

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
June 10th, 2025
Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Alamosa, Colorado

Call to Order 2 p.m.

Amber Pacheco called the meeting to order.

Introductions were made and quorum was met for Roundtable Members.

The agenda had a name change in section 11 changed from Fay to Emily. Motion to approve the agenda with change by Charlie Speilman with Virginia seconded. All approved and passed.

Virginia made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 11th, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded by Cary. The motion was approved.

Public Comment:

Mike Blakeman was present and was representing Headwaters Alliance. They are completing the water efficiency plan for Creede with Bright Engineers and are working on securing funding for North Creede stream stability and flood mitigation. Headwaters Alliance is also working with Trout Unlimited and Division of Water Resources regarding possible work on a mine site as a good samaritan project. In addition to the other work, they are also looking at all of Mineral County and Hinsdale County and working on projects with the Forest Service, such as road stability projects and forest fire mitigation work.

Kevin terry provided a Roundtable update on the Lobatos Bridge Project. They met a couple weeks ago with Army Corp of Engineers to talk about the boat ramp and are working on a couple changes for the boat ramp. Most of it is removing some concrete which is a simple change, but still a problem. Sue Swift-Miller also reported they did get a new update from Robbins, who are contracted for the boat ramp, and there will be no change to the budget for the design change on the boat ramp.

Jim Loud representing the Committee for a Healthy Rio Grande rep he left the April meeting with a request to get a few things done and said Daniel Boyes has done a lot of work getting people together. Mr. Loud requested time on the agenda for next month to talk more about the Committee and what they want. Amber Pacheco thanked Daniel for working on getting a meeting together and thanked Heather Dutton and Daniel for getting river flow and reservoir operations information out to interested folks.

Amber Pacheco let attendees know Attorney General Phil Weiser will be joining the Roundtable meeting next month. She asked anyone who would like to ask questions please send them to her and she will send them to his team.

Patrick Ortiz, representing Senator Hickenlooper's office, reported they are going to have a Department of Interior Budget Hearing meeting tomorrow and if anyone had questions for the Senator, please let him know. We still do not have a Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner. AmeriCorps funding has been reinstated. The bipartisan Fix Our Forest Act is still gaining support and utility companies supporting it. The senate GOP still has about 3 weeks to pass the Reconciliation Bill before the July 4th recess and still needs a lot of changes made to it. Senator Hickenlooper and Senator Jim Risch introduced the bipartisan Energy Threat Analysis Program Act to help modernize and better protect the US energy grid from cyber security threats.

DWR Update:

Craig Cotton gave a water update. We started at 60% average for the Valley but have seen an increase in our forecast. The storm in the beginning of May really helped out. They have increased curtailment for Rio Grande and the Conejos. We have gone up to 8% for the Rio Grande and the Conejos. On the Rio Grande Compact lawsuit, he said he hopes it is getting closer, but doesn't know for sure. Craig also reported it is the first time in 4 years DWR is fully staffed at the local office. Amber Pacheco asked if the previous trial was vacated, is there another one possible? Craig replied they did schedule one in the September/October time frame and are hoping that this will be a status conference hearing where all parties will be coming together reporting that they reached an agreement and just ask the judge to sign off on it.

CWCB Update:

Jeff Rodriguez reported they have finalized a date for the C9 Summit. For 2025, it will be held on October 28th and 29th in Lakewood with more details to come soon. CWCB has received funding to begin the next Water Plan Update cycle, starting with the analysis and technical update in conjunction with the Basin Implementation Plans. The Ag Water Protection Water Right has been expanded from just Divisions 1 & 2 to all of Colorado and the Division of Water Resources will be holding a series of stakeholder meetings to discuss the rules. Anyone can find more info on the DWR's waters administration website page. The fluvial webinar will be happening meeting on the second Tuesday of the month from 10am to 11am and they will be talking about the survey. They will be meeting on the second Tuesday of the month from 10am to 11am. Jeff gave a reminder that the 1051 data is due at the end of the June. The IBCC will be having a hybrid meeting on June 25th in Grand Junction. July 1st is the Water Plan Grant deadline. The Water Condition Monitoring Committee is meeting on June 17th.

