

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
September 9th, 2025
Rio Grande Water Conservation District
Alamosa, Colorado

Call to Order 2:06 p.m.

Amber Pacheco called the meeting to order.

Introductions were made and quorum was met for Roundtable Members.

Approve Meeting Agenda

Charlie Spielman made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Karla Shriver. All approved and the motion passed.

Approve August 12th, 2025 Minutes

Amber Pacheco reported she had received a request from the Committee for a Healthy Rio Grande to add a more detail to the section regarding their presentation at the last Roundtable meeting. The suggestion from the Executive Committee was to add a sentence to the minutes which says "To learn more about the Committee's specific requests, please reference their website". There was discussion also regarding including the handout from their presentation but it was decided it was best to just point interested individuals to the website which does include the list of suggestions.

Heather Dutton made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 12th meeting with the one suggested addition. The motion was seconded by Mike Gibson. All approved and motion passed.

Public Comment

Codi Backen reported a low-tech process-based restoration group is forming in the Valley. They are focusing on what the current issues are with low-tech projects and working to prepare a solid list of resources and contactors that people can use. If anyone is interested in joining or learning more about it, they are more than welcome to reach out to her.

Sue Swift-Miller reminded attendees of the upcoming celebration at the Lobatos Bridge Project. Ken Salazar is going to be there and there is a catered lunch. The date is Friday the 26th at 11 a.m. It will be a nice opportunity to thank all of the funders, the Rio Grande Roundtable included, who helped make this project come to life. RSVP is requested.

Matt Peterson invited everyone to attend the Rio Grande Head Waters Land Trust's annual fall event. The event will be held at the Colorado Farm Brewery on Saturday October 4th from 3 to 8 p.m.

Anna Vargas reported the San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council is hosting a History of Southern Colorado event on Saturday October 4th from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Fort Garland Museum in the Mess Hall. A QR code is available to RSVP for the event or you can RSVP to Anna by October 1st.

Cassandra McCuen announced the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project has scheduled their annual Rio Reels fundraiser for November 7th at Ski Hi. Tickets are available online.

CO Division of Water Resources Update

Craig Cotton provided an update for the Rio Grande Basin. There is still 0% curtailment for the Rio Grande because of the low water year that we have been having. Most recent flows have picked up because of the recent rains but they are still very low and at times were close to what we were at in 2002. It is good that we can use all the water that we have here in CO but the bad news is that the lower end of the Rio Grande and Conejos are very dry and are suffering from low to no water. He is looking at Nov 1st shut off date for the irrigation season. There is a fair chance that we will be a little over-delivered on the Rio Grande and the Conejos for the Compact so there is a chance that we may go into Winter Recharge on the Rio Grande but we still need to see how the season turns out.

Craig also gave an update on the Rio Grande Compact and the United States Supreme Court case. He reported the parties are getting closer to a settlement as of right now. The Compact Commission did vote recently to pass a resolution that all three states are in favor of the settlement. There are still a few hurdles that have to be overcome; The biggest one being the parties are headed to Philadelphia for a hearing with the Special Master. The individual states will share their thoughts on what should happen as will the United States. Hopefully we will get a resolution and we will be done with this case. It is not a done deal yet, but getting close.

Amber paused the meeting to allow the visiting students from Western State University to introduce themselves and their area of study.

CWCB Updates

Jenna Battson was filling in for Jeff for the CWCB report. She announced the C9 Summit is coming up October 28th and 29th in Lakewood at the Sheridan Denver West Hotel. The 28th will be more of a conference day and the 29th will be more meetings and workshops. The registration is open now and there will be more details, including an agenda, coming out soon. Reimbursements will be available for up to 10 Roundtable members for lodging and traveling for each basin. Individuals can be reimbursed for up to two nights lodging and travel mileage.

There is \$10 million dollars available for wildfire and flood impact loans. These loans are available to eligible applicants that either serve or receive water from areas that are under a Governor declared emergency declaration. If anyone is interested or has questions, they can reach out to a CWCB staffer.

- The WSRF deadline is October 1st.
- The Water Plan Grant deadline is December 1st.

