

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable  
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

**Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 2 pm  
8805 Independence Way  
Alamosa, CO 81101

The meeting was called to order at 1:59 pm by chairman Nathan Coombs> Introduction of those in attendance:

**Introductions**

Daniel Boyes, Cindy Medina, Bethany Howell, Nathan Coombs, Emma Reesor, Nancy Escalante, Daryl Kohut, David Marquez, Darin Schepp, Craig Cotton, Chuck Finnegan, Charles Spielman, Wayne Schwab, Cleave Simpson, Erin Minks, Heather Dutton, Brenda Felemlee, Matthew Gallegos, Gene Farish, Jim Ehrlich, Chris Shaffer, Don Thompson, Kevin Terry, Heather Greenwolf, Emily Chavez, Mario Curto, Ann Bunting, Virginia Christensen, Ronda Lobato, Steven Romero, Judy Lopez, Travis Smith, Peter Clark, Heather Greenwolf, Dwight Martin, Keith Holland, Anne bunting, Karla Shriver, Brenda Felmlee, Holly Flynn, Emily Chavez, Mike Gibson, Russ Sands, Sam Stein, Jayla Poppelton, Theresa Springer.

**Agenda**

No changes to the agenda other than the IBCC report from Cleave to Travis. Karla Shriver moved that the agenda be approved as presented, Mike Gibson seconded. All approved and the motion passed.

**Minutes**

Cindy Medina made a motion to approve the February 2020 minutes as presented, David Marqez seconded. All in favor and the minutes were approved.

**Public Comment**

- Holly Flynn from Intermountain West Joint Venture and NRCS introduced her new partner position. Flood irrigation projects along the Rio Grande corridor will be able to apply for funding and enrollment in NRCS programs. Deadline by April 10.
- Cindy Medina reminded the Roundtable of the meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup> at the RGWCD District building at 9:00 am for the Alamosa River stakeholder meeting examining project proposals for the Alamosa River watershed.
- Kevin Terry announced that on Friday, April 3, the river will be restocked with Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Community members are encouraged to volunteer to help stock and participate in activities. Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument.
- Russ Sands from CWCB introduced the new Rio Grande Basin liaison, Sam Stein, who replaces Megan Holcomb. Russ is now in the role of chief for water supply planning section.

**BIP Local Expert**

Nathan Coombs explained that there has only been one application for Local Expert for the Basin Implementation Plan; the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project. The executive committee proposed that Emma Reesor of the Colorado Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project and current vice chair of the Round Table would then step down from her vice chair role and recuse herself as a voting member of the RGBRT during the contract period. Judy Lopez will step up and take on that role

until the Basin Implementation Plan is complete. There were no objections to this proposal from the of the Roundtable members. The discussion then continued to Subject Matter Experts, which will take place later in the process, but that the Local Expert needs to be contracted by Brown and Caldwell. Coombs explained that the state contractor's office is strict on how to proceed with local contractors, and our Basin has an obligation to assist the Local Expert in obtaining the best information possible to include in their report. Local Expert will be selected by April 10 and subsequently contracted.

### **Water Education Colorado**

Jayla Poppleton of Water Education Colorado gave a report on the current progress of the Statewide Water Education Action Plan (SWEAP). Upcoming opportunities from WeCO include: The 2020 River Basin Tour, June 2-3 in La Junta and registration is now open on the WeCO website. The WeCO Water Leaders class announces their 2020 class participants (several alumni from the Rio Grande Basin). Citizens' Guides are updated and now include groundwater information. Headwaters magazine came out in the fall focusing on the Colorado River demand management plan. The Water Fluency class will take place in the southwestern basin for those wanting basic information on how water is managed, it is a 4 day program (June 23-24 and in September). Joanne from the district attended the class and gave a recommendation.

Poppleton discussed the SWEAP plan with the Roundtable offering background on the coalition and how they created the plan. Current programs and education already in place are doing a great job across the state, and the Colorado Water Plan describes the need for outreach and education, which is why WeCO worked on creating SWEAP. The project recognizes gaps and in turn supports local institutions by increasing effectiveness for current programs and creating a sustainable education plan into the future. The project works to inform Coloradans to encourage their participation and to expand outreach and education efforts. SWEAP is a five-year plan from 2020-2025, and serves as a resource and guide for water educators to support individuals and organizations in regional basins, while sharing a common agenda for reaching sustainability in 2050. Funded by CWCB and ThinkWater through the USDA, the process included a strategic planning consultant who conducted collaborative process, situation analysis, and stakeholder interviews. The big picture vision is sustainable water use in Colorado by 2050 and measurable objectives in water education by 2025. Coloradans are engaged in well informed community discourse regarding balanced water solutions and are empowered to take thoughtful action. Disciplines and strategies were developed to help achieve 10 outcomes, but is designed to be flexible enough to meet individual needs and the current education structure that exists within each basin.

Members asked:

- How will SWEAP determine the education gap? Currently in Phase 1 implementation, we are working on data collection, tracking and measuring demonstrable success.
- Does this meet Colorado Department of Education standards? Part of SWEAP is to collaborate with CDE to incorporate water literacy into academic standards.
- Will the project define/outline sustainable water supply and address population growth on the Front Range? Relying heavily on the CWP and its definition of values for sustainably managing water resources. The project will look at all the uses and needs of water and will be looking to the basin roundtables to inform that process.

Discussion revolved around the topic, what is sustainability? And how implementing the water plan and its values supports the SWEAP framework. The goal with SWEAP is for basins to identify groups who need to be educated, and where the gaps are occurring in target audiences.