Nathan Coombs reported the CWCB appointed new chair Lorelei Cloud from the Southern Ute Reservation which is a historic moment. The CWCB Board is working on the Shoshone Water Rights on the Colorado River and are trying to separate the questions from the concerns. It is one of the oldest water rights on the Colorado River. It is a non-consumptive use for power generation with Public Service. There is a purchase agreement with the Colorado River District,

in partnership with the CWCB, to purchase that water right and put an instream flow right on it to protect the historical regime flows within that system. There are a lot of things that hinge on that water right and there is really good staff working who will get it right. Nathan asked anyone with questions or concerns to bring them to him.

Amber Pacheco stated when we do get information on the C9 Summit, we will get that out and we will have some scholarships available. She encouraged everyone to attend.

Letter of Support Requests:

Airborne Electromagnetic Survey in the San Luis Valley - Dr. Ryan Smith CSU

Dr. Smith presented a proposal to conduct an airborne geophysical survey across the San Luis Valley to map aquifers and the extent of blue clay using Airborne Electromagnetics (AEM). The project would provide data up to 1,000 feet deep and support groundwater modeling and recharge planning. The total funding request is just under \$1 million from CWCB and local sources. Craig Cotten said he had talked to Ryan a few days ago and he thinks this is a good project, as they have difficulty determining the blue clay. He said the study would give DWR more information.

Judy Lopez motioned to approve the letter of support and Nikita Cooper seconded it. The motion was approved.

Open Soil Moisture Monitoring Project – Helen Silver, IN-RICHES CSU

Helen Silver requested support for Phase 2 of an ongoing project aimed at expanding soil moisture monitoring and creating the “Quench” AI-based knowledge platform. Activities include installing ~15 new stations and better integrating local data into the Colorado Drought Monitor.

Heather Dutton motioned to approve a letter of support and Virginia Christensen seconded. The motion was approved.

Rio Grande Riparian Stabilization Project Phase 6 - Connor Born, RGHRP

Connor Born outlined Phase 6 of a riparian restoration effort along the Rio Grande near the Alamosa County line. The project involves LiDAR and on-ground surveys to identify restoration sites in coordination with NRCS, private landowners, and other partners. Total project cost: \$1.1 million; request: \$500,000.

Judy Lopez motioned for a letter of support and Heather Dutton seconded. The motion was approved.

Rye Resurgence Project Phase II - Heather Dutton

Phase 2. Heather Dutton presented a continuation of the rye marketing and restoration initiative aimed at supporting aquifer recovery. Phase 2 will expand outreach to end users and develop long-term infrastructure and business strategies. The request is for \$250,000 and the project would be a total \$500,000.

Virginia Christensen made a motion to approve a letter of support and it was seconded by Cassandra McCuen. The motion was approved.

Colorado Upper Rio Grande Water Cooperative Project Phase II – Todd Doherty, Western Water Partnerships

Todd Doherty described Phase 1 of the project and the tools that were developed. He also reported an Implementation Plan will be prepared under the first phase. In Phase 2, they are looking to finalize these tools and build a water rights accounting and trading platform, focusing on Subdistrict 1 because there is an active market for the trading of surface water credits already somewhat established. The request is \$325,000 to \$350,000 with a timeline of 18 to 24 months if awarded the funds.

Charlie Spielman asked why residential and industrial are not in the framework? Amber Pacheco responded the project is written to help with the subdistricts who do work with all types of water rightsowners.

Virginia Christensen moved to approve the letter of support and it was seconded by Heather Dutton. The motion was approved.

Frozen Assets: Innovative Groundwater and Recharge Strategies in the Rio Grande – Cary Aloia, Wetland Dynamics

Cary Aloia requested support for a multi-partner project examining winter sheet ice use for wildlife and habitat. The project includes a consumptive use study, revegetation pilots, and public workshops. Total project cost is \$199,000 with a near 1:1 match. American Rivers is the Applicant and partners are CO Parks and Wildlife and Ducks Unlimited. Phase 2 will identify farmers with fallowed fields who would be able to use the winter sheet ice to revegetate that field.

Judy Lopez moved to approve the letter of support and Cassandra McCuen seconded it. The motion was approved.

