

Interbasin Compact Committee Basin Roundtable
Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable
MEETING MINUTES
March 14, 2017

Attending – Those who signed in are as follows: Ron Brink, Cindy Medina, Rio de la Vista, Wayne Schwab, Charles Spielman, Keith Holland, Terry Chiles, Karla Shriver, Stan Moyer, Virginia Christensen, Zeke Ward, Larry Sveum, Helen Smith, Bethany Howell, Brenda Felmlee, Robert Getz, Christi Bode, Gene Farish, Ann Bunting, Andrea Bachman, Adam Moore, Eugene Jacquez, Charlotte Bobicki, Craig Cotten, Dale Pizel, Matthew Gallegos, Megan Holcomb, Greg Johnson, Nathan Coombs, Andrea Taillacq, Heather Dutton, Travis Smith, Ruth Heide, Matt Hildner.

Welcome and Introduction: Vice Chair Heather Dutton called the meeting to order at 3 p.m. at the offices of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District in Alamosa, CO. Those in attendance were introduced. A quorum of 13 was established.

Agenda Approval: Ron Brink moved that the agenda be approved with the addition of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative report. Rio de la Vista seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Approval of February 14, 2017 Minutes: Keith Holland motioned to approve the minutes. Judy Lopez seconded the motion, which was approved.

Public Comment:

- Ron Brink thanked everyone who worked on the Ag Producers workshop in February.
- Adam Moore, of the Colorado State Forest Service, brought copies of state's annual forest health survey. The focus of the report is, in part, how fire has impacted watersheds.

Mountain Home Dam Rehab Engineering Project Funding Request: Wayne Schwab, of the Trinchera Irrigation District, presented the proposal. The irrigation district, which has 47 stockholders and irrigates roughly 12,000 acres, is seeking \$70,000 from the Basin Account for engineering studies on an upgrade to improve dam safety. The overall budget is \$100,000. Currently only one of the three valve gates works and the Colorado Division of Water Resources has asked that all three be functional to increase drawdown capacity. Another problem, the dam leaks nearly 2,000 acre-feet per year. Schwab said the engineering study will produce three alternatives, preliminary designs, and construction-cost estimates. In response to questions from roundtable members, grant writer Nicole Langley said Mountain Home has conducted earlier releases to limit the leakage and meet irrigation schedules. Schwab said that practice has not impacted the conservation pool, nor will the draining of the reservoir to conduct the repairs bring water levels down to the conservation pool. In response to further questions, Schwab said divers did an evaluation of the dam in phase one and will dive again for certain repairs, and the irrigation district will work with the Trinchera Subdistrict, although most

of the subdistrict's replacements will be in the middle reach of the Rio Grande. Travis Smith recommended a description of the subdistrict in the application would be helpful in securing other funding. Heather Dutton said it is a good project to invest in for nonconsumptive needs but most of all meets another basin need by improving storage capacity. Karla Shriver motioned to recommend approval with the provision that subdistrict uses be recognized in the application. Judy Lopez seconded the motion. On further discussion, Brink said approval was merited because the project fits into many categories of need and added if the project doesn't go forward, the reservoir won't have a conservation pool. A voice vote to approve the project carried unanimously.

Rio Grande State Wildlife Area Design Project Funding Request: Andrea Bachman, program manager for the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, presented on the proposal. A video taken of the project areas, including the San Luis Valley Canal headgate, bank erosion on the Rio Grande, and the Centennial Ditch headgate. Bachman said the project addresses priorities identified in the 2001 Study. Partners include Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the San Luis Valley Canal Company and the Centennial Ditch Company. The San Luis Valley Canal, which waters 20,200 acres and has 78 shareholders, will see improvements to its headgate to counter channel instability, sedimentation and an aging headgate. The Centennial Ditch, which has 22 shareholders and irrigates 8,500 acres, faces sedimentation, an aging diversion dam, and high maintenance requirements. Ditch board members are also concerned the river could jump the channel in high flows, thereby circumventing the diversion dam and headgate. Rio Grande 2 diversion has been added to the proposal. It is in need of engineering survey and design. Bachman said the overall project would stabilize 1,000 feet of streambank, restore and enhance riparian and aquatic habitat, and protect more than 100 acres of critical wetland habitat.

Bachman said WSRF Basin funds will make up \$90,000, or 42 percent of the project budget. Matching funds will come from CPW (12 percent), the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (28 percent), Great Outdoors Colorado (12 percent) and in-kind matches from CPW (5 percent) and Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation (2 percent).

San Luis Valley Canal Board President Terry Chiles, said the canal's headgate is 100 years old and concrete around the structure has deteriorated. The bank below the headgate is unstable. He said high flows could put the river in the canal and, although a flood gate could put flows back in the river, the flows would bypass the Centennial Ditch.

