



Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 2:00 pm
GoTo Meeting Online

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 2:02 pm by Nathan Coombs, chairman.

Introduction of those in attendance, who included Nikita Christensen, Rio Grande County; [member](#), Bethany Howell, Rio Grande Watershed Conservation & Education Initiative; Nathan Coombs, Conejos Water Conservation District; Emma Reesor, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project; Daniel Boyes; [RGHRP](#); Sam Stein, Colorado Water Conservation Board; Jojo La, CWCB; Cathy Garcia, US Congresswoman Lauren Boebert; Robert Hurd, Hinsdale County Commissioner; Amber Pacheco, Rio Grande Water Conservation District; Darin Schepp, Colorado Division of Water Resources; Chuck Finnegan, [Conejos County](#); Robert Sakata, Cary Aloia, Wetland Dynamics; Cindy Medina, Alamosa River Keepers; Daryl Kohut, USFS; Kevin Terry, Trout Unlimited; Keith Holland, [RGBRT and IBCC Representative](#); Adam Moore, Colorado State Forest Service; Tricia Snyder, WildEarth Guardians; Mike Gibson, [RGBRT](#); Judy Lopez, Colorado Open Lands; Clarice Navarro, US Congresswoman Lauren Boebert; Heather Dutton, SLV Water Conservancy District & CWCB Board Rep; Ann Bunting, [IBCC Representative and](#) Saguache County; Hannah Thill, RGWCEI; Ronda Lobato, Costilla County Conservancy District; Jenny Nehring, Wetland Dynamics; Sally Wier, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust; Christi Bode, Moxiecran Media; Russ Sands, CWCB; Cathy Morin, Dwight Martin, Heather Greenwolf, Headwaters Alliance; Allen Law, RiGHT; Alex Puglisi, Rio de la Vista, ASU Salazar Center; Dave Marquez, Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association; Ryan Unterreiner, CPW [and Steven Romero, Costilla County](#). Peter Clark and Travis Smith were absent, excused.

Agenda

Chairman asked for approval of the agenda as presented by acclimation. No changes were made so agenda was approved.

Minutes

Minutes for the February 9, 2021 meeting were presented. Clarification about Colorado Division of Water Resources request. There being no opposition or amendments, the minutes were passed by acclimation.

Public Comment

Rio de la Vista of the Adams State University's Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center reminded those present about the State of the Basin Symposium on March 20th. Dan Gibbs of DNR will be keynote

speaker. The event will be virtual and registration link reminder in the chat. Rio also thanked the groups sponsoring the symposium.

Amber Pacheco requested a letter of support from the Roundtable on behalf of the subdistricts who are working on a WaterSMART ~~grant~~ ([Bureau of Reclamation](#)) grant with Colorado Water Conservation Board staff, Colorado Open Lands, and a few other partners. Nathan requested that Amber draft the letter to be sent after asking for any opposition. There being none, the executive committee will review the letter and continue the process.

Daniel Boyes reminded people about the upcoming meetings for the Basin Implementation Plan subcommittees for measurable objectives and strategies. Dates and times will be on the website. The BIP drafts are being worked on in connection with the overall General Contractor. The timeline is shortening for feedback from community members.

PEPO Update

Bethany discussed the state-wide PEPO meeting and improved access on the CWCB website for sharing information. The hope is for better cross basin collaboration on common issues. A teaser was shown for the video in progress by Christi Bode in partnership with the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee focusing on agriculture and water use.

IBCC Report

Ann Bunting gave the report on the recent IBCC meeting on February 23rd. The meeting included a report from the PEPO/IBCC liaison, a message from Becky Mitchell, director of CWCB, and much discussion on the Demand Management Plan for the Colorado River. A panel discussion was held with managers from two districts (St. Vrain & Colorado River District) about recently successful ballot initiatives resulting in more voter approved funding for their districts. Keith Holland added that the conversation around demand management and storage was most time intensive as it involves so many people in upper and lower basin states and is contentious. It is important for our basin to stay aware of the discussion as we are part of the state, even if we aren't dealing with it directly.

