three months if everything is in order.
- Ryan Unterreiner stated that CPW is in full support of this project. He provided some clarification of the memorandum of agreement with LaPlata County Water Conservancy District that includes accessing a non-compact flow from December 1 through February 14 to protect three species (round shelled-roundtail chub, flannelmouth sucker, and blue head sucker). There is a conservation need. Although these fish are not federally endangered, they are state sensitive and considered a state endangered population. There are only a few waters that provide a unique habitat that is not infiltrated with non-native white suckers and they are all here in the southwest.

#### **10. Upcoming Events**

- January 29-31, 2025 - Colorado Water Congress
- February 1-WSRF Deadline
- March 28, 2025-Southwest Water Seminar at Sky Ute Casino, Ignacio
- April 24, 2025-SWBRT Meeting-Durango-La Plata County Fairgrounds and Event Center
- May 14, 2025-Children's Water Festival
- July 24, 2025-SWBRT Meeting -Cortez-Dolores Water Conservation District
- October 23, 2025-Durango (TBD)
- Other Announcements

#### **9. Wrap Up and Adjournment (At or Before 6:00 PM)**

Chair Ed Tolen adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m.