



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

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Arkansas Basin Roundtable Meeting Minutes and Recorded Decisions

Wednesday July 9, 2025, 12:30 pm
Virtual via Zoom

Members Present: Noted on sign-in sheet.

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

- Welcome and Introductions
- Quorum was determined and the meeting commenced.
- July 9, 2025 Agenda was approved
- Minutes of June 11, 2025, were approved by consensus.
- Public comments: Robert Sakada, with the Colorado Dept. of Agriculture reported an Ag Behavioral Health Work group will meet in Pueblo on July 22 on CSU Pueblo's campus. He also announced that former Water Advisor to the Governor, John Stulp passed away. Chairman Shea stated that Mr. Stulp was a very important figure in Colorado water as well as a significant person in our part of the State and said he will be missed. Mark thanked Robert for informing the Roundtable.

Reports

- **Executive Committee Report** - Chair Mark Shea asked Enviro-Rec Committee Chair Bob Hamel to provide an overview of the Colorado Stream Access Coalition that may introduce legislation on the right to float or access. This was a hot issue in 2010 which has resurfaced. The positions are no different than they were before. A concern Bob expressed is that current legislators are all different from 2010 and some of them have no idea of the history on this issue, including legislators in the Ark basin. This is an important issue that doesn't appear to be going away and could be coming forward in a meaningful way next session. The Coalition is scheduling another meeting which Colorado Water Congress will again host. There was concern expressed about the appropriateness of CWC hosting these types of meetings.

Chairman Shea reported a potential ballot measure is to create a new State agency called the [Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation Commission](#). Mark also stated the way that the Commission is being developed isn't clear on how the Commission would be related to any other State agencies, or have oversight, or how it would function, but obviously has some ties to water resources in Colorado. Mark also reported on discussions occurring around a good Samaritan law that would protect organizations and individuals who are involved in legacy mine reclamation. There are some protections already under Colorado law, this would further protect those types of activities and organizations that are interested in doing mine reclamation and potentially even set up some type of an incentive to help them do that type of work.

Chairman Shea updated the Roundtable on the State's new dredge and fill permit program. Previously the Water Quality Control Division has been revising the draft



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

program. Some issues of specific interest and concern for water right owners and operators of water supply projects have been addressed through changes in the draft regulation and some of the more significant concerns that were expressed with the regulation have been fixed. The Executive Committee discussed inviting the Water Quality Control Division staff to do another presentation on the program before it's implemented.

- **CWCB Report** - CWCB's Jeff Rodriguez provided an update on the Non-Renewable Investment Program, aka the [Projects Bill grants](#). These are statewide grants that CWCB board authorizes for regional supply needs and are included in the Projects Bill. The Projects Bill requires approval of the General Assembly. Jeff also provided an update on the Colorado Water Plan grant program. The grant cycle closed on July 1st and CWCB received 81 applications requesting \$39 million in funding. There is only \$37 million available for 2 cycles this fiscal year. So this shaped up to be a very competitive round. The CWCB Board will make funding determinations in September. Jeff also reported that the technical assistance for the Federal cost sharing program has been initiated. Grants are available to help applicants prepare the materials necessary for Federal funding for water projects. CWCB is accepting applications on a rolling basis. Jeff shared information pertaining to the [Water Education and Workforce Hub](#), a partnership between CWCB and Colorado State University's Water Center. They are developing a centralized online water education and workforce resource hub for the State. If interested in assisting in the development of the Hub Jeff suggested taking the survey at the above link and to share it. Its goal is to serve as a one stop shop for students, educators, water professionals, and community members to access Colorado specific water education and workforce resources. Jeff reminded the Roundtable that the [C 9 Summit](#) dates are October 28th and 29th in Lakewood. CWCB has funding available to help with travel, mileage and lodging reimbursement for up to 10 Roundtable members. The fluvial hazard mapping team is still hosting their [Fluvial Futures](#) webinar series on the second Tuesday of the month from 10 to 11 am and the Division of Water Resources is hosting stakeholder meetings for Divisions 3 through 7 for the Ag. Water Protection Water Rights. Jeff included a quick plug for the [Water Conditions Monitoring](#) Committee meeting this month on July 22 from 9:30 to noon.

