



Arkansas Basin Roundtable Meeting Minutes and Recorded Decisions

Wednesday June 11, 2025, 12:30 pm
Virtual via Zoom

Members Present: Noted on sign-in sheet.

Chair Mark Shea called the meeting to order at 12:30pm.

- Welcome and Introductions
- Quorum was determined and the meeting commenced.
- June 11, 2025 Agenda was approved
- Minutes of May 14, 2025, were approved by consensus.
- Public comments: None

2. Reports

- Executive Committee Report: Chairman Shea stated that Al Tucker has stepped down from the Roundtable and as the Recorder. Both Dave Allgood and Richard Hliderbrand expressed interest in the Recorder position. The subject will be discussed further at the July meeting. Chairman Shea stated he is ready to wrap up his tenure as the Roundtable chair in October. He requested consideration and input to pave the way for a smooth transition. The Executive Committee discussed the Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) and Colorado Water Plan (CWP) grant funding programs. A task force was created this past legislative session to look at the challenges of WSRF funding through the severance tax source. The Committee requested that Jeff Rodriguez with Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) provide regular updates from the task force regarding long term funding for the WSRF Grant program. Other discussions were related to the project bill that passed last session creating a new snowpack monitoring program. The bill provides a full time CWCB employee and also establishes regular funding for the snowpack monitoring initiative. The Executive Committee discussed funding that was part of the projects bill for the technical update for the next water plan update that will start early 2026. CWCB is restructuring the approach for the technical update that is based on lessons learned from the last round. This will provide a good opportunity to revisit some of the technical analysis that was previously done and continue to refine understanding of water supply demands and availability. A topic of specific interest in the Arkansas Basin was calculating the demand for agriculture. The demand was based in large part on available acreage for ag production regardless of water availability for that land for ag production. The Roundtable would like to revisit that and understand how that analysis will occur.

Another topic of interest from the last update was the analysis of water supply available within importing basins from trans-mountain diversion projects. And then, similarly, there were some issues with how environmental flows were modeled here in the Arkansas Basin. Previously, CWCB incorporated flow data from various nodes in the different river basins. The Arkansas only had 2 nodes which was not as robust of an analysis as desired.

- **CWCB Report: Jeff Rodriguez, CWCB staff**, reported that CWCB finalized the dates for the C-9 summit to be held in Lakewood on October 28th and 29th. CWCB received funding for the next Colorado Water Plan update cycle with the passing of the Projects Bill. CWCB is scoping the analysis and technical update in conjunction with the basin implementation plans for this update. Rodriguez reported the use of the Ag water protection water right was expanded from just divisions one and two to statewide under Senate Bill 24197. The Division of Water Resources is holding a series of hybrid stakeholder meetings to discuss the Ag Water protection water right rules for divisions three through seven. CWCB is hosting a [Webinar series](#) called Fluvial Futures. Webinars meet on the second Tuesday of the month, from 10 to 11. This is designed to highlight different aspects of the fluvial hazard mapping program. Mr. Rodriguez reminded members that 1051 data submittal deadline is June 30th and also the M. 36 Water loss audit is required for covered entities. For information on 1051 requirements and CWLI, please reach out to Kevin.Reidy@state.co.us or Sam.Stein@state.co.us. The IBCC will be meet in Grand Junction on June 25th and the [Water Conditions Monitoring Committee](#) meets on June 17th. Mr. Rodriguez also reported the [C-9 Summit](#) will be held October 28-29 in Lakewood.

CWCB Director Greg Felt reported the CWCB Board had their May meeting in Steamboat Springs. The Board elected a new chair and vice chair. Lorelei Cloud, the Southwest Basin director, was elected chair and vice chair is Barbara Vasquez, the North Platte Basin director. The next CWCB meeting will be July 16th and 17th in Salida at the Steam Plant. Mr. Felt is organizing a raft trip through Browns Canyon for interested board and staff. He has asked Tom Waters, Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area park manager to provide interpretive stops to understand the flow program and recreation management challenges in the upper basin. An agenda item at the May meeting was titled Fiscal Year 2026 Water Plan. Grant funding targets by category were discussed. Senior staff Anna Mauss led the conversation pertaining to the categories: agriculture, conservation and land use, engagement and innovation, storage and supply, and watershed health and recreation. The CWCB board discussed setting target allocations for the different categories He stated that currently agriculture owns 24% of the total going to ag conservation. Conservation and Land Use is at 16%, Engagement and Innovation is at 6%, Storage and Supply is 23% and Watershed Health and Recreation is 31%.

