

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Watershed Management Planning Committee

DATE: June 11, 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 June 11, 2018 at 6:05 p.m.

George Sibley, Ashley Bembenek, Michelle Pierce, Camille Richard, Jesse Kruthaupt, Bob Robbins, Marissa Manzanares, Taylor Paulson, Butch Clark, Frank Kugel and Beverly Richards were in attendance.

George Sibley called the meeting to order.

### **Wilson Water Group Update**

*Needs Assessment/Reach Maps and Stream Modeling* – Ashley Bembenek said the most recent work has focused on working with sub-basin coordinators on the issues list. This is a list of issues that have been identified by stakeholders. On the East River there have been over 200 issues identified, on the Lake Fork and Cebolla there have been 65 issues identified, and on Ohio Creek there have been 50 issues identified. The purpose of this document is to identify assessment points and is one part of a three-step process. The issues have been grouped into sixteen distinct categories such as water supply, water quality, and recreational access. On Ohio Creek the issues include diversion infrastructure, water supply, channel stability, and geomorphic conditions.

Erin Wilson and Chris Kurtz provided information about the modeling progress. They have developed a physical representation of Ohio Creek and the Lake Fork tributaries to model based upon stakeholder issues. They have also been working to improve the resolution of the model. They are looking at return flow ditches and what areas these irrigate and they have participated in several meetings with large water users on Ohio Creek and will include their input into the modeling process. Jesse Kruthaupt asked if the maps will include before and after representations of ditch alignments and new parcels. Ashley said there will be a basin wide before and after map. The landowners can zoom in and exercise their own judgement as to what is needed. They have added several tributaries never represented such as Coal

Creek, Washington Gulch, Perry Creek, Cement Creek, and Paris Creek. They also added Henson and Elk Creek on the Lake Fork and Powderhorn Creek on Cebolla.

The modeling process is taking longer than expected based on the level of detail needed. By July 1<sup>st</sup> they will have the monthly model results which they will present at the August meeting. She suggested a bit of extra advertising for this meeting particularly to those with technical familiarities with the basin. This will make sure that we have plenty of time for outreach as the assessment phase winds down. The process for field work will be working in the East River and Lake Fork basins in July where there are easier issues such as flow problems. Work in Ohio Creek will be completed last as there are more complex issues.

George asked what is comprised in the monthly model output versus the daily output. Ashley said the daily provides information about streamflow on that day then they run monthly. They will then calibrate the model and it will provide the daily information. The information is from state records and the data is good going back to 1975. This will aid in giving a detailed picture of stream levels.

Frank said that if WWG is mapping irrigated acreage and ditch alignments it would be good for Division of Water Resource staff to provide feedback now as they are currently administering a call on Ohio Creek. They are familiar with ditches but there have been questions about alignments and diversions. Ashley said they can provide a map right away, they will provide one for the upper and one for the lower half of the watershed.

Jesse asked if there will be an online version of the data output so this can be shared. Ashley said they can provide map data in Google Earth format but the ditch alignment and priorities are just spatial coverage at this point, just larger ditches will be labeled. Camille asked if it was possible to get the data output for community meetings she is arranging in the fall. Ashley will coordinate with Wilson Water Group to provide this information.

Frank said he is encouraged by the results thus far. As more comments come in these can be included. Ashley said that this must be handled by sub-basin and an updated spreadsheet was sent out. Any additional input that comes in over the summer can be included. She asked the sub-basin coordinators to include highlights on any additions so she can keep track.

### **Sub-Basin Coordinators Updates**

*East River* – Ashley Bembenek gave the update for the East River. They are preparing for an outreach event in Crested Butte on June 16<sup>th</sup>. This will be a meeting with kayakers and will also cover the Lake Fork due to kayaking in that area. They have been working with American Whitewater on this event and will provide maps and information with context about high flow years to accurately determine flow estimates. This meeting will be held at the Depot in Crested Butte on Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup> beginning at 5:00 p.m. Ashley encouraged committee members to attend.

Frank Kugel gave an update on the Slate River Working Group. This is a small group comprised of various interests on the Slate River. The group was developed due to conflicts between private owners, birding enthusiasts, and stand-up paddle boarders. The Crested Butte Land Trust and the Town of Crested Butte put this group together to address issues surrounding these water uses. They have held two meetings so far with the next one scheduled for Wednesday, June 20<sup>th</sup>.

