



Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
210 West Spencer Avenue, Suite B • Gunnison, Colorado 81230 Telephone (970) 641-6065 •
www.ugrwcd.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
AGENDA - REGULAR MEETING

Monday, February 27, 2023
5:30 pm

MISSION STATEMENT

To be an active leader in all issues affecting the water resources of the Upper Gunnison River Basin.

- 5:30 p.m. 1. Call to Order**
- 5:32 p.m. 2. Agenda Approval**
- 5:33 p.m. 3. Consent Agenda Items:** Any of the following items may be removed for discussion from the consent agenda at the request of any Board member or citizen.
- Approval of January 30, 2023 Minutes
 - Monthly Budget Review
 - Consideration of Expenses
- 5:35 p.m. 4. Legal and Legislative Matters**
- 5:50 p.m. 5. Creel Study Presentation** by Dan Brauch*, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Nancy Johnston, Colorado Trout Unlimited
**and update on Spring Creek Reservoir outlet gate project*
- 6:20 p.m. DINNER BREAK**
- 6:40 p.m. 6. Board Review**
- System Conservation
 - Demand Management
- 7:00 p.m. 7. Water Policy Discussions with Amy Moyer and Andy Mueller,**
Colorado River District

(continued)

- CRWCD Draft System Conservation Pilot Program Policy
- Demand Management Pilot Programs

- 7:20 p.m. 8. Basin Water Supply Report**
- 7:25 p.m. 9. Treasurer’s Report**
- 7:30 p.m. 10. General Manager and Staff Reports**
- General Manager’s Update
 - Wet Meadows Program Update
 - Grant Program Update
 - Gunnison River Festival Update
 - Scientific Endeavors Update
- 7:55 p.m. 11. Miscellaneous**
- Gunnison River spreadsheet
- 8:00 p.m. 12. Citizen Comments**
- 8:03 p.m. 13. Future Meetings**
- 8:05 p.m. 14. Summary of Meeting Action Items**
- 8:10 p.m. 15. Adjournment**

Note: This agenda is subject to change, including the addition of items or the deletion of items at any time. All times are approximate. Regular meetings, public hearings, and special meetings are recorded, and action can be taken on any item. The board may address individual agenda items at any time or in any order to accommodate the needs of the board and the audience. Persons with special needs due to a disability are requested to call the District at (970)641-6065 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 3

Consent Agenda Items

Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors
Monday, January 30, 2023

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) conducted a regular Board meeting on Monday, January 30, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. in the District office, 210 West Spencer Avenue, Suite B, Gunnison, CO, 81230 and via Zoom video/teleconferencing.

Board members present: Sara Bergstrom (via Zoom), Rosemary Carroll (via Zoom), Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, Julie Nania (via Zoom), John Perusek, Don Sabrowski and Andy Spann.

Board members absent: Stacy McPhail, Bill Nesbitt, Michelle Pierce

Others present:

Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD General Manager
Cheryl Cwelich, UGRWCD Water Resource Specialist I
Cody Tusing, City of Gunnison
Dayle Funka, US Forest Service (via Zoom)
Carolyn de Groot, Town of Crested Butte (via Zoom)
Ashley Hom, US Forest Service
Katie Jagt, Watershed Science and Design (via Zoom)
Jesse Kruthaupt, Trout Unlimited (via Zoom)
John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel
Luke Mecklenburg, Colorado Attorney General's Office (via Zoom)
Brad Piehl, J. W. Associates (via Zoom)
Beverly Richards, UGRWCD Water Resource Specialist II
Jill Steele, Concerned Citizen (via Zoom)
Sue Uerling, UGRWCD Admin. Asst/Communications Specialist
Jim Woodcock, Rancher and Environmentalist (via Zoom)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Board President and Secretary John Perusek called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

General Manager introduced Tom Stoeber and Alisha Jackson of Thomas Stoeber PC and noted that the firm has been contracted for a six-month trial basis for bookkeeping duties including payroll, accounts payable and receivable and payroll taxes for the District and the Spencer Business Park Association, as well as all year-end requirements. Mr. Stoeber said they had completed a year-end review of the 2022 financials and other than some minor corrections, found everything to be in good order. Mr. Stoeber said they had met all

January 31st deadlines and would be back in tomorrow to finish mailing 1099's. Tom thanked the District for the opportunity to do business.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director Rebie Hazard seconded approval of the agenda as circulated. The motion carried.

3. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director Andy Spann seconded approval of the consent agenda as circulated. The motion carried.

4. LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

General Counsel John McClow reported that the 2023 legislative session convened on January 9, 2023, and that so far, there has been no legislation brought forward that is critical to the District. John does want to meet with the Legislative Committee on Friday, February 3, 2023 at 8:00 a.m. to discuss some new draft bills that will be brought forth in the coming weeks.

In the confidential Board packet, John also included a draft bill presented by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on stream restoration and water administration issues. John noted that there is now a revised draft of this bill and that the Colorado Water Congress State Affairs Committee concluded that the matter was of sufficient interest to create a subcommittee to work with DNR on the proposed legislation. John will be serving as the chair of this subcommittee and said so far 34 people have signed up for the subcommittee, which indicates the level of interest in this matter. John said he will be working with Sonja and Cheryl to get their input on the proposed legislation.

General Manager Chavez reminded the Board that she and John had brought forth concerns about the need for guidelines to prevent any impacts to downstream water rights with respect to the District's Wet Meadows Program, riparian restoration efforts and use of beaver dam analogs. Sonja noted that she wanted the District to be involved in the development of this legislation and that she is grateful that John will be serving as the subcommittee chair.

5. BASIN WATER SUPPLY UPDATE

Water Resource Specialist II Beverly Richards referred to her memo in the Board Packet. She noted drought conditions have improved in all three District counties since last year. She said they are forecasting that the weather pattern will move from a La Niña pattern to more of a neutral pattern this Spring which historically has resulted in more moisture for our area. Beverly said they are still predicting that for at least the next three months it will again be warmer and drier than normal. She said there has been good news for California with

the recent storms as much of the state has moved from extreme drought or higher to moderate or lower drought conditions and there is one section of California that is currently showing no drought conditions. Beverly said that right now they are forecasting runoff to be at 103 percent of normal and that by 2023 year-end, Blue Mesa will be filled to 53 percent, which is almost double of where it ended at the conclusion of 2022, which was 27 percent.

General Manager Chavez noted that at the Colorado River Water User's Association convention in Las Vegas, they highlighted the benefits of the ASO flights in the Taylor River Basin on predicting reservoir inflow utilizing WRF Hydro.

Director Rebie Hazard noted that she was surprised that Saguache County was showing a range of 100-300 percent of normal precipitation as the area around her seems very dry right now. Beverly replied that only the far northwest corner of the county has received above normal precipitation and the rest of the area is actually below normal at about 70 percent.

Beverly also noted that she had received communication from CWCB about possible releases from Lake San Cristobal. Bev said that there really isn't any water available for releases and that even if there were at this time, winter releases may not even be possible under the ISF or that helpful for the fishery per CPW.

6. Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Bill Nesbit provided a written report in his absence. General Manager Sonja Chavez noted that Bill gave a historical breakdown of the companies making up the Dow Jones Industrial Average in 1928 versus 2020 and said there has been a shift from primarily industrial/manufacturing companies to big pharma, big finance and tech companies and that it will be interesting to see how this affects the duration of recessions. Overall, Sonja said the message is to be patient on investing more District funds for the time being.

7. PRESENTATION BY BRAD PIEHL, J.W. ASSOCIATES ON HIS "WILDFIRE ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND ZONES OF CONCERN":

Brad Piehl, forest hydrologist with J. W. Associates, said tonight's presentation is a follow-up to the report he had given in June 2022. Brad noted that they have basically completed their assessment and that the final written document should be available by the end of the week. Brad explained that with their assessment, they included four pieces as follows; (1) Watershed Wildfire Hazard Analysis and Ranking; (2) Climate Change Vulnerability; (3) Zones of concern and (4) Opportunities and constraints. Brad said they applied each of these criteria to areas within the Upper Gunnison Watershed, which he noted is quite large.

