

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Monday, January 29, 2018**

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District conducted a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, January 29, 2018 at the District's offices, 210 West Spencer Avenue, Suite B, Gunnison, Colorado.

Board members present: Kathleen Curry, Rebie Hazard, Julie Nania, Bill Nesbitt, Michelle Pierce, Brett Redden, George Sibley, Andy Spann, and Julie Vlier.

Board member not present: Rosemary Carroll.

Also present:

Dan Brauch, Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Andrew Breibart, Bureau of Land Management  
Tom Grant, Wet Meadows Project Coordinator  
Mark Jiganti  
Frank Kugel, General Manager  
Greg Peterson, Gunnison County Stockgrowers / Self  
Beverly Richards, Administrative Assistant  
Bob Robbins, Gunnison County Stockgrowers  
Jill Steele, Office Manager  
Steve Westbay, City of Gunnison

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Board President Michelle Pierce called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. AGENDA APPROVAL**

Michelle Pierce said that the board has received an updated non-operating expenses list, and updated list of topics for the upcoming board retreat, an article discussing Colorado's Governors response to drought, and the text of HB 18-1073, concerning water districts' ability to enter into contracts regarding their water-related assets.

**Julie Vlier moved and Brett Redden seconded approval of the agenda. The motion carried.**

**3. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

**Brett Redden moved and George Sibley seconded approval of the consent agenda items. The motion carried.**

#### **4. LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE MATTERS**

John McCLOW, participating via telephone, said that the board has received copies of the two diligence applications filed last week.

Julie Vlier asked if John anticipates opposition on these applications. John said he sees no reason why there would be opposition.

John said that new HB18-1073 is an amendment to the Water Conservancy District Act that allows a conservancy district to contract for space in a reservoir. He said it needs some fine tuning where it discusses water activity enterprises.

#### **5. MANAGER'S REPORT**

Frank Kugel said that the Bureau did not reach the Blue Mesa icing target by the end of December despite his repeated contacts urging them to do so. Fortunately, the warmer than usual weather has caused this to not be a problem. He will continue to urge the Bureau to meet the icing target in the future.

Frank said that the water supply forecast is still gloomy for next few weeks, with storms trending to the north of us.

Frank said that while at the CWC convention last week, he was approached by Joe Busto with the CWCB and asked to testify in front of a committee of the legislature that Thursday on the sunseting of permitting process for cloud seeding. There is currently a five-year process which must be reviewed every year. The committee was discussing extending that to twelve years.

Bill Nesbitt asked if anyone brought up funding provided by California. Frank said that he mentioned the fact that California pays 50% of the cloud seeding expenses, which was well-received by the legislators.

#### **8. BOARD/STAFF/COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS**

**Treasurer's Report:** Bill Nesbitt said that the District received 154% of the 2017 budgeted amount for interest on investments.

Bill said that the District received a thank you letter from the kids in Lake City who received the "Water" books.

Frank complimented Bill on his efforts working with the schools. Bill said that we are still trying to coordinate with Crested Butte to get their books to them.

**Taylor Park Reservoir:** Julie Vlier said that Dee Dee Marriott and Mark Schumacher have indicated interest in continuing to participate in the Taylor Local Users Group. She asked if more outreach is needed to recruit more interest. Frank said that the usual outreach and advertising were done, and that typically only the incumbents apply.

Frank said that in 2012, we had a similarly dry winter. In January of that year we decided to cut releases from Taylor from 100 to 75 cfs. If the current weather pattern continues, it may be advisable to consider that in February.

Andy Spann said he believes it would be a good idea to set up a meeting now rather than wait until February.

Frank said that Taylor Park Reservoir is currently at 74,000 acre feet, so there is still a storage buffer, but it bears prudent watching. He said that the Park Cone SNOTEL is currently at 74% of normal, better than other area snotels. Those two things offer a bit of encouragement.

**Gunnison Basin Roundtable:** Kathleen Curry said that the GBRT met January 15. The only grant application that had been received was withdrawn. There is approximately \$516,000 remaining in the basin account. Severance tax dollars will be really tight this year due to a lawsuit filed by British Petroleum in which they prevailed and are now owed severance tax by the state.

#### **Four Western Slope Roundtable Meeting – District’s Role in Cases of Severe Drought:**

Kathleen said that the four West Slope roundtables have a tentative meeting date of April 24 or 25. Bill Trampe sent out a memo pointing out that a West Slope consensus is needed on additional development of Colorado River water on the West Slope and on pending shortages.

Frank said there has been discussion of the upcoming CWCB meeting, at which some funding decisions will be made. Colorado’s Water Plan has a grant program and there are still some grant opportunities there. There is also grant money for Chris Sturm’s watershed protection program. There was originally funding of \$5 million for first three years, which has been pared down to \$3 million for year three to cover some of the shortfall.