Table 1: Recommended Target Allocation by Category for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Category	Target Allocation (%)	Target Allocation (\$)
Agriculture	24%	\$8,825,000
Conservation & Land Use	16%	\$5,883,000
Engagement & Innovation	6%	\$2,206,000
Storage & Supply	23%	\$8,457,000
Watershed Health & Recreation	31%	\$11,399,000
Total	100%	\$36,770,000

Setting targets for these categories may help create a metric and then publicizing the targets might help drive participation. Mr. Felt expressed interest in seeing how things pan out with the possible absence of WSRF. He anticipates more pressure on the WSRF funding source. Director Felt provided a report on the Shoshone Power Plant Water Rights and stated that CWCB Director Lauren Ris will provide a detailed presentation on this issue later today. The Board heard strong comments from Denver Water, Aurora, and Colorado Springs pertaining to building a case for what the historic use had been. The Colorado River District has been the lead on the research to demonstrate the viability of the in-stream flow right and what that water right ought to be. Front range concerns are that in more recent history there have been significant periods of time when the power plant wasn't operating nor diverting and it seemed that the River District had chosen to study periods of time that didn't have many of these significant outages. There were questions on whether it wasn't the best representative time frame to be studying. Other comments by the front range interests were stating that a junior water right was getting too much credit. There was discussion about separating the senior water right from the junior water right and trying to strike a balance. There was a strong request, particularly, from Aurora, asking for direction to go into mediation prior to taking all this into Water Court. Most of the people that spoke to that request, expressed that is what water courts are for is to figure out what Aurora would like to mediate. Director Felt expressed concerns about what the impacts to the Interstate, the Colorado River compact could be and impacts to the Ark Basin's water future. The CWCB Board is scheduled to make a decision in September. CWCB had a 20 day period following the May meeting where any entity could request a hearing and there will be a formal public hearing with a hearing officer in September. Director Felt stated that because of the complexity of the whole thing, and the incomplete nature of the information that the Board needs for good decision making, the Board needs to spend more time to discuss this further. Terry Scanga questioned If CWCB gets this unprecedented in size and scope instream flow water right on the Colorado River if Director Felt sees increasing pressure on agricultural water rights in the South Platte, Arkansas and Rio Grande basins in the future. Director Felt replied that in whatever manner the possibility of using west slope water for east and south slope needs to be reframed and if we reduce other options there will be more pressure on agricultural irrigation water rights in those three basins. Director Felt stated that the goal on the west slope is to preserve the status quo, not to change it and the interesting thing was some of the bigger entities who participated in the public comment session were concerned about an expansion of use. It seemed to Mr. Felt that most of the bigger

entities were okay with the status quo and protecting that and they were really raising flags significantly about the elements of the study that could expand the use.

Director of the CWCB, Lauren Ris joined the meeting and reported the process CWCB goes through for in-stream flow acquisitions is to have two meetings. The 1st meeting occurred at the May Board meeting where the Colorado River District presented an official offer to the Board for this water right. Then Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) explained their role in this process is to evaluate whether or not there's a benefit to the natural environment by acquiring this water right. CPW's conclusion was there would be a benefit. That report is available on the [CWCB Board meeting website](#). The CWCB Board was given an opportunity to ask questions, to ensure they had information needed to determine whether or not to acquire the in-stream flow water right into CWCB's program would be a benefit. Next, the Board heard public comment from front range water utilities and the west slope. As Greg outlined, there were concerns about potential injury and what the historic use analysis says, and what that would mean for the Front Range water users on the Colorado River. Director Ris stated that this is a two board meeting process the board has not made any conclusions. Built into the process is an opportunity for anyone to request a Contested Hearing. This provides additional opportunities for objectors to file statements outlining their concerns. The deadline for that was yesterday and CWCB did receive requests for that. From this point forward, CWCB will be in a Contested Hearing mode, which means that CWCB will have another board meeting on July 1st to acknowledge the receipt of the request for a Contested Hearing, and to set a hearing date. CWCB must have that hearing within 120 days of the 1st hearing that was in May. The second hearing will be in the southwest basin at CWCB's September meeting. CWCB will also appoint a hearing officer which will be from the Attorney General's office that will run that hearing process. CWCB expects to receive statements from all of the parties that have expressed an interest in the Shoshone water rights. At the September hearing the Board will hear all sides of the issues and then will be able to take action on whether or not to acquire the water right into the in-stream flow program. If approved the Board can then direct staff to file a water rights application for the change case that would need to occur to add the in-stream flow use into the water decree. Director Ris stated the information provided to the Board and the actions that the Board is [available publicly](#). There are a variety of memos that are included in the May Board packet that includes a memo from staff, the official offer from the River District, CPW's biological analysis, and a draft of the in-stream flow use agreement between the State and the River District. There's also a draft of the water court application and information about the preliminary historic use analysis. If the outcome of the Board's decision is to move forward with this acquisition, it will then move to water court for more discussion about what the historic use is. This is the first step in many. After the Water Court, Xcel Energy also has to go before the Public Utilities Commission to obtain approval. To do this transaction the River District is also awaiting a Federal funding award that has since been frozen. The River District must go before the CWCB Board again and confirm that all of the conditions outlined in the purchase and sale agreement between Xcel and the River District have indeed occurred, and depending on how the Board votes may then release the State's \$20 million worth of funding. Chairman Shea opened the discussion to questions: Terry Scanga asked if someone else could come in and buy that water right during this process? Director Ris stated she believes that the purchase and sale agreement that exists between the River District and Xcel gives that exclusive option to the River District. Mr. Scanga's next question was would CWCB try to claim in court that the entire volume of water secured in the agreement is required to protect the environment?

Director Ris replied that all of the information is preliminary and draft and she expects to see changes. She added that the CPW biological analysis stated that the full decreed amount of the senior and the junior Shoshone water right would be beneficial to the environment. Chair Shea asked if the historic use analysis had been conducted by the River District exclusively? Director Ris stated the River District hired BBA consulting to perform the analysis. Because CWCB is co-applicants in the Water Court case staff has reviewed the analysis. Chair Shea asked if it may make sense to have an independent analysis of that done by the State agency? Director Ris stated the consultants have said that it's a preliminary analysis, and will likely change as to what is submitted as part of the water court application. She stated that CWCB is doing their due diligence and after reviewing their engineering staff think that it's reasonable. Chair Shea stated that as a co-applicant CWCB will need to stand behind the claims that are part of the application process to establish the in-stream flow right. If CWCB only refers to the River District's analysis it will result in much more litigious interaction in Water Court and potentially cost more to both the applicants and the opposers. Maybe that could be avoided if there were greater review of the historic use analysis, period of record outages, and other issues. Director Ris replied CWCB has taken a hard look at the analysis that was provided by the consultants with a skeptical eye and expects it to change. CWCB is looking for a path towards narrowing the scope of disagreement and is trying to be creative and listen to the concerns around the State to figure out a way that is fair and equitable. The final question from Chairman Shea was recognizing the magnitude of this water right and how it affects the administration and water supply availability and the potential for change in hydrology. Does CWCB think it would be appropriate to consider climate change effects as part of this process? Director Ris replied that climate change is hanging over all of our heads as we contemplate future water management. She is not sure how that's built into modeling for the quantification of this water right but prefers to leave that to the engineers. She stated if there's information that the various parties would like CWCB to consider the Board would welcome that. But that's not a factor that the Board is required to consider in this acquisition. The main consideration before the Board is does this water right provide a benefit to the natural environment? Director Ris stated that all of the [CWCB board meetings](#) are available on Youtube. Chair Mark Shea and Director Greg Felt thanked Ms. Ris for her time and insight. Chair Shea asked Director Felt to provide the Roundtable with updates.

- **IBCC Report: Representative Terry Scanga** stated that the next meeting is scheduled for June 25th in Grand Junction and the agenda has not been posted.
- **Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative (ARWC) Report: Executive Director Jonathan Paklaian** reported ARWC went to the Interlocken burn scar to review post fire recovery work that had been done last fall and found it held up well. He stated that ARWC will hold a workday before the monsoons come to shore up efforts before heavy rains hit. Please reach out to Mr. Paklaian or the team if you're interested in assisting. Mr. Paklaian stated that field work for the Wildfire Action Plan has begun, which is in the area of the Twin Lakes watershed and includes Lake County, parts of Chaffee and Pitkin counties for the transmountain water that comes into Twin Lakes. The Collaborative performed field work analyses and ground truthed areas that might be important project areas for wildfire resilience. Mr. Paklaian stated that ARWC has rebranded itself and has a new logo with the name Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative in the forefront. Executive Director Paklaian reported hiring a new forester, Mike Rung, from the US Forest Service in Pagosa. ARWC hired him through the Colorado State Forest Service.

He is technically a State employee but ARWC is funding the position through various projects throughout the Basin. This agreement saves ARWC administrative costs, provides vehicles, and insurance and benefits costs. ARWC has a 2 year term with the State and hopefully can extend that into the future. Mr. Paklaian reported that ARWC will be represented at the FibArk festival in Salida this weekend. Staff Cecilia Timburg will be there and if interested in assisting contact her. Mr. Paklaian stated that ARWC recently submitted its PEPO application. Mr. Paklaian also reported the Ag - Muni Committee is working on a channel stability and geomorphology project in the Arkansas River, between Pueblo and John Martin Reservoirs. ARWC has partnered with the committee to pursue funding to start this initiative and for outreach and engagement from stakeholders. ARWC is arranging a partnership with Ducks Unlimited and is exploring an arrangement in which Ducks Unlimited provides technical support and in kind matches that would help secure grant funding. Mr. Paklaian stated the ARWC is working on a grant application to fund a position to lead the stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts. ARWC needs to develop a \$75,000 cash match and will be having conversations with different stakeholders and interested parties. Co-Vice Chair Bob Hamel asked for an update on the stream gauges project. Mr. Paklaian stated he spoke to Luke Javernick, who is working on gauges that measure turbidity and temperature. He stated the gauges will be live by the end of the month and will begin sharing data then. ARWC has had conversations with USGS about how to continue stream gauge monitoring into the future. This data has been useful for Canon City for water intakes, by knowing the levels of turbidity, and also the outfitting community and many others.

- **Needs Assessment Committee: Committee Chair Gracy Goodwin** reminded everyone that a special round of WSRF funding deadline is June 15th to the Needs Assessment Committee. The proposals will be heard at the next committee meeting, probably June 26th or 27th. The date and time will be posted on the arkansasbasin.org website. Chair Goodwin introduced Jonathan Paklaian who gave a short [presentation](#) on the Ark Basin Restoration and Recovery project. They are requesting a letter of support from the Roundtable. Hearing no opposition, Chair Shea approved the request by consensus. Committee Chair Goodwin introduced Alli Schuch with the Fountain Creek Watershed District who is requesting a letter of support for a Colorado Water Plan grant. Ms. Schuch provided a short presentation about the Frost Ranch Restoration Design project. Hearing no opposition, Chair Shea approved the request by consensus. Chair Goodwin introduced Dan Tucker with the Arkansas Groundwater and Reservoir Association who gave a [presentation](#) on the West Pueblo Bank Restoration project. They are requesting a letter of support from the Roundtable. Hearing no opposition, Chair Shea approved the request by consensus. Chair Goodwin introduced Erin Quinn, with Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, with the Beckwith Project who gave a [presentation](#) on the West Pueblo Bank Restoration project. They are requesting a letter of support from the Roundtable. Hearing no opposition, Chair Shea approved the request by consensus.
- **PEPO Report: PEPO representative Ariel Hacker** announced the next PEPO Workgroup meeting will be Thursday, June 19th at 4 PM. Bob Hamel asked if the CWCB Ark Basin educational infographic was still available? He would like a digital copy of it. Mr. Hamel was told the infographic is posted on both the ABRT and the CWCB websites.
- **Enviro/Rec Committee Report: Committee Chair Bob Hamel** stated the next meeting is 10am on June 30th. He reported that tomorrow he plans on attending the Colorado

Stream Access meeting, sponsored by the Colorado Water Congress and American Whitewater. He will provide an update in July.

- **Ag/Muni Committee Report:** **Dan Tucker** stated he had already reported during the ARWC report. He reported that committee members are primarily working to support ARWC on the upcoming grant application and the stakeholder engagement to secure matching funds for the application.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jean Van Pelt
ABRT Admin Recorder

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