

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables

Rio Grande Basin Roundtable Meeting Minutes Tuesday, January 14, 2020 at 2:00pm

Vice chair Emma Reesor called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm. Introductions around the room.

Agenda Approval

Cindy Medina made a motion to approve agenda as presented, Judy Lopez seconded. All approved the motion and it passed.

Approval of November & December Minutes

Judy Lopez made a motion to approve the minutes from November and December Roundtable meetings, Virginia Christensen seconded. All approved and the minutes for November and December were approved.

Roundtable Elections

Dwight Martin made a motion to retain all the officers of the Roundtable as are already in place, Keith Holland seconded. All approved and the motion passed.

Nominations for other IBCC representatives were discussed, especially in light of Cleave Simpson possibly having to step down if other circumstances prevail. Keith Holland explained that having an alternate in addition to his continuation would be helpful for travel purposes. Questions were raised about allowing an alternate to vote if representatives were unable to attend, Cleave and Keith explained that votes were still allowed from alternates. Roundtable members will discuss for the next month and consider nominations during February's meeting.

Public Comment

Judy Lopez passed around cards for Rio de la Vista's recent surgery, and recognized Megan Holcomb's transition out of the Rio Grande Basin as liaison to the CWCB and into her new role with the CWCB. Megan Holcomb spoke to her time on the Roundtable and expressed appreciation for her time as a liaison.

Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association invited the public to their annual Congreso on January 25th.

Cleave Simpson invited the public to the second annual State of Basin Water Symposium at Adams State University on February 22 in the absence of Rio de la Vista.

Heather Dutton explained that during the symposium, discussion would likely take place regarding the Colorado River demand management plan. Some CWCB board of directors will attend to offer perspectives on other basins and demand management and trans-basin diversions.

Heather Dutton asked for a letter of support from the Roundtable to continue her role as CWCB representative from the Rio Grande Basin to the Board of Directors. The Roundtable agreed by general acclimation to provide a letter.

Patrick O'Neill from Mosca Hooper Conservation District gave an update about the completion of the groundwater project and will give a more thorough update to the Roundtable at a later date. O'Neill also gave an update about the general consensus meeting held by the district which was well attended and will give a presentation at a later date.

Colorado Field Institute representative gave a public invitation to the latest lecture from CFI.

If anyone is interested in nominating someone to have their history and information documented, Patricia from the Yampa is interviewing people. Nathan invited further questions later for this project after the meeting.

John Reesor from the City of Alamosa asked for a letter of support from the Roundtable in connection with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project for a project to work on riparian areas and river access on City of Alamosa property. Reesor gave a presentation about the increased recreation use on the river but the lack of access for people to get onto the river safely and with best land stewardship practices to protect riparian areas.

Grant funding will allow engineering plans to be designed as well as construction of boat ramps. Multiple benefits will be seen from this project such as quality of life, environmental, tourism/economic, and youth and other community programs utilizing the river corridor. Judy Lopez made a motion to provide a letter of support, Bethany Howell seconded. Roundtable members discussed the need for improving efficiency of water flow in the Rio Grande on this particular stretch, and also the increased use of the riparian areas by youth programs. Questions were asked about the type of rivercraft able to navigate the river especially with increased access points and ramps. Motorized boatcraft would be strongly discouraged with the emphasis on pedestrian and small trailer access. All were in favor of the project receiving a letter of support.

Nathan Coombs took over facilitation of the meeting and pointed out that there was a request to know where the Basin account stood for this point in time. Megan Holcomb stated that there is just under \$340,000 in the Basin account as of January 1, 2020. Judy asked when the next financial injection would be, Megan stated that it would be in April for \$144,000.

Judy Lopez gave a presentation on behalf of Colorado Open Lands' conservation easement project on the Jackson Ranch in Conejos County and Schaefer Farms in Rio Grande County. The project meets multiple Basin goals on each land area and statewide Colorado Water Plan objectives. Colorado Open Lands is requesting \$291,050 in combined Basin and State WSRF funds.

Charles Spielman asked questions regarding mineral rights for both properties. Both are owned and would be retired so they would not be able to be developed. Keith Holland asked about the Santa Maria water on the Schaefer easement not being able to be part of a conservation easement and the non-contiguous property. Question from the community regarding whether property owners approached COL or vice versa. COL was approached in both cases. Cleave Simpson asked about the water forbearance and whether the property was in the Habitat Conservation Plan. It is not in the HCP, but they are working with the owners to keep water uses flexible in management. Heather Dutton asked if the Roundtable could allocate funds specifically to riparian areas affected by conservation easement in order to ease Roundtable members' discomfort rather than wholesale approval. Judy thought this was possible with the Schaefer parcel, which is the part most under question. Cindy Medina asked a question about the budget's in kind match from land owners. Judy explained that it's actual value from appraisal and a percentage is donated by the landowner in order to ensure commitment and raise in kind for further cash match. Nathan asked about groundwater remaining part of the conservation easement if they included language about the riparian area specifically. Judy explained that it would be considered part of the riparian area. Virginia Christensen made a motion to approve the request, Kevin Terry seconded the motion. A request was made if in future, land easements could be separated into separate requests rather than two properties evaluated at one time and also a baseline of consumptive use to understand how riparian areas are saturated from year to year. One abstention from Charles Spielman, the rest of the Roundtable approved and the motion passed.