Kathleen Curry said that Bostwick Park Water Conservancy District is starting a watershed planning process and is looking for funds.

Kathleen said that at the next GBRT meeting on March 19, some time will be set aside to bring everyone up to speed on Colorado River issues.

Kathleen said she feels the IBCC is underutilized. They want to have a conversation about the seven water principles in the water plan and how to move forward.

The board discussed considering buying blocks of water out of Aspinall this year. The consensus of the board was to look into the specifics of doing that, and also to look into reducing Taylor Reservoir outflows.

## **6. DINNER BREAK**

## **7. GUNNISON RIVER PROJECT UPDATE – DAN BRAUCH AND STEVE WESTBAY**

Steve Westbay of the City of Gunnison, and Dan Brauch, from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, gave a presentation on the Gunnison River and Riparian Habitat Rehabilitation Project. Project goals include: improve diversions, bank stabilization, reconnect floodplains, improve channel habitat for trout, increase trout biomass, improve trout size, improve riparian habitat, and improve public river access.

Frank Kugel said that in 2012, winter releases from Taylor Park Reservoir were reduced in January after consulting with Dan Brauch about any harm to the fishery. He said that we are unfortunately getting close to that situation again and he would like Dan's thoughts as to impact on fisheries. Dan said that while 100 cfs is optimum, 50 cfs is the bare bones minimum. The recommendation is for steps down in 25 cfs increments.

Frank asked if the change of release rate during the winter impacts spawning. Dan Brauch said that the recommendation is to keep the flows the same as, or at least not lower than, they were during the spawning period.

Julie Vlier said that it is possible that we may want to reduce Taylor releases from 100 to 75 cfs, so some ongoing discussions with staff might be helpful. Dan Brauch said he has modelling he will share.

Steve Westbay invited the board to take a field trip and tour their Gunnison River project in the future.

## **8. BOARD/STAFF/COMMITTEE MEMBER REPORTS - Continued**

**2018 Grant Program:** Frank Kugel said that the District has been advertising in the newspapers and has received good interest thus far. The plan is to use the same guidance and criteria as before.

**Education Committee:** George Sibley said there is a student teacher, Katya Hafich, at the public school with lots of ideas for education. He is going to meet with her Wednesday afternoon if anyone is interested in sitting in on that.

Frank Kugel said he met with a prospective intern yesterday. Molly McConnell was an intern with BLM last year, working under Andrew Breibart. She also helped us with the River Festival and volunteered with the Wet Meadows project. Molly is going to work for Ashley Bembenek full-time this summer, working Monday through Thursday. She wants to strengthen her resume and has asked about opportunities to do a part-time internship on Fridays with our District. She will work with the fourth-grade water festival in May, the Gunnison River Festival, and the Colorado Workshop.

Julie Nania suggested that Molly could do some work with watershed assessments as part of the District's watershed management planning process.

**Watershed Management Planning:** George Sibley said the board received reports on last two meetings, which took place December and January.

George said that Wilson Water Group is still working on an exhaustive and thorough analysis of the irrigation in the three basins currently being worked on: the East River, Ohio Creek, and the Lake Fork.

Andy Spann and Frank are working on putting together a subcommittee of ag people to evaluate the alternative transfer methods discussed in the Colorado water plan.

This Saturday evening there will be a stakeholder meeting in Powderhorn, organized by Camille Richard.

George said that work is proceeding on a sort of literature review of studies and information about the upper Gunnison which can be put on the website for public access.

The next watershed management planning committee meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2018.

Julie Nania said that low flows could make some of the assessment work planned for next summer challenging.

Frank said that the District's plan is being looked at by others across the state as a shining example of how to bring ag to the table. He has been asked to make presentations about the process and will attend a meeting in Durango on how to do a watershed management plan. The Yampa Basin have also approached him about presenting to their watershed planning group.

## **Board Retreat Planning:**

John McCLOW participated via telephone in this discussion.

The board discussed the proposed topics for the upcoming board retreat on February 22, 2018. Given the low snowpack, the consensus of the board was to spend a majority of the time discussing big picture items including addressing droughts of varying lengths. Each board member is asked to send to Frank their two top questions on this subject with sufficient lead time to allow staff to summarize the questions and gather resources for discussion. Frank will send a reminder to the board about this.

Julie Vlier will be unable to attend the retreat, and will submit her questions to staff.

**Wet Meadows Update:** Tom Grant gave a brief presentation on the Wet Meadows project. Ten sites are being worked on, and field work continued into January before the ground became frozen. There will be a meeting February 5, 2018 at 3:00 in the board room, at which all are welcome.

