



Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Tuesday, July 13, 2021 at 2:00 pm

In Person

623 4th Street

Alamosa, CO 81101

Zoom Virtual Option

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:07 pm.

Attendance

Those in attendance in person and online included Emma Reesor (Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project), Adam Moore (CSU Forest Service), Peyton Valentine (Conejos Water CD), Nathan Coombs (Conejos Water CD), Anne Bunting (Saguache), Amber Pacheco (Rio Grande Water Conservation District), Travis Smith (Wild Turkey Federation), Judy Lopez (Colorado Open Lands), Peter Clark, Rio de la Vista (ASU Salazar del Norte Center), Cindy Medina (Alamosa Riverkeepers), Heather Dutton (CWCB and SLV Water Conservancy District), Charlie Spielman (M&I representative), Wayne Schwab (Trinchera Irrigation District), Kevin Terry (Trout Unlimited), Wanda Sandoval (National Wildlife Federation), Donald Valdez (HD 62 Representative), Hannah Thill (RGWCEI), Virginia Christensen (Trinchera Irrigation Company), Nikita Christensen (Rio Grande County), Sally Wier (RiGHT), Erin Minks (Senator Bennett's office), Alex ?. Keith Holland (agriculture representative), Darin Schepp (CDOW), Cathy Garcia (Boebert's office), Seth Murrell, Andrea Jones, Ryan Unterreiner (CPW), Heather Greenwolf (Headwaters Alliance), Jared Romero, Matt Stearns, Michael Gibson, Mike Roque (Valley Community Fund), Robert Sakata, Chuck Finnegan, Sam Stein (CWCB), Michael Gibson, Dale Pizel (CPW), Jim Ehrlich (Colorado Potato Administrative Committee), Danielle Snyder, Christi Bode, Glenn Miller, Russ Sands (CWCB), Antonio Huerta (Senator Hickenlooper's office), Bethany Howell (RGWCEI), Chloe Dickson, Daryl Kohut, Derek McDonald.

Agenda

Chairman asked for approval of the agenda with general consensus unless otherwise objected. The agenda was approved by general consensus with no amendments.

Minutes

The minutes were approved by general consensus as mailed out for May 11, 2021.

Public Comment

Judy Lopez from Colorado Open Lands asked for a letter of support from the Roundtable on behalf of their grant request for a Colorado Water Plan Grant for \$1.3 million for groundwater conservation

easements. Match includes over \$6.7 million. Rio de la Vista made a motion to approve a letter, Charlie Spielman seconded. The motion was approved for a letter of support to be provided. Additionally, it being Judy Lopez' birthday, those in person sang a quick round of "Happy Birthday."

Emma Reesor of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project asked for a letter of support from the Roundtable on behalf of a Colorado Water Plan Grant to replace 4 diversion structures. The project will improve efficiencies and river restoration with multiple benefits. The project will have an \$800,000 request for the grant with equal cost share. Kevin Terry made a motion to sign a letter of support for the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project's request, Cindy Medina seconded. All approved and the motion passed.

Travis Smith of the Wild Turkey Federation announced that Colorado Water Congress will be in person in August 24-26 in Steamboat Springs. Capacity will be limited to the first 300 who register.

Rio de la Vista from the Salazar Rio Grande del Norte Center announced that a water studies minor is launching during the fall semester at Adams State University. High school students and community members are also able to take it either concurrently or as listening participants. Additionally, the Water Equity Task Force has met for an orientation meeting and will be in a workshop in the fall.

Donald Valdez, House Representative for District 62 spoke to the legislative work being done on behalf of Colorado water and the importance of education, wildfire mitigation, and other topics related to natural resources and drought.

Wanda Sandoval from the National Wildlife Federation and HECHO spoke about a regional assessment for the riparian corridor. One of the aspects is a socio-culture lens which includes questions regarding values tied to the river, riparian areas, ditches, and acequias. A copy of the survey was sent to the Roundtable mailing list, if anyone would like to take the survey, they are encouraged to do so or to contact Wanda for additional presentations regarding the survey. The survey will build awareness of enhancing the riparian corridor. The survey is online but is also accessible in paper form. The deadline for completing the survey is ASAP as it should be completed before the end of September. There is a possible glitch with the online survey that will be addressed.

PEPO Update

Bethany discussed the latest newsletter and swag (stickers and canteens) that were ordered before COVID hit, so there are water bottles available in the SLV Water Conservancy District Office for all members. If people on the newsletter list are not receiving them, please check your spam folder to ensure that the newsletter isn't being sent there instead of your email inbox. PEPO liaisons will meet in August at the Summer Water Congress in Steamboat Springs.

Membership Updates/Appointments

Nathan discussed the process for re-upping member terms and staggering the initial terms for At Large members. Appointed members have a 5 year term according to the date that they are appointed. The Roundtable is not responsible for appointments. At Large members who provided a letter of interest were given tentative, alternating terms of 5 or 2 years. There are vacancies in various county municipalities appointments. Those interested should contact their municipalities and see where the vacancies occur.

There is a question regarding the timeframe for the legislative appointee. They are appointed by the House Agricultural Committee and Karla Shriver is currently the Roundtable appointee for the past several years. Russ Sands from the CWCB responded by saying that he would find that out.