Bachman said funds from the WRSF Basin account would go toward design, surveying and permitting for the SLV Canal's headgate, the Centennial diversion and Rio Grande 2. Stream-bank work is already funded.

Shriver said the Centennial is also old and in need of repair. The 2001 Study was meant to identify all of these old structures and she noted they were no different than roads or sewers — eventually they'll need to be replaced. Rio de La Vista said the potential failure of the CPW's siphon would put Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat at risk. She supports the project strongly. Smith said a cornerstone of the water supply reserve account was to bring partners

and ditch companies together and to provide seed money. He asked if any work needed to be done before spring runoff. Chiles said he didn't believe any work could be done by then. Cindy Medina asked if the ditch companies still needed to sign off on the proposal. Rio de la Vista said the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust also has easements on a significant amount of land serviced by the ditches in the project.

Judy Lopez moved to approve the proposal, noting it serves a variety of needs. Holland seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Dutton and Shriver abstained as they are on the Board of the RGHRP and Shriver is also a Centennial Ditch member.

Dam Safety Presentation: Bill McCormick, Chief of Dam Safety with the Colorado Division of Water Resources, gave an overview of his office's work. His office has 12 engineers and regulates 1,870 dams. Average age of dams in the San Luis Valley is 91 years. They provide 368,495 acre-feet of storage. Five of the dams designated as high hazard were built between 1908 and 1914. McCormick reviewed recent troubles with flooding and spillway damage at Oroville Dam in California, noting 188,000 people were evacuated. In the valley, Terrace, Beaver Park, Rio Grande, Humphreys and Continental reservoirs have all had work done. Alberta Park, Trujillo Meadows and Rito Hondo are being studied for repairs by CPW. McCormick said increased storage is critical but the safety of our reservoirs is paramount. His office appreciates the diligence of dam owners and the roundtables for funding to maintain and repair dams. In response to questions from the roundtable, McCormick noted the recent breach of a dam in Nevada that damaged a small town and said emergency spillways allow flood flows to be routed around a dam without anyone having to throw a switch. He also said the 2013 flooding along the Front Range taught the division that the design of most dams was good. Only failures came from low-hazard dams that were not built for that much rain. All of the dam safety information, including inspection reports and the status of EAPs is online.

CWCB update: CWCB Program Manager Megan Holcomb gave an update on the Statewide Water Supply Initiative, which is a technical platform with a focus on delivering data for the future refinement of the basin implementation plans and the Colorado Water Plan. The policy of the state water plan will inform SWSI. New and refined approaches include scenario planning with climate change and other drivers such as agricultural, environmental and recreation supply gaps. The scheduled completion of analyses is December. There will be less public back and forth. The Technical Advisory Groups, which will be small and flexible, will review all phases. She said the agency's goal is to have one TAG meeting and a second, if necessary. Its membership has not been finalized. In response to a question about the roundtable's role, CWCB Program Manager Greg Johnson said they were still trying to determine it. He added that there may be time and funding limitations that determine how much information to get from the individual basins. Johnson also gave an update on the second phase of Colorado River Risk Study. Western Slope roundtables would like more detail in the study, including how to use the state model, water rights, its relation to the Bureau of Reclamation model and, possibly, contingency planning for reservoir operations. Johnson said there has been resistance from the Front Range roundtable and they were undecided on whether the roundtable, its management

committee, or its technical advisory group would participate. CWCB staff recommends support of the study. Smith suggests the roundtable support the CWCB staff recommendation.

DWR Update: Division Engineer Craig Cotten reviewed the most recent 10-day report. His office is forecasting an annual flow of 750,000 acre-feet on the Rio Grande at the Del Norte gauge. The delivery obligation would 229,000 acre-feet, 19 percent of which is expected to come during irrigation season. On the Conejos, his office is forecasting 450,000 acre-feet at the Mogote gauge, which would be 147 percent of the historic average. The obligation downstream under the compact would be 232,000 acre-feet, 45 percent of which would have to be delivered during irrigation season. Cotten said basin snowpack is higher than average and significantly higher than the last three years, although it is dwindling some because of warm weather. Craig presented a table of stream flow forecasts. The Rio Grande is projected to 113 percent of average, while the San Antonio projects highest at 160 percent of average. He said the Rio Grande Compact Commission meets April 5 in Santa Fe. Irrigation Season will open on La Jara and Hot creeks March 16. He encouraged folks to come forward with ideas on opening dates for other watersheds.

IBCC Update: Smith said the next meeting is April 20.

Dutton said the Colorado Foundation for Water Education has opened registration for its Water Fluency course, which is issue-based.

The meeting adjourned 5 p.m.