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Inter Basin Compact Committee Basin Roundtables

Rio Grande Basin Roundtable

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 2:00 pm

In Person

8805 Independence Way

Alamosa, CO 81101

*Zoom Virtual Option*

**Meeting Minutes**

**Call to Order**

Chairman Nathan Coombs called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

**Attendance**

Those in attendance in person and online included Emma Reesor (RGHRP), Adam Moore (CSU Forest Service), Nathan Coombs (Conejos Water CD), Amber Pacheco (Rio Grande Water Conservation District), Connor Born (RGHRP) Rio de la Vista (ASU Salazar del Norte Center), Cindy Medina (Alamosa Riverkeepers), Charlie Spielman (M&I representative), Wayne Schwab (Trinchera Irrigation District), Kevin Terry (Trout Unlimited), Hannah Thill(RGWCEI), Virginia Christensen (Trinchera Irrigation Company), Sally Wier (RiGHT), Erin Minks (Senator Bennett’s office), Alex Puglisi, Peter Clark(water user at large), Cathy Morin, Ryan Unterreiner (CPW), Heather Greenwolf (Headwaters Alliance), Chuck Finnegan, Dale Pizel, Jim Ehrlich (Colorado Potato Administrative Committee), Glenn Miller, Antonio Huerta (Senator Hickenlooper’s office), Bethany Howell (CDA), Chloe Dickson, Daryl Kohut, Breece Robertson, Cary Aloia, Elizabeth Schoder (CWCB), Eugene Farish, Jenny Nehring, Karla Shriver, Matt Lindburg (Brown & Caldwell), Pricilla Waggoner, Steven Romero (Costilla County), Wavrely Klaw (Sonoran Institute), James Henderson, Erin McWilliams(RGHRP), Mario Curto, Daniel Boyes (RGHRP), Nikita Christensen (Rio Grande County Rep), Larry Svuen, Pat McDermott (DWR), Chris Ivers (RGWCD)

Excused: Keith Holland, Judy Lopez, Travis Smith, and Ronda Lobato were absent but excused.

**Agenda**

Chairman asked for approval of the agenda with a motion. Charlie motioned, and Cindy seconded. The agenda was approved unanimously.

**Minutes**

The Chairman asked for approval of the July minutes as mailed out. Virginia motioned, Charlie seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**IBCC Update**

Ann Bunting will be unavailable to serve as the IBCC representative, and an alternate is needed to serve in her stead. This usually involves a maximum of 4-5 meetings annually. If you are interested in representing the Roundtable in this role, contact Nathan. If you have any questions about the role, Cleave Simpson, Keith Holland, and Nathan all have experience.

**Roundtable Funding Timeline**

*Reminder:* If you want your project supported by the roundtable as part of the next cycle of Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) funding, you MUST give a project preview as part of the October Roundtable meeting, as a final presentations will be made in November, and WSRF applications are due to CWCB December 1st. The project sheet is available on the Roundtable Website, rgbrt.org. At the top of the Roundtable homepage click on “Funding Opportunities” for more information about the application process and schedule.

**Recording Secretary**

We will be needing a new recording secretary, as Bethany’s new job will restrict her ability to attend every meeting. The roundtable can offer payment for this position. Contact Bethany or Nathan with potential candidates or further questions.

**Public Comment**

**Rio Update**

There will be a water equity workshop hosted by CWCB on Sep 30. More info will be shared with those on the roundtable mailing list before the event.

**Charlie Spielman** – recommended the book *Dark Winter* to members of the roundtable. This book describes a future in which global cooling occurs.

**Bethany Howell**

Bethany talked about her new job with the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) on their communication and outreach team. She also highlighted funding opportunities through the CDA, including a soil health grant due September 15, and a drought resilience grant, due Sep 30. She will be sending more information regarding these grants and contact information in an email.

**Colorado Water Trust – David Getches Award**

Cindy highlighted that Nathan Coombs and Kevin Terry will be awarded the David Getches Flowing Waters Award for their work on the Conejos Winter Flow Program.

