

# **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Watershed Management Planning Committee

DATE: February 12, 2018

SUBJECT: Summary of Watershed Management Planning Committee Meeting

## ***MISSION STATEMENT***

***The mission of the Watershed Management Planning Group (WMPG) is to help protect existing water uses and watershed health in the Upper Gunnison Basin in the face of pressure from increased water demands and permanent reductions in water supply.***

A meeting of the Watershed Management Planning (WMP) Committee was held on February 12, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

George Sibley, Rosemary Carroll, Julie Nania, Ashley Bembenek, Jesse Kruthaupt, Erin Wilson, Chris Kurtz, Bill Trampe, Jessica Noelke, Chris Sturm, Amy Harmon, Bob Robbins, John McCLOW, Ralph Clark III, and Beverly Richards were in attendance. Camille Richard participated by phone.

George Sibley called the meeting to order.

## **Wilson Water Group Update**

Erin Wilson gave the update on the assessment process. The assessment phase will help to develop an options management plan and is the foundation for everything else. They have been developing information on how the water is currently being used and how it may be used in the future. This will help identify potential projects and could help with stakeholder feedback on which projects or options might be viable on a voluntary basis.

The work they have been doing has been instrumental in understanding what is going on in the basin. Once they have completed gathering the data they will be updating the StateCU and StateMod models with a more accurate picture of water use in this basin. These updates will include correcting irrigated acreage and ditch assignments, return flow locations and time patterns, municipal water use, and water rights allocations.

WWG has been working with water commissioners on irrigated acreage, as much of what was assigned was incorrect. They will also be updating uses in the basin other than agricultural and municipal. Once the reallocation is complete they will recalibrate the model to provide the most current information. Ashley said this is

critical to the whole planning process as we will only be able to evaluate effective changes if we catalog and understand all the uses.

Erin said they struggle with return flow patterns as there is not much groundwater information available. Due to geologic factors, return flows in the basin vary from stream to stream. They will rely on the model to understand the flows in the river where gauges do not exist. This will also help in determining if we are meeting the CWCB instream flows. At this point they will work on identifying reaches of concern, using stakeholder input, modeling tools, existing studies, and mapping overlays.

Once the model is recalibrated and assessments are completed, they will develop an extensive list of reaches of concern and these will be prioritized for implementing pilot projects or voluntary changes in water use. Erin said the calibration points will be major diversions where there are stream gauges. They will also be finalizing data collection of irrigated acreage and municipal water use. Ashley will be working on a more detailed environmental flow assessment in the field this coming summer. Bill Trampe asked if they have the capacity to look at how water storage in the watersheds will be affected by changes and reductions in use patterns. Erin said she will research available literature to find information about this issue.

### **Sub-basin Coordinators Update**

Camille Richard said about fifteen or twenty people attended the meeting at the Powderhorn Community Center. They were able to make good contacts with some of the local ranchers. The presentation went well, and these were followed by one on one focal groups. As a result, a couple of participants signed up for the agricultural sub-group. Camille suggested we need to do a better job of really emphasizing why we are involved in this planning process. Most of the attendees are worried about water supplies for this summer but not into the future. The assessments of these sub-basins will be critical and will likely result in better education within these meetings.

George Sibley said getting stakeholders engaged is key as most do not have a real awareness of how they will deal with less water. He said there is a general feeling that things are good and should be left the way they are. Considering current conditions, this might be an interesting year to hold more stakeholder meetings. The next meeting in the Upper Gunnison basin will be held either on March 8<sup>th</sup> or March 13<sup>th</sup> in Lake City.

George said he has been meeting with the Western student group on the public relations project. The group is very enthused about the project and he invited anyone else on the committee to attend with him (Tuesday mornings at 8:00). He has also been working with Chris Kruthaupt and Katya Hafich at the middle school on an educational outreach project where they are going to focus on a water problem and develop some solutions.

## **Discuss Combining Needs Assessment/Options Analysis for the Lake Fork and Cebolla Creek**

Camille Richard said she thought about doing this when we first started putting these together, and she thinks this should happen now. It should be made clear that while the assessment and demonstration projects would not necessarily happen on Cebolla Creek at this point, they should still combine these two basins as there are fewer water users in both watersheds than on Ohio Creek. Erin said Wilson Water Group has not been separating the two and it makes sense to combine them. Ashley said at this point she does not have all the information to make this decision. In terms of field assessments, we may not use all the assessment locations on the Lake Fork and we could apply these to Cebolla Creek. Butch Clark asked if water quality has been included in the assessment of this area, given potential mining activity in Cebolla Creek. Ashley said water quality is included in the scope of work in a small way but addressing those specific issues will be part of the needs assessment. It was the consensus these two sub-basins would be combined for the assessment process.

## **Stakeholders Meeting Content**

George Sibley said he thought that at the Powderhorn meeting we gave the participants too much information and then asked them to work; it was not necessarily successful. He said the informational part of stakeholder meetings should maybe be kept short and simple, and focused on four points: a brief description of the planning process as part of the statewide plan; how will water users operate under increased people pressure; how will they operate under a permanent decrease in water supply; and how will the basin respond if or when “demand management” is requested or required by larger entities outside the Upper Gunnison Basin. He suggested that we will need to be proactive about costs to water users in our basin. We should acknowledge the fact that we are looking at less water permanently in the future and we cannot afford to operate as if this is a temporary problem.

Julie Nania said it is important to highlight the purpose of the meeting which is to inform stakeholders about the process. One on one meetings will provide more feedback, but we should be clear about the process. Chris Sturm said information should also include the science of identifying environmental and recreational flows. The objectives would then include prioritization of projects and flow needs based on the science. Julie said we have not selected a method for setting environmental and recreational flows. Ashley Bembenek said R2CROSS was suggested as it is what is currently being used in the instream flow process. Julie said R2CROSS will likely be the benchmark to identify the minimum baseline and another method will be used then in identified reaches of concern for identifying target flows.

## **Agricultural Sub-Group Update**

Jessica Noelke said there has been no meeting set up yet. She will contact Frank Kugel and Andy Spann to begin preparations for this meeting.

## **Video Production Update**

Julie Nania showed the first cut of the final video, which was well received by all present. She would like feedback from committee members. Some suggestions from this included identifying the people speaking, including their name and business/company names; introductory information about the District and the management plan; credits to people who have contributed footage included at the end of the video; and contact information.

## **Meeting Wrap-up and Action Items**

In preparation for the next meeting the following items were discussed:

- The next meeting for the Watershed Management Planning Committee will be March 12, 2018 beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Action items include:

- Develop an outline of plans and what the Working Group hopes to accomplish by the end of 2018. This should include attention to the agricultural, municipal/industrial, environmental and recreational needs assessments and options toward the management plan.
- Begin work on preliminary progress report for the CWCB as part of funding requirements. This report is due in June 2018.
- Include information in video production discussed for final distribution in the next few months. Also include any input received from committee members.
- Set up meeting for agricultural sub-group prior to next meeting.
- Sub-basin coordinators will continue work on needs assessment/options spreadsheets, continuing to compile information to share with the group.
- Ashley Bembenek and staff will continue to work on literature review and citations for distribution.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.