Subdistrict Report

Amber Pacheco from the Rio Grande Water Conservation District discussed the contacts with well owners for well rules and regulations exempt from commercial uses. The rules will go into effect next week on March 15th so owners need to have a plan in place. Subdistrict one raised their ~~fee tax~~ to \$150/AF. They were requested by the judge to hold more public hearings, etc. to show the community that they can use the charge. A budget hearing held on March 2nd and voted to leave it at that price. A compromise request to the board was denied. Subdistricts 2,3, & 6 are working on annual replacement plans. Higher pumping and depletions are expected with the current water situation. Subdistricts 4 & 5 recently filed first annual replacement plans for partial year, March 16-April 30th. Subdistrict 5 is still in process for finding replacement water, but Subdistrict 4 has completed theirs. A full annual replacement plan would still be possible after May if the partial year plan isn't approved in time.

Colorado Division of Water Resources Report

Darin Schepp from Colorado Division of Water Resources gave the division's report. The annual Compact Commission meeting will be on April 8 with New Mexico and Texas. The well rules and regulations will go into effect next week so everyone has been busy preparing for that. We will most likely be below normal precipitation and irrigators may be able to open a little ahead of time, but not much.

Colorado Water Conservation Board Report

Jojo La is the Endangered Species Policy Specialist from the CWCB and gave a presentation to update the Roundtable on the Colorado Water Plan's Environment & Recreation goals. La is asking for feedback on the focus area maps if able as Basin Implementation Plans are being formed. She also thanked those who helped create the initial maps. There are multiple uses for the maps for E&R purposes such as avoidance of conflict, identify needs, collaborative efforts for future maps, and guide for water supply planning. La discussed the specifics of the Rio Grande Basin's E&R focus area needs as identified by stakeholder input. There is not currently a database to include all the information gathered, so the CWCB would like to put it in a Story Map type infographic to allow public utilization. An E&R workshop will be hosted by CWCB and Basins on April 7 from 8 am-12:30 pm. Original map creator Rio de la Vista gave background on why particular data was focused on. Cary Aloia expressed concern about other similar efforts to [pull-compile spatial data and about potential overlap between those efforts](#). La discussed the positive aspects of increased data efforts and how they can be complementary. The workshop will allow for these types of conversations regarding similar efforts in other basins.

Sam Stein gave an account balance of \$251,347 for the Basin. Roughly \$5 million is in the statewide account. The Rio Grande does not have any grants going in front of the board so the basin account will be accurate until future grants are approved. The Board had a demand management workshop with proposed options. Becky Mitchell, director, will speak on code of conduct and expectations on her visits to the Roundtables. Visit the engagecwcb.org website for upcoming events and other information from CWB. Future funding approval of \$5 million has to go through the legislature but the CWCB is hopeful that they will approve. The CWCB board of directors meeting is March 10th & 11th.

Project Previews

Nathan reiterated that projects are not being ranked at this time, but it is a chance to view what is coming and to note the account balance in connection with proposals. There is another proposal that is possible with an updated water efficiency guidebook, but the proposal hasn't been solidified with financial numbers. The rate would be proportional to what the rest of the state is contributing. When more information is available on that, Nathan will send it to the Roundtable.

Judy Lopez from Colorado Open Lands previewed their grant proposal for water conservation easements in partnership with Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust and others. Funding would allow farmers and ranchers to keep water rights intact while preserving their intended use. The project is Tier 2 ranked, in process already. The total project cost would be \$10M, with the majority of funds coming from other sources.

Heather Dutton from the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District previewed their proposal for Shaw Reservoir in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and Trout Unlimited. The reservoir outlets and dam infrastructure would be updated to maximize use for storage. The project is Tier 2 ranked, in process already. The total project cost would be \$370,000. Kevin Terry from Trout Unlimited reiterated the fishery aspect with conservation, environmental & recreation benefits. Having a recreational cutthroat fishery would also include an educational value.

Judy Lopez also discussed a second project proposal for the next fall, the Conejos Ranchland Initiative. Partners include Colorado Open Lands, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, and Colorado Cattleman's. The ask would not be large, possibly around \$200,000 and a combination of WSRF and Water Plan grant funds. The total looks close to \$800,000.

There were no questions or concerns raised for any of the project previews. Nathan noted that other project proposals are invited throughout the year.

Other Business

Wayne Schwab had suggested to Nathan and Bethany about placing minutes and/or newsletters in the newspapers to encourage understanding of the Roundtable's role in the community. This idea will be discussed with executive and education committees on the potential of proceeding. Members were encouraged to notify their boards of the meetings and represent as many entities as possible.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm.