

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 24, 2020**

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District conducted a regular meeting on Monday, August 24, 2020, at 5:30 p.m.

Board members present: Rosemary Carroll (participating via teleconference), Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, Stacy McPhail, Julie Nania, Bill Nesbitt, John Perusek, Michelle Pierce, George Sibley, Andy Spann, and Julie Vlier.

Others Present:

Jesse Bryan, UGRWCD Intern

Sonja Chavez, General Manager

Kathleen Curry

Jeff Derry, Colorado Dust on Snowpack Center

Paul Jones, Wet Meadows Program Coordinator

Jesse Kruthaupt, Trout Unlimited

John McClow, General Counsel

Beverly Richards, Water Resource Specialist

Bob Robbins

Jill Steele, Office Manager

Vern Tharp, Western States Water Partnership

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

George Sibley moved and Stacy McPhail seconded approval of the agenda as circulated. The motion carried.

3. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Stacy McPhail moved and George Sibley seconded approval of the consent agenda. The motion carried.

4. LEGAL MATTERS

Drought Contingency and Demand Management: In the board's packets, John McCloy included a memo to the demand management workgroup members. The Demand Management feasibility investigation progress report is available for public comment through August 28.

There will be a public, virtual workshop on August 26 at which highlights of the report will be discussed as will next steps.

The CWCB board will hold a Demand Management workshop on September 2 to provide an opportunity for more detailed discussion.

5. MANAGER AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

The board received the August 18, 2020 General Manager & Committee Reports in their packets. An additional report dated August 24 was included in the board's meeting folders.

Watershed Management Planning Committee: Sonja Chavez said that the August 18 report contained two recommendations that came out of the August 14, 2020 meeting of the Watershed Management Planning Committee.

The first recommendation is to authorize the manager to release an RFP and enter into a contract with a consultant for up to \$150,000 for agricultural infrastructure assessments and system optimization improvement planning.

The second recommendation is to authorize the manager to release an RFP and enter into a contract with a consultant for up to \$100,000 for environmental and ecological services.

Stacy McPhail moved to approve the recommendations of the Watershed Management Planning Committee to authorize the manager to release an RFP and enter into a contract with a consultant for up to \$150,000 for agricultural infrastructure assessments and system optimization improvement planning. And also, to authorize the manager to release an RFP and enter into a contract with a consultant for up to \$100,000 for environmental and ecological services. The motion carried.

Grant Committee: Sonja discussed the Crested Butte Mountain Biking Association (CBMBA) Strand Ditch Bridge Project Concerns that were detailed in her manager's report.

In 2019, the CBMBA obtained a District grant for the Strand Ditch project, a demonstration project of the District's Watershed Management Planning program. As part of the project, a portion of a recreational trail located on Forest Service land was relocated, and a 40-foot bridge was installed over Strand Ditch. The primary ditch water right holder is Mr. Michele Veltri. The bridge was installed without communication with Mr. Veltri, who then removed the bridge. The Forest Service subsequently re-installed the bridge in the same location. The bridge was installed at a different location than what was detailed in the grant application. The installation in constriction of the ditch which is believed to have caused a new ditch embankment leak to develop. Due to fear of a ditch blow out, Mr. Veltri, who operates the ditch with Bill Trampe, was unable to divert his full, decreed water right amount in 2020.

Relationships between the landowner, the Forest Service and CBMBA have deteriorated. Sonja and Director McPhail have reached out to Matt McCombs of the Forest Service and to Dave Ochs (CBMBA) in an attempt at resolving the issue. Both Director McPhail and Sonja feel that the project applicant should contribute funding to mitigate the problem and relocate the bridge. This situation will also be used to refine language used in the District's Grant Program funding agreements to prevent any future issues with project communication.

Sonja Chavez gave an update on "Psychedelic Falls." Two emails from commercial outfitters, forwarded by Dan Brauch, stated that the falls were made dangerous by the placement of rocks done as part of the work to improve safety. She showed a video of a raft going safely through the falls a few days following the complaint. This was just one of about half a dozen a group composed of Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Director Spann and Fonken, John McCLOW watched navigate the falls with ease and successfully. A letter was transmitted by CPW to the two complainants indicating that no issues were observed.

Sonja Chavez discussed the Outcalt No. 2 & Gunnison and Tomichi Valley Association Ditch proposed project. The GTVA was awarded a District grant in 2020 for \$21,775 to replace their headgate, stabilize a section of eroded bank near the headgate, and install an irrigation return sluice gate. While Mr. Steve Guerrieri was seeking letters of support for the project, he spoke with the ranch manager for Esty Ranch (erroneously referred to as Mike Clark in her memo), who expressed interest in creating a single point of diversion with a splitter box for the GTVA and the Outcalt No. 2. This would encompass channel modifications on the Gunnison River including elimination of the two, in-channel, gravel push-ups and spillway armoring to direct flows.

Due to cancellation of the Pete's Lake project, there is \$36,960 available for demonstration projects in the Watershed Management Planning program which she'd like to direct to this project. Sonja also indicated that she was going to be directing some of the identified funding to engineered designs and modeling to help ensure there are no unintended consequences from the channel modification and project.

Bill Nesbitt moved to approve the transfer of \$36,960 in previously-approved Watershed Management Planning demonstration project funds, from Pete's Lake to the Outcalt No. 2 & Gunnison and Tomichi Valley Association Ditch single point of diversion project. Don Sabrowski seconded. The motion carried.

Sonja the intent of the District to contract with Maddie Redden, Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy intern, to assist in completing an inventory and evaluation of water rights in the Upper Gunnison tied to conservation easements, using publicly available data.

An update was provided on the administrative assistant position advertised for three weeks. Thirteen applications were received, and staff chose to interview three of the candidates. Two interviews have been completed, and the third will take place this Wednesday.

Taylor Reservoir: The board discussed adding gages upstream of Taylor Park Reservoir in order to improve inflow forecasting. This was discussed at the August 19, 2020 TLUG meeting due to concerns that current operations rely on modeled inflow forecasts (30 year) versus real-time data.

Sonja will look into the cost and locations of potential seasonal stream gages with the USGS.

The Bureau of Reclamation made some corrections to the releases and modeled end of year content in Taylor Reservoir based upon adjustments to gages (lake elevation and stream) maintained by USGS during the month of August. The TLUG expressed concern that this maintenance happened so late in the operations. Sonja reached out to USGS with a request to communicate earlier in the year regarding tying the maintenance schedule more closely with operations. The USGS has indicated they are happy to increase communications with TLUG on a modified schedule that supports operational efforts, especially in dry years.

Don Sabrowski said that Ernie Cockrel is very concerned with winter flows which he wants to maintain at 84 cfs while also staying above the 69,000 acre foot target. The TLUG supported a recommendation of an 84 cfs winter flow as Erik did some quick model runs to ensure that the TLUG could still come close to meeting the end of year storage target while making some slight modifications to releases and the release schedule.

The meeting of the 4 Parties of the Taylor Park Reservoir Operations and Storage Exchange Agreement took place August 27. The Bureau of Reclamation agreed to the following operations schedule based in part on the recommendations of the TLUG from the August 19 meeting: Releases will be reduced to 200 cfs on September 1. Releases will be reduced to 125 cfs beginning on September 7. A winter release of 84 cfs will begin on October 1. This schedule may be modified at the discretion of the Four Parties and Reclamation upon further evaluation after the September 15th forecast is obtained.

Wet Meadows Project: A report from Paul Jones on the Wet Meadows Program was included in the board packets. Paul said that since writing his memo to the board, he received an offer of an additional \$100,000 from the U.S. Forest Service.

Lake San Cristobal: Sonja Chavez said that the CWCB is currently making releases from its 200 acre foot storage pool in Lake San Cristobal in order to meet its instream flow water right on the Lake Fork. The LSCWAE board will discuss the possibility of making additional releases in an attempt at lowering the water temperature for the benefit of the fish.

6. 2021 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Discussion of Draft Goals and Activities for 2021

It was suggested that rather than doing an annual update of the strategic plan, the focus be changed to an annual update of the Watershed Management Action Plan(s) which would support budgetary planning. The Board agreed that this was a good approach.

Bill Nesbitt said he spoke with the Gunnison County Treasurer, who indicated that foreclosures are still low, with just one currently in progress.

Preliminary Estimate of Assessors' Valuations

The preliminary estimates of assessed valuations have not yet been received from the three counties.

7. BREAK

8. WATERSHED HEALTH UPDATE – JULIE NANIA

Julie Nania gave a presentation on watershed health.

Landscape condition is the condition and configuration of natural land cover in the landscape. The effects of big outbreaks of beetle kill cause an overlapping of various issues in landscape condition, such as floodplain connectivity, forest mortality events, and fire regimes. These factors impact water quantity and quality and will increasingly come up in the District's Watershed Management Planning process as it starts to assess some aspects of watershed health. The Gunnison Basin Roundtable will be looking at forest health in the Gunnison Basin Implementation Plan revision process.