On a map of the 2.2 million acres of watershed, Brad showed the biggest areas of concern in red. These areas have the highest wildfire hazards combined with post wildfire hazards. In addition, Brad showed the map again with climate change vulnerabilities factored in, which he said starts to provide a number of priority areas to address concerns to hopefully make these areas a little less vulnerable to wildfires, climate change

and post-fire impact, particularly in critical water supply zones. Brad projected a table of 20 major zones of concern that total more than one million acres. Two of the biggest zones of concern are Blue Mesa and Taylor Park Reservoirs. Brad noted that in the Taylor Park Reservoir zones of concerns, there is a pretty high concentration of beetle kill. Brad said that the following step for the District is to identify specific actions that can be taken before a fire and after a fire to reduce some of these hazards. Brad said it will be important to take the next steps of planning with the appropriate parties.

Director Joellen Fonken asked Brad what would be a couple of different actions he might recommend. Brad noted that there could be a number of actions to take in combination, including thinning of lodge pole pines; creating ridgeline fuel breaks; increasing the diversity of vegetation, such as increasing aspen stands; working on connecting floodplains to the streams; and addressing road conditions that could create negative impacts post fire. He noted that some of these can be completed without investing a lot of money.

General Manager Sonja Chavez said the assessment was partially funded by a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board. No one had ever taken the time to analyze all of the components and bring them into one comprehensive assessment and a single report. She thinks this information will be really valuable to the shared stewardship group, which includes folks like the US Forest Service, the BLM, Gunnison County, municipalities and other stakeholders who would be impacted by wildfires. Sonja said she believes the next step will be to hand over the report to the full shared stewardship group where they could choose to move forward with a more detailed Phase II analysis. The District is going to be focusing on additional geo-fluvial assessments as this information provides the most value to the District and our goals and mission.

8. BREAK (15 minutes)

9. PRESENTATION BY KATIE JAGT, WATERSHED SCIENCE AND DESIGN, PHASE I REPORT ON GEO-FLUVIAL ASSESSMENT RESULTS:

Katie introduced herself as an engineer and geo-fluvial morphologist and explained that her study is a complement to Brad Piehl's work. She said she started on the ground and moved upwards. In order to narrow down the study area, the WMP Team prioritized assessment areas and did so by identifying critical infrastructure for human interest in the study areas of Coal Creek, the East River, the Slate River, Quartz Creek and the Taylor River Basin. She noted that her presentation will start with conclusions first and then work backwards on how she got there. She wanted to get to the "meat" of the assessment right away.

The four major recommendations that Katie came away with as a result of the assessment are: (1) Request debris flow hazard mapping to be done; (2) Establish a stream corridor overlay on new development areas (particularly in Coal Creek, Cement Creek and Ohio City); (3) Evaluate the potential for an early warning system; and (4) Recommend the Town of Crested Butte undertake a robust multi-hazard evaluation and warning system since they are in such a high-risk area.

At the stream level, Katie recommends (1) Establish some land and water protection measures; (2) Perform corridor rehabilitation, reconnection or restoration; (3) Conduct infrastructure improvements and retrofits and (4) Take action to mitigate burn severity.

Katie reviewed three major areas of concern, which are: Taylor Park Reservoir, Coal Creek and Cement Creek. In each of these areas, she recommends (1) restoration of areas above the reservoir/infrastructure to potentially catch more sediment before it enters the stream or rivers; and (2) mitigation of burn severity below the reservoir/infrastructure, particularly where the canyon wall or high hillslope is going to push sediment into the stream. She recommends that the Town of Crested Butte and Crested Butte South carefully consider limiting development in areas near the town's water supply and just above the Crested Butte South Water Treatment Plant as these are areas of high risk with limitations on restoration and mitigation strategies.

Director Joellen Fonken asked if there were similar issues in other areas of the state. Katie replied "yes," that she is currently working on a similar study in the Upper Poudre watershed and the Boulder Creek watershed. She said entities throughout the state are in similar boats. Katie did, however, extend "major kudos" to the UGRWCD saying that we do have a lot of things that are working for us, including a limited amount of new development around critical water resources, mostly connected flood plains, and action on diversion improvements. She said it could definitely be a lot worse and that there is still plenty of work to be done.