CWCB Director Greg Felt reported the July Board meeting is next Wednesday and Thursday in Salida. He has arranged for a Browns Canyon raft trip for the Board and staff and a presentation by Tom Waters, Arkansas Headwater Recreation Area, about the Voluntary Flow Management Program and recreation management. After reviewing the meeting agenda Greg stated that the Board will continue to focus on the Shoshone Power Hydropower Water Rights Permanency Project. Greg stated the State has assigned a different Assistant Attorney General to advise the Board specifically for the Shoshone hearings, because the normal Attorney General Jen Mealy, is involved in the Water Court application. Mark asked Greg if there will be ways to get additional information about the specifics of what will be considered by the Board. Greg responded that the answers to those questions ought to be available after the July meeting. Greg stated that the CWCB Board recently held a single subject virtual Board Meeting to move forward with the hearing process in September. There are still questions pertaining



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

to the studies that were partly conducted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and through the Colorado River District and their consultants. He stated a dynamic at work with the situation is from letters and public comment the Board received in May, mostly from larger front range interests to the north. The front range interests are in overall support for this concept, but question the data and methodology. There's been many good points made by the front range interests in particular, and those need to be considered. Greg said an overall consensus of the board would be supportive of maintaining the status quo and are not supportive of an expansion beyond what has truly been the historic use, not consumptive use. And there are elements of the river district's study in question; the years they chose, assumptions made, things they didn't carve out that are valid concerns. Greg stated he hopes the Water Court can understand and make a good decision. Jeff added that the public comment period is open until September 18th and today's deadline is to request party status for the hearing. He added that the decision being made by the Board at the September hearing will be determining if the water right is suitable for the in-stream flow program, and if the Board wants to accept the offer from the River District and then proceed to Water Court, which, assuming, will take years to actually get a decree. Jeff encouraged interested parties to make public comments at the CWCB board meetings or submit your public comments before the September 18th deadline. Mark stated that it's a question of how things will move forward and making sure there's not an expansion of that water right that would potentially injure other rights either in the near future or definitely in perpetuity. Jeff provided a link to the [Shoshone flow acquisition](#). There is information on the details from each board meeting, including board memos and public notices.

- **IBCC Report** - Jeris Danielson reported the IBCC met on June 25th. He stated that Becky Mitchell reported on the Platte River Recovery Program for the Whooping Crane in Central Nebraska. The purpose is to create a habitat where the Cranes can recover from their endangered status and partners are Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and the Federal Government.

Jeris stated the deadline is 2026 for the upper basin and lower Basin States to come to an agreement on the Colorado River Compact. If not, the Federal government will impose their own solution to operating the reservoirs on the Colorado river. There's been a breakthrough in the last 10 days where the upper and lower states have come to some agreement. The agreement is a compact uncoupling rather than looking at the compact itself. The proposal is to look at the natural flows at Lee's Ferry, which is the dividing line between the upper and the lower basin, over a 3 year period, and then administer releases from Lake Powell on the basis of those 3 years of flow data. There are still issues to be dealt with, but at least it is moving ahead in terms of an agreement that may avoid a Supreme Court litigation.

Jeris said an IBCC subcommittee created a [NLR Report](#) that was presented at the meeting. The document proposes a timeline for discussion of topics and sets priorities in terms of the most important to be dealt with. Jeris suggested for the Ark Basin Roundtable's September meeting an agenda item could be a discussion of the NLR Report to be able to provide feedback to the IBCC before their next meeting at the C 9 Summit. Jeff stated the subcommittee will continue to meet in the interim to develop materials for IBCC members to work on to carry on this conversation with the Basin



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

Roundtables. He encouraged the Roundtable to focus on the first topic area because that is what will be discussed at the C 9 Summit IBCC meeting rather than providing feedback on the full executive summary.

The IBCC received a report from Senator Roberts, chairman of the Senate Ag Committee, that stated major issues for him right now are cost of living, housing, balancing the budget, and how to react to Federal funding cuts. Senator Roberts also reported there will be a task force to study future water funding since severance tax is so unreliable. The Senator stated that the legislature removed the requirement to refund taxes back to the Casinos and that Casino betting could provide about \$32 million this year for water projects. That'll probably go to \$42 million next year, just based on those tax rebates. Senator Roberts encouraged the IBCC and Roundtables to engage with their elected representatives by inviting them to meetings, have them make presentations, and ask them questions. He stated there is a lot of turnover and a lot of institutional memory is lost with term limits and this would be a good way to keep our legislators educated.

- **Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative Report** - Executive Director Jonathan Pakalian reported ARWC submitted a water Plan Grant application to fund the Lower Ark initiative. The goal is to build some capacity in the lower Ark, including hiring an employee to identify river issues and to develop ways to resolve them. ARWC is working to secure partnerships to meet the required match for the grant. Dan Tucker stated he felt they have a really good and diverse group of stakeholders and partners.

