

**Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables**  
**Rio Grande Basin Roundtable**  
**MINUTES**  
**June 13, 2017**

**Attending:** Ron Brink, Rio de la Vista, Chuck Finnegan, Nathan Coombs, Andréa Bachman, Ralph Curtis, Dwight Martin, Ed Nielsen, Pete Striffler, Brenda Felmler, Don Thompson, Stan Moyer, Keith Holland, Larry Sveum, Mario Curto, Charlotte Bobicki, Larry Crowder, Christi Bodi, Adam Moore, Susan Wolfrey, Nicole Langley, Jim Ehrlich, Laura McCarthy, Allen Law, Ann Bunting, Heather Dutton, Matt Hildner, Gene Farish, Cleave Simpson, Cathy Morin, Greg Higel, Ryan Unterreiner, Craig Cotton, Wayne Schwab, Ruth Heide, Matt Gallegos, Cindy Medina, Travis Smith, Mac McFaddon, Anne Steinhogge, Robert Getz, Erin Minks, Emilee Rowe, Emma Reesor.

**Welcome and Introduction:** Chair Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. at the offices of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District in Alamosa, CO. A quorum was established and those in attendance were welcomed.

**Agenda Approval:** Nathan proposed changing the agenda to add an informational item on LIDAR flights to the agenda. Mario Curto motioned to approve the revised agenda. Chuck Finnegan seconded. The proposal carried unanimously.

**Approval of the May 9, 2017 Minutes:** Ron Brink motioned to approve the minutes. Keith Holland seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Public Comment:**

-Susan Wolfrey, who travelled to the Euphrates River in Iraq for a water box project, said water is a necessity and a right. She was troubled by the inability of a person she spoke to in Costilla County to get water and by the state-sponsored snowmaking program. She asked the roundtable embrace the philosophy that water is endowed by the creator.

-Jim Ehrlich relayed a message from the Colorado Ag-Water Alliance that it was looking for the best date to schedule their next workshop.

-Nicole Langley asked if anyone knew the entity surveying near U.S. 160 on the east side of the San Luis Valley and vowed to report back to the roundtable.

**Roundtable and Vice Chair appointments:** Nathan congratulated Heather Dutton on her appointment to the Colorado Water Conservation Board and thanked Travis Smith for his work on the board. To fill the vacancy on the roundtable left by Heather's appointment, Nathan proposed appointing Travis as a representative of reservoirs and storage. Travis said he would accept the nomination if nominated. Rio de la Vista motioned Travis be appointed. Dwight Martin seconded. Susan Wolfrey nominated herself to fill the vacancy. Travis seconded her nomination. Nathan called for more nominations and, seeing none, closed the nomination process. 17 voted to appoint Travis, none were opposed. There were no votes for Susan. Travis was seated.

Heather's appointment also created a vacancy for vice chair. Cleave Simpson motioned to nominate Emma Reesor. Wayne Schwaub seconded. Gene Farish motioned to close the nominations. Jim Erlich seconded. Emma's appointment to vice chair was approved unanimously.

Helen Smith will also begin minute-taking at the next roundtable.

Cleave also noted that there is an opening on the Interbasin Compact Committee with Travis stepping down.

**Funding Preview — 2017 Five Ditches Improvement Project:** Emma Reesor of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project said the project includes a lot of partners with a long history. The roundtable funded design work on three of the projects earlier in the year. Reesor said the 2001 study of the Rio Grande pointed to the aging infrastructure of ditches and stream-bank instability as problems along the river. The RGHRP is partnering on the project with the Consolidated Ditch, the San Luis Valley Canal, the Centennial Ditch, the Rio Grande Ditch No. 2, the Pace Ditch, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Riverbend Engineering and Colorado Parks & Wildlife. Project elements include the replacement of aging and inefficient diversion dams and headgates, and stream bank restoration. Emma said the project meets nine goals in the Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan and would benefit agricultural, environmental, and recreational water uses. Division Engineer Craig Cotton said the ditches in the project struggle to get their allotment through their headgates in low flows and often see the river jump their diversion structures in high flows. Emma said the project would also automate the ditches' headgates.

**Stream Management Plans: Nicole Seltzer, River Network.**

Nicole said the state Legislature had appropriated \$5 million to fund the plans beginning in fiscal year 2018. Most stream management plans are between 10 to 30 river miles. Possible end results include market-based strategies, infrastructure strategies, water conservation strategies and channel modification strategies. Funding for stream management planning can go to government agencies or nonprofit organizations but not to individual landowners. Heather said it could be a good opportunity to bring people and data together while not duplicating previous work. She called for the formation of a subcommittee to explore a stream management plan proposal. Emma, Ed Nielsen, Rio de la Vista, Nicole Langley, Cathy Morin and Ryan Unterreiner volunteered to join the subcommittee.

**LIDAR Flight Photos, Christie Bodie:** Christie went to Grand Junction to take photos of the LIDAR flights being flown over the the Conejos. Nathan also gave a short recap on how the Conejos Water Conservancy District has utilized the flights in helping to measure snowpack.

**Rio Grande Water Fund:** Nancy Smith and Laura McCarthy of The Nature Conservancy presented on the Rio Grande Water Fund. Nancy reviewed TNC's history of helping to protect the valley's water, including the expansion of the Great Sand

Dunes into a national park and the creation of Baca National Wildlife Refuge. Laura reviewed the Rio Grande Water Fund, which was up and running in 2014, three years after Las Conchas Fire. They fund tree thinning, wetland and stream restoration and post-fire and flood mitigation. Nancy said they hoped to identify groups who might be interested in online training about how to get funding. Rio de la Vista volunteered to coordinate a subcommittee.

**CWCB Update:** Travis Smith said the four Western Slope roundtables used their funds to move forward with a risk assessment for their basins, while the Front Range pressed to clarify the state's role in the assessment.

**DWR Update:** Craig Cotten said a pool of 10 applicants will be cut to two. He said over the last few days nearly all the streams in the valley have peaked and are coming down with the possible exception of Culebra Creek. The index on the Rio Grande is projected at 760,000 acre-feet, while the Conejos is pegged at 445,000 AF, both of which are above average for the last decade. Dick Wolfe continued to meet with objectors in the rules and regs case, reaching a handful of settlements. He was set to meet with others tomorrow. In response to a question, Craig said Elephant Butte Reservoir has 510,000 AF of storage, while Caballo is at 70,000. If storage drops below 400,000 in Elephant Butte, it will trigger article 7 restrictions on upstream reservoirs. Craig said the Bureau of Reclamation is forecasting that won't happen until end of August. He added the middle Rio Grande had good spring runoff, helping with silvery minnow spawning.

**Subdistrict Update:** Cleave Simpson said Subdistrict No. 1, which is in its sixth year of operation, is proposing to amend its plan of water management. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District board will review it, as will the state engineer. Subdistrict No. 2 will meet next week to receive public comment on its plan of water management. Subdistrict No. 4 has petitioned the board and will present the petitions to the court on July 10, while Subdistrict No. 5 petitions are still being finalized. All plans and draft plans can be found at [www.rgwcd.org](http://www.rgwcd.org).

Rio de La Vista noted the upcoming Colorado Water Workshop will be on rural-urban overlap at Western State Colorado University next week.

The meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

Next Executive Committee Meeting: July 11, 2017 at 1:00pm  
San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District  
623 Fourth Street, Alamosa, CO

Next Roundtable Meeting: July 11, 2017 at 2:00pm  
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