- The Technical Assistance for Federal Cost Sharing Program is open now with rolling deadlines.
- The last of the Fluvial Futures Webinar Series is on October 14th from 10 to 11 a.m. The previous sessions from this series can be found on the CWCB YouTube Channel.
- The last Division of Water Resources Water Protection Water Right Stakeholder Meeting for Divisions 3 through 7 will be held virtually on September 23rd beginning at 1 p.m.
- The Water Conditions Monitoring Committee Meeting will be held on September 23rd from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- The CWCB Board Meeting is September 16-18th. It is being held in the Southwest Basin in Durango.

Nathan Coombs provided additional information regarding the upcoming CWCB Board Meeting. Wednesday will be the Finance Committee. The remainder of the three-day meeting will include the Shoshone Water Right hearing and other regular business.

Presentation from the Wright-Ingram Institute on the Drought Interface Tool

Cassandra McCuen provided some background on why this tool is being presented to the Rio Grande Basin. She asked everyone to think about if something similar would be good for the Rio Grande Basin.

Presenters for the Wright-Ingram Institute included Dylan Gauthier, Director of Research and Tal Beery, Executive Director. The presentation included background information on the Wright-Ingram Institute which was founded in 1970 with a focus on land, water, and ecology. The institute looks to help communities engage with complex environmental issues. One of the examples of their work is Deep Mapping which tries to layer together and integrate many different parts like data, a legal framework, and lived experiences. Through this work they hope to drive better questions and have the community help with that.

They presented on the Drought Interface Tool they developed in the Colorado River Basin. They spoke of how the Colorado River is a complex with competing water rights (state, tribal, federal), climate impacts, variability in flows, and legal/apportionment complexities. The tool is meant to provide a visualization to explore how different claims, uses, and possible future scenarios intersect. A video discussing this tool is available online on their website.

Discussion was also held regarding what kind of tool the Rio Grande and San Luis Valley would want or need. The questions that are guiding the Institute regarding the Rio Grande are: Is there a need for this type of tool? What would make a Rio Grande Basin Drought Interface tool most useful? What kind of tool could support the Rio Grande Basin implementation plan goals? How might it bridge technical expertise and community knowledge? What kind of visualization makes the most sense? What variables should be included? Would the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable be able to contribute some funding to a deep mapping pilot process for the Rio Grande?

Questions were taken from the attendees. There were questions about how the tool has been used in the Colorado River Basin. There was also discussion regarding the cost of such a project here in the Rio Grande Basin. Additional discussion regarded the many studies and programs which already exist. Tal and Dylan talked about not duplicating efforts and whatever deep mapping work they do, it would start with where we already are. Some suggestions were to take the existing data and come up with a beta version that compiled all the information that is also user friendly. The discussion ended with agreement there would need to be more conversations on the subject.

Education Committee Update:

Cassandra McCuen announced Cary Aloia is putting together a transmountain diversions panel which will be presenting at the October meeting. She also reminded everyone about the tour to Pueblo. She said she will provide a quick report after the tour. There are no additional talks or tours planned for the rest of the year.

Executive Committee Report

Amber Pacheco reminded everyone the next meeting is scheduled for Veteran's Day which will be a holiday for many that attend the meetings. There was a suggestion to move the meeting to an informal meeting on Nov. 3rd at 11 a.m. The goal of that meeting will be to sit down and finalize the funding process with limited funding in the next couple years. Lunch will be provided. The process is being developed to provide a way for the Roundtable to focus on the projects that have the highest values for the Basin at this time. Cassanda added that anything drafted during the informal meeting will still need to be brought to the full Roundtable for approval.

Amber also reported the Executive Committee discussed the Dust on Snow program and how the Roundtable might be able to help expand on how the data is being integrated into real time forecasting. The group also discussed how there might be ways to help with additional funding.

Emma Bump was present and reported she is just getting started with visiting other Roundtables and they are definitely open to hearing what others are thinking. She reminded everyone that even if we had another step in the program, we would still need to be collecting the annual Dust on Snow data. There was additional discussion on ideas of how this data can be helpful to other modeling the Roundtable is currently funding. There was also a conversation regarding the radar that was put in place in Alamosa County and how it has benefitted the forecasting process as well.

Update from American Rivers regarding funding Opportunities

No update was provided for this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:36 p.m.