Bylaws have included 18 At Large positions that is representative of the issues and concerns in the Basin. These positions required a Letter of Interest in election to one of the At Large positions. If the position is filled by someone else mid-term, they will serve out the remainder of that term before able to be re-elected on their own. Those interested in nominating in person (or in the virtual format) are able to do

so during the meeting. The agricultural representative position is open and available for nomination. Members are expected to attend as much as possible, with 3 un-excused absences only or letting a Roundtable member know and giving a proxy vote. This applies to all positions, at large and appointed. The Roundtable membership voted on each at large position. The following positions were approved by general consensus:

Agriculture/Reservoirs – Keith Holland
Alamosa River – Cindy Medina
Acequias – Dave Marquez
Conservation Easements – Judy Lopez
Education – Bethany Howell
Environmental – Rio de la Vista
General At Large – Mike Gibson
Industrial/Domestic – Charles Spielman
Recreation – Kevin Terry
Reservoirs – Travis Smith
Rio Grande Water Users – Greg Higel
SLV Well Owners – Mario Curto
Water User – Peter Clark
Water User – Virginia Christensen
Watershed Health – Emma Reesor (non-voting until next year)
Wildlife – Dale Pizel

Alamosa River Project

Virginia Christensen with the Terrace Irrigation Company gave an update on their project funded by the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Roundtable. The project replaces the main canal structure with a new headgate that is automatic, an automatic controller on the Creek Canal diversion, and satellite recording on the 5 largest and most senior priority diversions. Construction began in January 2021. The project totaled \$148,202, \$97,813 from the WSRF and \$50,389 in matching funds, with a remainder of approximately \$11,000 to complete miscellaneous tasks.

Watershed Health Update

Adam Moore with the Colorado State University Forest Service gave a report on the 2020 health of Colorado's forests. The health update is a joint effort with the USFS and CSUFS. The pandemic showed that forests are necessary for long term benefits of connection with nature and mental and physical health. Colorado is seeing historic wildlife action across the state and forest management is trying to keep up with mitigating risks to residents, wildlife, and the watershed. Insect, disease, and other risk factors are also discussed throughout the state in the report. There are good neighbor agreements in place with other land management agencies to mitigate tree health failing due to insect infestation. CSUFS has grant programs to help reduce wildfire risks. Moore also discussed specific projects taking place in the San Luis Valley that included enhancements, roadside thinning, timber sales, and collaboration in environment & recreation for the BIP. The 2020 Forest Action Plan is available online at csfs.colostate.edu/forest-action-plan. Some questions and discussion around continuing to work on carbon sequestration.

Basin Implementation Plan

Emma Reesor with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project and the BIP Local Expert gave an update on the drafts that were sent to the CWCB for review. After it has gone through the CWCB review,

it will go back to the Roundtable for further review into the final draft. A big thank you to Daniel Boyes of the Restoration Project for leading the project and putting hard work into getting it completed.

Subdistrict Report

Amber Pacheco with the Rio Grande Water Conservation District gave an update on the current status of the 5 operational subdistricts. Two subdistricts are not meeting sustainability criteria but are working to resolve those issues. Depletions are occurring as irrigation season is upon us. Subdistrict 5 is still struggling for augmentation with no reservoirs or other storage options in the area and a large amount under conservation easements. The subdistrict is still working to find solutions along with the Colorado Division of Water Resources. The last plan submitted was not approved. The subdistrict filed an objection to the state water engineer's ruling to allow a legal window for allowing pumping. The discussion will continue to find a successful path forward. A Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grant was submitted on behalf of the District in the amount of \$425,000. This should help to use the ATM concept of municipal use of agricultural water for a certain period of time into agricultural to agricultural for use as replacements. Thanks to the Roundtable for a letter of support.

Colorado Division of Water Resources

Darin Schepp of the Colorado Division of Water Resources gave a report in place of Craig Cotton. During May, we have 162% of average precipitation with a higher percentage than normal. The Rio Grande Basin is in Abnormally Dry for drought conditions, with parts going into moderate drought condition. The long term outlook is for below average precipitation.

425,000 AF on the Rio Grande system at Del Norte with an obligation of 105,000 AF. Will need 7,1000 for the rest of the irrigation season. Current curtailment is 11%. Conejos River is 225,000 AF, with an obligation of 60,000 AF, will need 4,800 AF through end of irrigation season with an 18% curtailment. Objections to the water rules and regulations are taking place in court in Illinois. Under further judicial review is subdistrict 5's appeal to the denial of their Annual Replacement Plan. There is not an updated abandonment list until December 31st that is then submitted directly to the court, however, they will probably have the list ready in a few months.

Colorado Water Conservation Board

Sam Stein with the CWCB gave a quick update. Russ George has stepped down as the IBCC director and into full retirement. There was no IBCC meeting in June, but another will take place on October 21st. Water plan grants are due December 1st. WSRF stimulus of \$5 million will be divided equally between all the basin accounts. The stimulus dollars should be used first and native basin funds last. Finally, a drought proclamation has occurred throughout the majority of Colorado counties and the information can be accessed at the CWCB website www.engagecwcb.org.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Next meeting will take place Tuesday, August 10th at 2:00 pm.