Review of RGWCEI's proposal for a community education liaison staff position from Bethany Howell. Bethany answered questions from the Roundtable about her proposal:

Cindy Medina brought up at the Executive Committee meeting concern about Roundtables oversight and make sure everyone is on the same page and is included in the conversation. Bethany responded that going forward, she would use the PEPO template and go through the Education Subcommittee to vet projects and topics to cover through PEPO. The project would plan to continue with that method and submit communications proposal to Roundtable for each year, so Bethany has a clear plan that is vetted by the RT for her education efforts. This way the Roundtable will be involved in developing topics and methods for her work. The Education Subcommittee will have more direct and frequent contact with Bethany through this process, but all Roundtable members would have input into prioritizing projects.

Keith Holland asked about how Bethany's current position with RGWCEI is funded. Bethany responded that RGWCEI is funded through grants and other funders. This grant would expand RGWCEI's capacity and allow Bethany to take over the RT Liaison position, while allowing RGWCEI efforts to continue as they have. Holland also asked about the education focus of the Roundtable. The focus has been on adult education, Bethany would like to see youth education more integrated. Both Basin and Statewide efforts with education will be increasing, for example the Statewide Water Education Action Plan.

Keith stated a concern about expense/amount of request. Judy Lopez explained that this request is right in line with past similar efforts for PEPO, particularly looking at how much a full time communications professional would cost if out of the Basin.

Charlie Spielman commented that he would like to see the project engage ROMEO (Retired Old Men Eating Out).

Ronda Lobato made a motion to approve the proposal, Judy Lopez seconded. The motion was approved by the Roundtable majority.

Virginia Christensen of the Terrace Irrigation Company gave a presentation on their proposal. The project is asking \$15,000 from the Basin funds. This is in collaboration with the Alamosa - La Jara Water Conservancy District to improve efficiency of flows and water delivery in the Alamosa River by updating diversions and structures. Current head gates and diversion structures are outdated, require manual operation, and are deteriorating. The project meets Rio Grande Basin Implementation Goals in multiple areas, and statewide water plan objectives particularly, in agricultural viability and critical agriculture actions.

Kevin Terry asked about head gates closing on November 1 and not being able to register flows in the main stem after that time. Discussion about losing water from leaking head gates and the need for increased efficiency with water administration. There is question about whether environmental should be included since the head gates cannot be measured by their influence on main stem flows. Cary Aloia discussed the other side of not being able to check the agricultural box on their projects which have an environmental concern. Heather agreed that when funding is scrutinized about their category allotment, the CWCB want to be fair and accurate with dispersal of funds where it makes sense. Many projects are multi-purpose and they recognize that there is overlap in many areas. Ryan Unterreiner commented that when "checking boxes," they consult with CPW in order to find agreement or receive a letter of support if it's appropriate. Kevin Terry made a motion to approve the project, Keith Holland seconded the motion. The Roundtable unanimously approved and the motion passed.

Kevin Terry discussed the project sheet for Trout Unlimited's water plan grant proposal on the Conejos River. The project will move sediment and design a low flow channel that will improve connectivity between habitats and conveyance for agricultural deliveries. He is asking for a letter of support on behalf of the project. General approval of letter of support from the Roundtable.

CWCB Update

Technical update to the Colorado Water Plan – Russ Sands from the CWCB gave a report on the updated data used for the technical update. Data from HB 1051 was used which allowed a greater depth of data to be utilized. Stakeholder driven scenarios were used to understand the consequences and outputs. Gives multiple plausible futures according to the data.

Rio Grande Basin was specifically discussed regarding different water use categories, data for M&I could be improved in the next BIP. Population growth was slower than projected in SWSI 2010. There was no HB1051 data for the Rio Grande, which would be recommended to rectify in the next BIP update. Agricultural demands are projected by looking at crop types, acreage, and climate data. To address demand, we need to know what you need, what you want, and what you lack. Our planning scenario includes looking at urbanization, planned agricultural projects, GW acreage sustainability, climate, and emerging technologies to address acreage needs, IWR/crop demands, and system efficiency. These should help us address projects that need to be prioritized in the next BIP.

In 2010, there were no CDSS StateMod datasets in the Rio Grande, so Surface Water models were used where available. Pumping was limited to historical levels and surface water gaps on historical shortages.

Over the state, gap analysis results look like 18-43% increase in total acre feet needed but not met. Similar gaps to SWSI 2010, but better data is needed to understand how projects can meet demand.

BIP review will include scoping, improving project data, refine tech update findings, and drafting BIP volumes 1 & 2. The BIP also needs to invest in process efficiency. Next steps for scheduling will include finalizing the RFQ for the local expert by the end of January, Roundtable will rank and submit candidates to Brown & Caldwell by mid-March and onboard local experts by April 10, draft work plan is scoped by July.

Charlie Spielman asked a few questions regarding 2015 M&I report, paying local experts, and receiving the Powerpoint used. Patrick O'Neill asked about the Colorado Dust on Snow component - it was not included in the analysis but could be implemented in our BIP process.

Other Business

Blake Osbourne on behalf of multiple organizations, specifically CSU's Water Center, gave a presentation on the ATM Strategic Plan. The project will proceed on a statewide level and solicits feedback from local Roundtables. Studying how ATMS fit into state planning efforts, policy adoption, and funding programs through partnership with the CWCB. The Rio Grande Watershed utilizes ATMS in a different way than around the state but may be used to meet sustainable groundwater goals and help with Compact compliance. As the project proceeds, an advisory committee has been established, Cleave Simpson is the Rio Grande representative. They will meet with Roundtables to receive input on projects and assess status in order to make recommendations for the overall program. The project solicits feedback and responses from locals on ATM use, etc. Members can respond via email.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 pm.