

Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 2 pm
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
623 Fourth Street
Alamosa, CO 81101

Meeting Minutes

Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm. Introduction of those in attendance:

Daniel Boyes, Cindy Medina, Bethany Howell, Nathan Coombs, Emma Reesor, Nancy Escalante, Daryl Kohut, David Marquez, Darin Schepp, Chuck Finnegan, Charles Spielman, Wayne Schwab, Sean Tonner, Cleave Simpson, Erin Minks, Heather Dutton, Patrick O'Neill, Matthew Gallegos, Gene Farish, Jim Ehrlich, Chris Shaffer, Don Thompson, Kevin Terry, Heather Greenwolf, Emily Chavez, Mario Curto, Ann Bunting, Virginia Christensen.

Agenda

Chairman Nathan Coombs explained that Jayla Poppleton from Water Education Colorado will not be able to attend due to hazardous weather travel conditions. We will add amendments to include, discussion of the RFQ and Basin Implementation Update plan. Cindy Medina made a motion to approve changes to the agenda, Virginia Christensen seconded. All approved and the motion to approve the agenda as amended.

Minutes

Charlie Spielman would like to clarify in the minutes from January that he would like the section on the ROMEO's to include, Public relations and communications won't be a success until the ROMEO's know what's going on. David Marquez made a motion to approve the minutes with the addition and Cleave Simpson seconded. All approved and the minutes for January 2020 passed.

Public Comment

- Nathan Coombs reminded everyone that the Roundtable has a Dropbox folder for people to include suggestions and ideas of topics or people to present at the Roundtable meetings.
- Heather Greenwolf gave an update on Rio de la Vista's health conditions. A simple surgery turned into an extended hospital stay. Heather encouraged cards and visits as Rio is staying in Swedish Medical Center. An update and more information will be shared with the Roundtable newsletter mailing list. Cleave Simpson added his knowledge of Rio's condition and reminded everyone that the Basin Symposium is postponed until further notice.
- Simpson noted that he presented at the Colorado Cattlemen's Association meeting after Sean Tonner from Renewable Water Resources gave his water export proposal and reiterated that the Rio Grande Basin does not feel that the proposal is a good idea.
- Heather Greenwolf gave notice that the Colorado Water Quality department is coming to Creede and the Willow Creek floodplain area and Nelson Creek Mine at 1 pm on February 27th at the Rio Grande Silver Building.
- Heather Dutton explained that the future Roundtable meetings will now be held at the Rio Grande Water Conservation District's office in order to accommodate everyone who has traditionally been in attendance. The March 10, 2020 meeting will be the first held in the new meeting place.
- Emma Reesor gave notice about the Rio Grande Water Leaders' course being held March 23-27, 2020. Applications are due February 28th.

- Nancy Escalante From the Sangre de Cristo Acequia Association requested a letter of support from the Roundtable for a grant project on land grant outreach seminars and farmer education. No one was opposed to providing a letter of support.

Request for Qualifications for Local Expert for Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan Update

Emma Reesor previewed the RFQ for Local Expert candidates to apply to work with Brown & Caldwell the state contractors for the Basin Implementation Plan updates. Reesor walked the group through the RFQ located on the Basin website which includes information on qualifications, restrictions, and application dates. The Local Expert is an individual or firm hired by the general contractor, Brown & Caldwell. The LE will coordinate with groups throughout the Basin and work with the general contractor to provide information and prioritize projects for the Basin Implementation Updates. There will also be later funding available for local Subject Matter Experts to apply. Nathan Coombs explained that the Executive Committee would review LE applications to send on with approval but have also identified the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project as a possible candidate. The Roundtable also has to put together a list of projects to prioritize over the next 5 years and provide the CWCB with information for the legislature to understand funding needs. Questions were asked regarding projects and update process. The Basin has 18 months to complete the project list and implementation plan.

Report on SLV Recharge Optimization Pilot Project

Patrick O’Neill of the Mosca Hooper Conservation District gave a report on the SLV Recharge Optimization Pilot Project. Primary partners included Patrick O’Neill, also with Soil Health Services, Kate Ziegler of Ziegler Geologic Consulting, and Jim Hasbrouck of Hasbrouck Geophysics. The project began with an initial discussion with local farmer Lyle Nissen of Alamosa, who noticed particular areas on his land where surface water infiltrate more quickly, providing quick groundwater recharge. Project was a small-scale pilot to understand if using geophysical imaging would work to determine where it might be easier to introduce surface water to recharge aquifer systems. An area near Mosca was tested with 5 linear arrays of electrical resistivity imaging data. Special attention was paid to the position of clay lenses which could prevent “sweet spot” recharge. ERI (Electrical Resistivity Imaging) was instrumental in discovering the depth and range of geophysical attributes, including materials and their resistivity to electricity and water recharge. Kate Ziegler joined the Roundtable by phone to explain results and mapping. The project incorporated 155 well logs in the area, as well as drilling 5 test wells on 4 arrays. Eight arrays overall were deployed on the test section. The project utilized NRCS Soil Surveys to determine the first 6 feet of soil profile. The project attempted to ascertain what was happening between the top of the water table and the bottom of those 6 feet of soil profile. Wells included in the Rock Works model were a mix of domestic, irrigation, as well as a few USGS wells.