The Upper Gunnison District contributed \$7,000 to this effort through its grant program. With this funding they purchased river counters to have a better idea of uses in this area. The ones originally purchased did not work well in the bright sun, so they are working on purchasing better models. They are also focusing most of their attention on signage stressing responsible behavior on the Slate River including respecting private property and agricultural fencing. Ashley said they have been in discussions with the Land Trust and the Town asking them to refrain from creating flow regimes as this is already being worked on. They have agreed to focus primarily on managing flow issues when it relates to trespass. She also said the recreational user numbers will be very helpful for our survey needs.

Frank said he has also spoken with Bill Lacy who has three diversion structures on the East River. The furthest downstream ditch, the Lafayette Ditch, is capable of drying up the East River. The uppermost ditch, the Verzuh Young Bifano, exhibits significant leakage where it flows over a scree slope at the base of Mount Crested Butte. Mr. Lacy has often considered piping the ditch in this area to prevent this from happening but the cost has been prohibitive. This may be a project to consider as a pilot project when we are at the stage of the process.

*Lake Fork and Cebolla* – Camille Richard said they have held their first River Restoration Corridor planning meeting. This was an informational meeting to look at work that has already been completed. They also established an ad hoc committee to address public access issues. The next meeting will be held on June 29<sup>th</sup> where they will walk the entire stretch to develop a plan for future work. They have also been in touch with the River Trail Association who will provide technical support for these planning processes. They are working on a report with the team and will update more later.

*Ohio Creek* – Jesse Kruthaupt said he has had several meetings with landowners. They have been working on measuring ditches and determining transit losses. The situation in this watershed is not ideal as it is dry for the most part. Frank Kugel said that shortages on Ohio Creek are making a call likely. To avoid this, a communications network of water users in Ohio Creek could be formed to discuss water shortages in the basin. Jesse said having the modelling results will help with determining how to meet the calling rights in short water years.

Butch Clark asked the group if there are plans to integrate rare earth development into the planning process. Ashley said they have not worked on including this aspect yet.

## **Review on Draft CWCB Status Report**

Camille Richard said she is somewhat behind schedule with the status report as she has been working on cleaning up the issues tables. She sent out a draft prior to the meeting but the draft did not include the issues tables which will be included as an exhibit. There will also need to be amendments made to the year two statement of work which will have to be approved by the CWCB. Staff will forward the draft status report for committee input.

*Discussion of Pilot projects* – Clarification and consensus were needed on what could be reported as a ‘pilot or demonstration project’ in the report due in June. George Sibley said that Chris Sturm had said that any suitable demonstration project could be included, including exemplary projects completed outside of the planning process, and wanted to include as pilot projects some projects either completed or in process. Michelle Pierce said that the planning process clearly said that pilot projects would only be chosen after the sub-basin needs assessments were completed; that is what had been promised to the stakeholders and we should adhere to that. Frank agreed with her, citing one stakeholder’s complaint that the planning process was already skewed toward certain projects that would target agricultural water. Ashley suggested that we could list ‘existing projects’ that seemed to fulfill the multiple-use, accessible and durable projects that would be sought for pilot/demonstration projects, but that we will wait to select actual pilot/demonstration projects until the needs assessments were done, in accord with the Watershed Management Plan process. The working group gave consent to that.

## **Development of WMPG FAQs**

Staff has received limited responses for this item. A list will be developed for distribution at the next committee meeting.

## **Discussion of Suspending Working Group Meetings and Working in Sub-Committee groups**

George Sibley said this item came from members who will be working in the field to complete the needs assessment. These will include meetings for those interested in the assessment process, stakeholder outreach, and grant application preparation. The sub-committee meetings will be held in July and September and report back to the full committee in August and October. The August meeting will be necessary as there will be a lengthy presentation by Wilson Water Group on the needs assessment. Staff will work on a monthly newsletter with interns to keep communication open in the interim.

## **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 August 13, 2018 beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Action items include:

- Establishment of working groups
- Complete status report for submission to CWCB with input from committee members
- Develop content for monthly newsletter and twitter articles
- Staff will develop FAQ list for presentation at next committee meeting

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.