Ashley Hom with the US Forest Service asked Katie why Willow Creek was potentially falling off the docket as a high level of concern indicating there are a lot fewer beaver dams in this area now versus historical data and asked if Katie's assessment considered the number of dams per mile. She also wondered about their assessment of functioning depositional areas versus non-functioning areas. Katie replied that they do assess functionality in depositional areas and that although she agrees that there could be more beavers and other natural infrastructure on Willow Creek, at the present time, it is functioning as a depositional zone in its current state and doesn't rise to a high priority. Ashley also asked about Texas Creek and Lottis Creek and Katie noted that they are not on the priority list primarily because the landscape is flatter in these sub-watershed and that these areas are not as forested.

General Manager Sonja Chavez said that these assessments by JW and Watershed Science & Design were something that the Watershed Management Planning Committee really pushed for in order to collect valuable data that gets to the substance of concerns. Sonja said the next step is to take the results to the Upper Gunnison Shared Stewardship in hopes that they will take the assessment to the next level and hone in on smaller sub basins to determine priorities for vegetation management. Sonja noted that Brad and Katie will be providing Education and Outreach about their findings to the Gunnison Basin Roundtable, the Colorado River District and hopefully other jurisdictions within the basin. She said that in Phase II of the assessments, Watershed Science will also be looking at other areas of concern where there is critical infrastructure and risk to population including the Lake Fork, Cebolla Creek, the Upper Tomichi Creek, Quartz Creek and Cochetopa.

Sonja noted that at the Colorado Water Congress conference there was an interesting session about what was learned from the East Troublesome Fire. Their finding showed that although 90 percent of the fires occurred on federal land, most of the impacts were on of course downstream private landowners. Sonja said during the presentation they discussed some potential policy changes being discussed with the Colorado Attorney General (and other State Attorneys) on processes that could provide more funding and reduce liability for private property owners working to repair or restore their land as well as any long-term liability for any local government entities who choose to manage federal funds. Sonja noted that natural resource and economic impacts to communities and landowners are not short-term but will be felt 7-10 years, post fire. Sonja said the District will continue to reach out to Scott Morrill of the Gunnison County Emergency Management department.

Cody Tusing of the City of Gunnison said that the NRCS does have the ability to go on private property to help mitigate wildfire risk but that the hang-up is that their funding requires that municipalities, conservation districts and other such entities serve as a sponsor for the project and ensure long-term operation and maintenance. Sonja answered that one of the concerns of the District is that when taking on such projects, the District must assume this liability, even when working on private property. She said the state Attorney General is looking into the matter with other states' attorneys general for changes to these requirements at a federal level.

10. GENERAL MANAGER AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

General Manager's Report:

Executive Committee: In addition to her memo in the packet, General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that the Executive Committee met on January 20, 2023 to talk about a number of administrative issues including:

Parental Leave Policy: In an effort to attract and retain a younger generation of staff, Sonja said the committee is recommending the approval of a 12-week parental leave policy. Sonja noted that the current employee handbook does not address parental leave. There were some questions about how the leave would be paid for and Sonja noted that new policy would be drafted outlining the parameters but that the 12 weeks could be a combination of paid and unpaid leave and possibly include some provisions for participation in the State's FAMLII program.

Director Rebie Hazard moved and Director Joellen Fonken seconded the recommendation of the Executive Committee to finalize policies, program guidelines, an agreement and a budget line item for a 12-week Parental Leave Program. The motion carried.

UGRWCD Employee Home Opportunity Program (EHOP): Sonja noted that the EHOP is being used as a recruitment and retention tool for the District since finding affordable housing is such an important factor for attracting qualified staff. Sonja and General Counsel John McCLOW explained some details of the loan process and particularly noted that the program should be a break-even venture financially for the district. It

was noted that the program would be for full-time permanent employees only and that the loan would be for a home located within a 30-mile radius of the District office. John noted that the District would set the program loan interest rate equal to the average return on the District's CDs at the time of the loan application and that the Board would have the discretion to approve or deny the loan for each specific application. Sonja said she was looking for Board approval to move forward with developing a program packet which will be presented to the Board for final approval.