Final thoughts on the project include: using existing well logs and landowner insights as starting points to pinpoint best prospects. the ERI produced a good match between the test wells & observations, and that subsurface deposits are complex and are a primary concern in developing recharge features.

Questions included:

- Were where sensors were located -primarily in the unconfined aquifer as sensors penetrated to 80 feet in depth, and if the clay layers were in fact clay as the wells were drilled and cuttings were identified. The interpreted rock types were descriptions of the cuttings as seen through microscopes and geologists were confident that they were identifying true clay layers as opposed to “rock flour.”
- If recharge ponds were positioned over “ideal” sweet spots, what would the rate of efficiency look like, and would the practical application of knowing where the well is located versus where the ideal recharge spots are pinpointed in order to maximize the benefit across the Valley? Ziegler was hesitant to give a concrete answer on efficiencies until more data was analyzed, and O’Neill noted that this was just a small spot and would need to be expanded into other areas of the Valley. Discussion continued around expansion of knowledge of recharge through a variety of avenues.

Interbasin Compact Committee Update

Cleave Simpson gave an IBCC meeting update. Their next meeting is in March for two days. Main topic of conversation in IBCC has been demand management on the Colorado River. Work groups have been set up and have been meeting separately to address a variety of issues. Simpson pointed out that the Rio Grande Basin has also been dealing with demand management since 1900. Simpson reminded the Roundtable that he would be stepping away from time spent on the IBCC board. Nathan Coombs explained that Keith Holland is currently also serving on the board, but that the Roundtable had heard of interest in the alternate position from Ann Bunting. Ann reiterated her interest in serving as an alternate to the IBCC. Heather reminded the Roundtable that the Colorado River's demand management did have an impact on the Rio Grande River. CPW and private trans basin diversions which provide valuable augmentation water and environmental benefits. Cindy Medina approved Ann as alternate and moved to appoint Ann as alternate and eventual member to the IBCC, Wayne Schwab seconded. All approved and the motion passed.

Patrick O'Neill spoke on Mosca Hooper Soil & Water Conservation District's desire for an Exploratory Consensus Process on Groundwater Conflict in the SLV. This would be a collaborative project of the conservation district, about listening, Soil Carbon Coalition, and Soil Health Services. Background of the consensus project was the need for more listening and consensus regarding subdistricts and others using water. The initial exploratory one-day workshop was held in January and fielded 71 participants from a variety of areas (farming, banking, engineers, etc.). To continue the process, the facilitator proposed one year's worth of workshops, 3 days for each workshop once a quarter. The total cost would be approximately \$75,000. Cindy Medina asked about the marketing for the workshop to encourage different people to participate. O'Neill explained that he believed the water community felt they could achieve more than what they had previously regarding groundwater sustainability. People were perhaps feeling nervous about the future. Discussion involving the burden on subdistrict managers, the community perceptions, and needing to listen and engage with each other's issues.

Division of Water Resources Report

Division of Water Resources report from Darin Schepp, assistant division engineer. The Rio Grande near Del Norte estimated annual flow was approximately 929,000 AF. 142% of average, a decrease of 60,000 AF from August estimate. The Conejos River estimated annual flow 431,000 AF, 143% of average. Decrease of 20,000 AF from August estimate. Downstream obligation was 50% of index.

108% of average for the Rio Grande Basin snowpack. Rio Grande Compact Commission meeting is April 9, 2020 in Santa Fe. Judge Michael Gonzales is taking over as water district judge from Pattie Swift, who retired in January. Division 3 is out of RG Compact Article 7 restrictions.

Reminder that the groundwater rules and regulations apply to almost all non-exempt wells in Division 3 and will be in effect March 15, 2021 for compliance. Augmentation plans must be filed in court by that date or have a temporary plan in place.

Colorado Water Conservation Board Update

Heather Dutton gave the CWCB update. The BOD met in January where South Fork received a loan for their municipal water supply. Other grants awarded were for Upper Culebra and the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration project. WSRF account balance is \$339,952.00. The next CWCB meeting is March 11-12 in Lakewood.

Reminder, next month's meeting is at the Rio Grande Water Conservation District office, 8805 Independence Way, Alamosa, CO 81101 on Tuesday, March 10 at 2:00pm

Adjourned at 3:55 pm.