Water Education Mural Project – Jocelyn Catterson RIGHT

Jocelyn Catterson presented a proposal for a creative education initiative involving local schools, artists, and communities in Del Norte and Alamosa. Students will learn about local water issues and create murals reflecting that knowledge. The project is in collaboration with Salazar Center at ASU and RGWCEI and schools in Del Norte and Alamosa. The project will create a more engaging and accessible way for our community to become more water literate. She is requesting \$45,000 in funding with the total cost of the project being around \$60,000.

Judy Lopez made a motion to approve a letter of support and Mike Gibson seconded. The motion was approved.

Terrace Irrigation Company's Storage Future: Analysis of Opportunities and Obstacles and Design & Engineering of Outlet Works Repair – Nikita Cooper

Nikita Cooper described a dual-purpose project to explore a new direct flow storage decree on the Alamosa River and to upgrade and automate outlet works for improved storage capacity and control at Terrace Reservoir. She said the Terrace Irrigation Company is looking at how they might be beneficial for many uses and expand their storage utility. They are asking for \$250,000 from the Water Plan Grant and have matches of \$30,000 from the Alamosa-La Jara Water Conservancy District and Terrace Irrigation Company is matching \$55,000 with its own funds.

Kevin Terry made a motion to approve the letter of support and it was seconded by Daniel Boyes. The motion was approved. Virginia abstained.

Presentation from San Luis Valley Weed Management Association – Armando Ross

Armando Ross provided an update on regional efforts to address noxious weeds, emphasizing the serious threat they pose to land, water, and communities. Despite a 40% reduction in state funding, the San Luis Valley Weed Association continues to move forward by collaborating across all six counties. The Association is actively pursuing grants and other funding sources and has pooled resources to produce educational brochures (valued at \$7 each) that are being distributed to the public free of charge.

A unified mapping system has been developed and implemented to improve coordination, using a standardized form and language across counties. These efforts have also strengthened relationships between neighbors and agencies. Outreach has expanded to local schools, where scholarships are now being offered to engage students in weed management and land stewardship.

Armando noted that reduced water availability increases vulnerability to noxious weed infestations, and encouraged brainstorming new approaches to address this challenge. Local municipalities have begun reaching out for assistance, and the Association continues to find ways to respond despite limited resources. Senator Hickenlooper has expressed support and is working to assist where possible.

He added that only non-restricted chemicals are used for weed control, with strict precautions taken near water—maintaining at least a 3-foot buffer from shorelines, where mowing or hand-pulling is used instead.

Education meeting update:

Cassandra McCuen reported back on Rock Creek Tour which is wildfire mitigation project. Upcoming on July 24th is a tour to Subdistrict 4's Peachwood Farm. She reported there were no speakers planned for the rest of the year and asked if anyone knew of any other speakers, they should let her know.

Amber Pacheco mentioned there are a couple upcoming tours that will be out of the basin in September and in October/November so everyone should keep an eye out for those.

Jocelyn Catterson thanked those who filled out the survey for the Alamosa Library We Are Water Project. She reported the water exhibit should be installed by the fall.

Executive Meeting:

Cassandra McCuen said the attendees went through the agenda and got a preview on some of the projects presented today. They talked about how Roundtable might look at projects and for the basin funds. Maybe come up with a sub-committee, so we have figured out what we can do. If you have any suggestions, please let us know to fill the board. We are over on our WSRF basin account. Amber Pacheco added Ben Wade at CWCB is looking into this basin fund accounting issue to figure out where we may have been over.

There are no terms expiring for members this year but next year we will see a few terms expiring. The group also talked about how to get the empty seats filled.

Update from Emily Wolf with American Rivers regarding funding opportunities

Emily Wolf reported there are a couple of funding opportunities. She reminded everyone to go to the Roundtable's website on the funding tab to see what is available. The North American Wetlands Conservation Grants are open until July 10th.

Alex Funk from Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership: Partners for fish and wildlife, conservation projects on private lands. First step to contact state or regional for contact.

Amber Pacheco reported they have no good news about our IRA package that got awarded but has since been held up but there have been some conversations happening. The Bureau of Reclamation is trying to get that money released. It is sounding a little bit more positive but still unknown what we might receive. The award was a little over \$18 million for the San Luis Valley. She thanked the Senators and their staff for pushing for our support.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.