Sonja Chavez asked what the District can do, in terms of its goals, to help maintain a healthy watershed.

Rosemary Carroll suggested that the District could work to identify vulnerable areas. This could be helpful to the District in setting priorities as part of the Watershed Management Planning process.

It was decided by the board that this should be an effort of the Watershed Management Planning Committee.

9. DUST ON SNOW UPDATE – JEFF DERRY – CODOS

Jeff Derry gave an update on the Colorado Dust on Snow Center's work. There are eleven dust on snow monitoring sites. During water year 2020, there were dust on snow events on January 17, March 26, and April 17.

Mr. Derry said that Dan Broman, PhD, P.E., of the Bureau of Reclamation, is interested in creating a streamflow prediction tool.

Mr. Derry thanked the board for past support and said he hopes the District can provide that support for another water year.

Rosemary Carroll asked Jeff Derry about the link between soil moisture and dust generation where dust is produced, namely if there is more dust when there is less soil moisture. Jeff said yes, and it also depends on where the low

soil moisture is. A dry period in the desert southwest is conducive to dust on snow events in Colorado.

Michelle Pierce thanked Jeff. She said that the board has his budget request and will be in touch.

10. WESTERN STATES WATER PARTNERSHIP – DOPPLER RADAR - VERN THARP

Vern Tharp, of Western States Water Partnership gave the board a presentation on doppler radar in the Gunnison valley. He said that a project in the Upper Rio Grande found that streamflow forecasts can be improved by using doppler radar to fill in radar “shadows” in weather forecasts.

Mr. Tharp said that his group would like to work with the District, in accordance with the board’s priorities, with the goal of improving stream forecasts.

Bill Nesbitt asked if WSWP intends to sell water data, or if the data will be proprietary. Vern said that the data will be free to the District and the County. He wants to use the data in products that can be sold to utilities, ski resorts, etc.

The board saw value in this effort. Vern Tharp and Sonja Chavez will be in touch to see how collaboration can take place on a potential MOU.

Bill Nesbitt asked where the radar would be located. Vern Tharp said about 5-7 miles away from the airport. Gunnison County is reviewing potential locations and he will provide the board with a detailed map.

11. BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

Treasurer’s Report: Bill Nesbitt said that interest rates are still down. The 10-year bond is paying .65%. This Thursday, the head of the Federal Reserve will discuss how to increase interest rates. He said that the United States, Canada, and Mexico are the only countries not paying negative interest on deposits. He noted that the District has 39 months of operating funds on hand.

Bill said that in August, the board purchased a 5-year bond for \$345,000. Another bond will be called in December, for \$250,000.

Update on Scientific Endeavors within the District: Rosemary Carroll said that the Department of Energy atmospheric radar measurement team was here last week scoping out logistical sites for their program.

Rosemary said that the CSU constituent spoke to her about how a water district like ours uses radar data. They are writing a paper on the modeling the Upper East River basin looking at where the water flows from monsoon rains versus water from snow melt. This could present a good opportunity for Sonja to meet with them when they come back out in late fall. She and Sonja will coordinate.

12. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

John McClow said that a flyer from the CWC was included in the board packets presenting an opportunity for sponsorship of the upcoming CWC conference.

Stacy McPhail moved and Bill Nesbitt seconded to participate in the CWC conference as a sponsor at the silver level of \$500.00. The motion carried.

Board members who want to attend the CWC conference should contact District staff so that they can be registered.

13. CITIZEN COMMENTS

No citizens requested to speak.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS

The USGS Water Quality planning meeting will take place August 27.

The CWCB Demand Management Workshop will take place September 2. Advance registration is required.

15. SUMMARY OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS

Sonja Chavez and Stacy McPhail will follow up on the Strand Canal bridge project.

Sonja will ensure that the selected engineer will check the upstream/diversion intake of the Gunnison Tomichi Valley Association ditch if the diversion were to be combined with the Outcalt No.2.

The Watershed Management Planning group will work to come up with some initial recommended objectives important to the board for addressing watershed health.

The Board directed Sonja to get an opinion from an engineer on the foundation and structural building issues observed during the Board tour of the outside building concrete pads beneath the roof covered patio.

Sonja will follow-up with Vern Tharp regarding potential participation in testing doppler radar and signing an MOU. A copy of the County MOU should also be obtained.

Set up a meeting date for TLUG if necessary.

Beverly Richards will assist board members with registration for the CWC virtual workshops and conference.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Board President Michelle Pierce adjourned the August 24, 2020 meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



George Sibley, Secretary

APPROVED:



Michelle Pierce, President