As they work to build the plan and implement it going forward required a second grant approved by CWCB for implementation and roll out plan to launch in January – May. Where team members will refine strategies and enroll participating entities, ensure connection to the CWP update, develop tools,

and identify additional funding. Finally, they will seek official endorsements from organizations and the public.

### **PEPO Update**

Bethany gave an update on PEPO and the involvement with SWEAP, specifically regarding collaboration with other PEPO liaisons from the other roundtables. She invited any Roundtable member to participate on the education sub-committee to further inform education and outreach in the Rio Grande basin.

Bethany also debuted the Radar video by Christi Bode and announced it was available online at the [rgbrt.org](http://rgbrt.org) website. The crane video by Colorado Open Lands was also shown and is available on Youtube.

### **Post Fire Play Book**

Theresa Springer of the Post Fire Play Book project provided an overview of the proposed Post Fire Playbook and sked for input to help inform the contents and design. Target audiences are water providers, counties, and municipalities. Proposed content includes roles and responsibilities for federal, state, and local agencies and the watershed communities. It will include a timeline for key contacts and milestones during the fire, (within 1 week, and within 30 days and for containment); funding sources and eligibility, understanding who does assessments, who funds, who permits, and who implements and monitors post fire strategies, and weather warning system.

The worksheet includes what to do during the fire such as contacting your region's USFS BAER Coordinator and NRCS District Conservationist to request assistance with post fire assessments and rehabilitation. The host for the playbook is possibly the CDPHE, and the proposed timeline for completion is before summer.

Questions included:

- How is the county assessor is involved? Springer responded that there is discussion about a federal CMAT team, although Erin Minks suggested that there should be a Colorado-specific group.
- Mitigating post fire timber in planning process? That is a congressional issue as there are specific requirements around utilizing fire seasoned wood on Forest Service land. The Army Corps of Engineers is looking at case studies. Karla Shriver made the point that DOLA's guidebook and this one should reference each other, so there are disparate pieces of information for people to reference.
- Nathan Coombs suggested the county emergency managers should be involved to inventory resources and ownership of bridges and culverts. Discussion about to utilize OEM's in different areas, sending checklists, soliciting input, evacuation plans. EQUIP program funds thinning and mitigation, but getting people involved is very difficult due to trust issues about federal agencies in more rural areas. Adam Moore with CSFS's work was referenced as a person who can be accessed for Valley mitigation. Judy Lopez brought up Costilla County's experience with private land surrounded by forests and fire mitigation and post-fire assessment. Craig Cotten discussed having an idea written down about the potential for flooding.

Springer's presentation also included information regarding: What feedback would be most useful for an organization's high level recovery guide? What relationships have formed pre-fire that are beneficial? What else should be addressed in playbook? What format would a playbook be most useful in? Suggestions and questions encouraged to be sent to Springer by email. Springer concluded with statements regarding getting everyone on the same page and asking for help.

## **IBCC Report**

Travis Smith made some remarks about the Roundtable's roll during the 2013 fire and the collaboration which occurred through many agencies and organizations in the community. Additionally, he lauded the Headwaters magazine on drought contingency planning issue, particularly the Colorado River Basin which states working together to address reduced river flows is critical. Water users across disciplines met together to discuss Colorado's role in reconciling demand management plans and protecting Colorado's water future. The Ag community advocated temporary, voluntary, and getting paid for it as a solution. Water leasing is an option to discuss if irrigators are interested, especially in a water short year. Roundtables are a great example of working together to find local solutions to big problems.

Question regarding use of xeriscaping for municipal streets and highway spaces. Travis responded that the Colorado Water Plan discusses local control for using water efficiently in planning and development. It's up to the local planners and commissioners to become educated on how water is used in other areas in order to examine their own use. Suggestion was made to have a CWCB staff member discuss municipal water efficiencies that are occurring in the front range metro areas would be helpful for . Cindy Medina commented that green spaces in urban areas such as golf courses need to address their water use before looking elsewhere. Smith responded that "green agriculture" to people's social and emotional psyche is important to consider, although increasing efficiency is still important as well. It's important to learn from each other's perspectives to effectively address education and outreach gaps.

Steven Romero discussed the Farm Bill's subsidies for crop growth, but not water sustainability and pushed for understanding it better. Smith responded that he advocates for Front Range water providers, ag groups, environmental community, etc. working together to find a solution to meet all the demands. Virginia Christensen asked Steven to define his idea of sustainability. Steven explained that maximum capacity of population on a particular bio-region to sustain life, but if population exceeds bio-region's ability to provide water, that it is not sustainable.

## **Division of Water Resources Report**

Craig Cotten gave a report on current status of water in the basin. 2019's water year ended with 800 AF in credit. We are set up well for this year. 2020 numbers are lower than last year for snowpack, forecast is for a little more snow. The basin is currently at 94% of average for snowpack. NRCS and others are forecasting lower numbers on streams, with a concern that dry ground will impact flows. He explained that the Sangre de Cristo mountain range snowpack is higher than the San Juan range. Irrigation season will begin April 1 and that remains the target date with La Jara Creek beginning a little early. Rio Grande Legal Education Conference will be held in Santa Fe on April 7-8. Rio Grande Compact meeting is April 9 immediately following. Costilla Creek compact meeting is hosted by Colorado on May 14 in San Luis.

Meeting is adjourned at 4:15 pm.