**PEPO/Education Update**

With Bethany taking a new position, there is an opportunity to try a collaborative approach towards education and outreach that does not task one person with all the roundtable’s responsibilities. Nathan shared the outline for this plan, including 101 level topic sheets, Fun fact Fridays, Articles, and newsletters. These media types will serve to educate those familiar and unfamiliar with the roundtable in a quick and concise way on multiple different platforms. If you have any ideas for topics to cover as part of this campaign, or would like to assist in the media’s creation, contact Nathan.

Cindy suggested drought and the Colorado River. Karla suggested the Closed Basin Project, and Michael suggested water’s economic impact in the valley vs. the front range. The Alamosa Citizen had a figure comparing the wide difference between $ values, and to the untrained eye it can mislead people about the Valley’s value and deep reliance on water availability. There was further discussion focused on this, including how to compare water usages. Media covering this topic should counter potential criticisms of the Valley. Finally, anyone wanting to attend education meetings is welcome to.

**Basin Implementation Plan**

Daniel Boyes with the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP)(the BIP Local Expert) gave an update on the BIP drafts that were reviewed by BIP subcommittees. The revisions and comments made by BIP subcommittee members, which were completed September 13, are being incorporated by RGHRP staff and Brown & Caldwell. In October, the drafts will be made available to the public for review. The public review period does not exclude roundtable members from making additional edits. Thanks to all the subcommittee members that were involved in this round of review!

**Conservation Planning Mapping- Breece Robertson**

The title of this presentation was Unlocking the Potential of Technology to Advance the Pace and Quality of Land and Water Conservation Easements. Breece formerly led the GIS division at Trust for Public Land Institute. Her work involved using GIS in public planning, working with local governments and NGOs to create and protect natural community spaces. Her book, Protecting the Places we Love, talks about utilizing GIS to engage and revitalize communities. Her current job is with Center for Geospatial Solutions, a consulting firm dealing with data access, big data management, and actionable information. There will be an unprecedented amount of funding available in the next few years regarding conservation, and having the tools to prepare and communicate specific needs is crucial.

She talked about the functionality of GIS to create a clear path from opportunity to Strategy, highlighting some GIS mapping of the Colorado River Basin, as well as an example geo-hub. This geo-hub is intended to serve as a “geospatial library” to access curated data for a given area.

Erin Minks touched on the 30 by 30 goal, and the potential for further conversation around the meaning and goal of land conservation. There is a grey area concerning defining conservation, and depending on interpretation, the Valley may be ahead of the curve, and leveraging those strengths will be important.

**Subdistrict Update – Amber Pacheco**

There is a collective push by the subdistricts to find replacement sources and meet overall goals. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District’s WaterSMART grant was approved, which includes match from Colorado Open Lands, RiGHT, and potential match from the CWCB. This grant involved exploring Alternative Transfer Methods (ATMs) and their potential to make water work harder and address the water gap. They are also exploring the potential for groundwater conservation.

The wells in subdistrict 5 were turned back on June 20. They had been shut off because their annual replacement plan (ARP) was under review, but the subdistrict sued the State of Colorado. They are hoping to deal with the case before the next ARP is due.

Substitute Water Supply Plans (SWSPs) were also filed, and there has been work to streamline the process. The subdistricts meet publicly every few months. For more information on these meetings, contact Amber Pacheco

**Compact 101/DWR Update**

The Roundtable went over the Compact 101 sheet created by Peyton Valentine. This sheet provides a basic overview of Compact law. There was a general discussion about whether the compact would ever be amended. This sheet will be made available to share soon.

Along with his DWR Update, Pat McDermott gave a talk about the compact, historical river flows, and this year’s river flows to date. Groundwater rules went into full effect this year. Pat showed the levels of major western reservoirs, showing a grim outlook for water supply.

**Colorado Water Conservation Board**

Elizabeth Schoder with the CWCB gave a quick update. The Water Plan revision is progressing, with public comment planned for June 2022. The CWCB annual board meeting will take place September 15-16. More information about the water equity meeting can be found at Engagecwcb.org

Meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Next meeting will take place Tuesday, October 12th at 2:00 pm.