Tom listed the various grants he has lined up:

- NFWF - \$149,829.20
- CWCB - \$31,507
- GOCO YCC - \$24,200
- BLM Cooperative Agreement #1 - \$32,000 (confirmed)
- BLM Cooperative Agreement #2 (new funding that Andrew acquired, but is NOT confirmed yet) - \$130,000 but less than \$100,000 would go through UGRWCD due to new federal financial processes
- USFS Resource Advisor Council (RAC) - \$19,000 (Matt Vasquez applied for funding, it is likely but NOT confirmed yet)
- USFS Wildlife projects - possibly up to \$40,000, but this funding is NOT confirmed yet (Matt)
- USFS also applied for SCA YCC and WCCC work crews through internal funding sources (Matt)

Tom said that he had been considering two proposals in January, but did not apply for the funding:

- National Forest Foundation - program coordinator did not think that GPS shock collars to keep cows out of restoration areas and critical habitat was a good fit for the program. Everyone likes this idea, but it doesn't fit into traditional frameworks for habitat management funding.

- Audubon Society of Greater Denver - I ran into problems getting support from partners on a specific proposal idea (insect abundance and diversity in wet meadow restorations) for the small grant program (\$1,000-2000). I didn't want to push ahead without broader support.

Copies of recent newspaper articles were included in the board's packets. Tom handed out a newsletter released today by the Gunnison Conservation District.

Tom said he is interested in helping with the education committee.

Tom said that the Society for Range Management will meet in Sparks, NV. Nate Seward from CPW and Renee Rondeau are presenting in an all-day session regarding wet meadows restoration. This will be available as a live webcast, and he can provide information on how to watch it board members are interested.

George Sibley said that a year ago we wondered how the Wet Meadows program would continue without TNC and Betsy Neely, and yet, he cannot see how it could have gone any better.

## **9. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS**

**Summary of CWC Annual Conference:** Bill Nesbitt said that there is no talk of sharing the pain. He was advised to refer to this as "mitigation."

Bill Nesbitt suggested inviting the people working on the Upper Arkansas fen study to come to a board meeting.

Frank Kugel said that at a workshop he and Julie Nania attended, they learned about the new CDSS product with mapping tools which will be extremely useful.

Frank said that the state demographer, Elizabeth Gardner, presented a revised, statewide growth increase estimate of 50% by 2050. This is lower than previous estimates.

Michelle Pierce said that she attended some of the workshops and learned about the Catlin Ditch and its bylaws and how the provisions of those bylaws stood up in court. She also heard information about Rocky Ford and what happened to agriculture there. At another presentation she heard that people have always been a part of the environment. Michelle said that she attended a presentation on the very large number of dead trees due to the pine beetle. The Forest Service is now paying people to come and take the dead wood off the land. They are also working to get wildfire classified as an emergency, so that FEMA can be involved in recovery efforts.

Julie Nania said she attended a workshop with interesting information about earlier snowmelt trends.

The board discussed supporting the appointment of UVWUA manager Steve Anderson for a CWCB seat that will become vacant when John McClow's term is finished. Frank Kugel said he feels Steve is uniquely qualified, being a second-generation manager and third-generation board member at UVWUA.

Kathleen Curry said she would like a strong line of communication with Steve, and she would like him to come here to meet the board. She said the board needs to know what his stance would be on a Gunnison Tunnel call. She said it is important for him to understand that he would represent the entire Gunnison Basin and not just the UVWUA.

Julie Vlier said she would like the board to have more advance knowledge of key, statewide appointments to increase their opportunity for input.

Brett Redden said that the board needs to support this nomination, and it is also necessary to have conversations with Steve.

**Kathleen Curry moved to support the nomination for Steve Anderson to the CWCB. Bill Nesbitt seconded. The motion carried.**

Kathleen Curry said she has wanted to ask Frank to put together some information but has not wanted to do so without board approval. Some of the items are: how many were called out during 2002 – 2003. If we were to use all our second fill, who would be affected? Are there other augmentation sources besides Blue Mesa or Taylor? Could we use Vouga, Needle Creek, Lake San Cristobal, or Meridian Lake reservoirs? If the current conditions continue and we need to contract for water with the Bureau, how much would we want to buy, and how much do we want to spend on that?

The board approved of requesting this information from Frank. Kathleen will send these questions to Frank.

Andy Spann said that Spring Creek Reservoir could be added to the list as another potential source.

Julie Nania said it would be useful for those who are newer to the board to receive information on reservoirs have been looked at in the past.

## **10. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Bob Robbins said that he came to hear the discussion on drought planning.




**11. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The legislative committee will meet Friday, February 9 at 8:00 a.m. The education committee will schedule a meeting. The grant committee will meet in early March.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**


Board President Michelle Pierce adjourned the January 29, 2018 meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



George Sibley, Secretary

APPROVED:



Michelle Pierce, President