Jonathan stated that ARWC withdrew one of the post fire work and fire recovery CWCB grant applications. After conversations with CWCB they stated they would not fund this type of activity because internally Chris Sturm is building a technical team to respond to wildfire events. Mark stated that in the recent past most of the post fire needs were met through more regional or place-based programs and resources. That's why there has been a big value in having an organization like the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative with those types of resources and experience to come in and work with communities impacted by fire and post fire conditions. CWCB was not there with a team to come in and do post fire condition assessments and come up with plans to stabilize burn scars and protect values at risk. If CWCB's plan is to meet that need with internal resources or contracted resources it would be great to understand that clearly because that is something that is needed. The Roundtable will ask Chris Sturm to present on this new program. Jonathan stated that CWCB wants more wildfire ready action plans to be developed in the State. He said ARWC has one ongoing in the Twin Lakes area and the Pikes Peak area. ARWC's goal is to develop additional plans in the basin. If anyone is interested, let ARWC know. Jonathan said that CWCB is much more willing to apply wildfire readiness dollars to areas with existing wildfire ready action plans.

Mark reported that Palmer Land Conservancy and other nonprofits are working with the military installations to look at easements and property acquisition to address encroachment on the military installations in El Paso County. This initiative called the Sentinel Landscape Designation doesn't bring any resources to the landscape to work on but it does give its stakeholders within that designated landscape a leg up on pursuing other grant funding. Mark suggested it maybe worthwhile for at least a short



Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

presentation to the Roundtable to learn more about what it is, and how and why it extends up to Lake County, which is a water supply piece of it to eastern El Paso County and parts of Pueblo County.

Jonathan reported that the Pueblo Steel Mill was recently sold and he is not sure if this will impact ARWC's Minnequa Dam Redesign project. He has reached out to the new owners but has not received a response.

- **Needs Assessment Committee** - Chair Gracy Goodwin explained the Roundtable received a request for a letter of support last month for a Colorado Water Plan grant, but the applicant could not attend the meeting. The grant request is to expand the IN-RICHES Open Soil Moisture Monitoring Project. This will expand the State's network of soil moisture sensors and develop an innovative, browser-based platform. The proposal was distributed to the Executive Committee for review and was approved by consensus to provide a letter of support. The Committee felt this was a very important project and wanted the entire Roundtable to be aware. Gracy asked if there were any questions or consensus to move forward with ratifying the letter of support. Hearing none the letter was ratified by consensus.

Gracy reported the NAC had 4 applicants submit WSRF applications and two of the applications were asked to request Colorado Water Plan funding instead due to limited funds in the Basin WSRF account. If these applicants are turned away from CWP funding we ask them to resubmit their application for WSRF grants.

Gracy introduced Jean Van Pelt, Arkansas River Basin Water Forum Program Manager. The ARBWF is requesting \$30,261 in WSRF funds. [Presentation](#) The grant request was approved by consensus by the Roundtable membership.

Gracy introduced Bill Tyner, Tyner Engineering & Sciences who was representing the Fort Bent Canal Association. The Association is requesting \$110,502 in WSRF funds. [Presentation](#) The grant request was approved by consensus by the Roundtable membership.

- **PEPO Workgroup** - No report this month.
- **Enviro/Rec Committee** - Chair Bob Hamel reported that the Voluntary Flow Management Program started July 4th. Bob mentioned the benefits associated with monitoring water temperature in the river and the relationship of low flows or lower flows to temperature. This data benefits the fishery biologists and water managers. Bob stated that the committee will continue to provide written reports to the Roundtable membership.
- **Ag-Muni Committee** - Co-Chair Dan Tucker reported the committee members have
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Arkansas Basin Roundtable

PLANNING OUR
WATER FUTURE

been busy supporting ARWC and the Colorado Water Plan grant application. Dan stated that this initiative is broadly supported by entities from Pueblo reservoir to John Martin Dam. Dan said he salutes the folks that are participating because they have joined without a moment's hesitation. The eagerness to participate indicates that this initiative is important and something worthwhile.

- **Presentations**

Ark Decision Support System (DSS) – Megan Kraner & Brian MacPherson, CWCB

[Presentation](#)

Lower Arkansas Valley Groundwater Study – Lesley Sebol & Orna Buch-Leviatan,

Colorado Geological Survey [Presentation](#)

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Mark Shea at 4:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Van Pelt

ABRT Admin Recorder