Director Don Sabrowski moved and Director Andy Spann seconded the recommendation of the Executive Committee to approve management to move forward with Impact Development Fund (IDF) to draft additional documentation including but not limited to policies and guidelines, a District EHOP contract and deed of trust, and any other paperwork necessary to present to the UGRWCD Board of Directors for final approval. The motion carried.

UGRWCD Education Assistance Program – Sonja reported that the committee is recommending the Board adopt an Education Assistance Program consistent with the federal's CARES Act. The program would allow full-time permanent district employees to make pre-tax payroll deductions to pay off student loans. Sonja said it is a win-win situation because it helps the employee payoff their student loan debt faster, decreases their taxable income and decreases the District's payroll taxes. There was discussion that the employee must repay the District for the equivalent of the monthly amount of the loan payment in the event that the employee leave the district in the same calendar year. Sonja said the District is also exploring whether or not an employee could alternately ask the District to utilize a portion of unused PTO hours to help pay student loan debt under the CARES Act. Director Rosemary Carroll asked if this program will be continued forward through the years. Sonja replied that this program can only be taken advantage of via the CARES Act through December 31, 2025 after which it expires.

Director Don Sabrowski moved to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to adopt the UGRWCD Education Assistance Program through December 31, 025 for student loan payments for full-time permanent District employees. The motion carried.

Wet Meadows Field Supervisor Position – Sonja said the committee is recommending to the full Board that District management hire a Wet Meadows Field Supervisor as a temporary, seasonal, and unbenefited position to supervise the summer field crew. This position would be paid for utilizing grant and federal agency agreement funding. This field supervisor would report directly to the Wet Meadows Program Coordinator (Cheryl) and would be responsible for the day to day management of the field crew. Sonja noted that this would be a means to increase the capacity of the program as Cheryl cannot be in the field every day and since her position was never envisioned to be in the field every day. Sonja noted that Cheryl raised over \$600,000 for Wet Meadows program in 2022 which can be used to support the position. Director Rebie Hazard commented that when the District adds new staff, there is always a bit of grumbling about the need and expense. Rebie said that she would also like to have interns report to the Board about their experience. Sonja agreed and noted that through this field supervisor position and Western Conservation Corps (WCC) crew internships, the District is helping provide real world experience they can take with them when they

enter the work force. Sonja noted that there is current state legislation to support helping build capacity in watershed, wildfire, restoration, and the timber industry. Director Rosemary Carroll asked if Cheryl had someone in mind for the position and Cheryl replied “yes” but that she hopes to interview at least three applicants to provide a fair platform for the final hiring decision.

Director Rebie Hazard moved to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to hire a temporary, seasonal and unbenefited Wet Meadows Field Supervisor for the 2023 season. The motion carried.

Purchase of a District field vehicle/truck – Sonja said the committee is recommending approval to purchase a truck for field work. Sonja noted that the current District vehicle’s clearance is too low to access some of the remote areas in the basin where Wet Meadow projects are located. Sonja said grants will provide for reimbursement of the mileage put on a field truck, an indirect 10 percent cost recovery on grants we manage that helps cover expenses, and the grants are providing cash support for Cheryl’s position.

Sonja initially recommended that the committee consider a purchase price of \$30,000 but ultimately the committee recommended a purchase price limit of \$40,000 feeling that her proposal was too low for a decent work vehicle. Director Don Sabrowski noted that the current District vehicle is a good highway vehicle but can see where it would be difficult to take off-road in some areas of the basin. Sonja said it has definitely saved the District travel expenses and noted a vehicle is needed that is large enough to carry work crews back and forth to the job sites. Don said he is in favor of a work truck for the District. Director Joellen Fonken asked if there would be limitations on who can drive it and whether there would be policies on how it is cared for. It was specified that only District staff would be able to drive the vehicle except in the case of an emergency when a staff member is unable to drive. It was also noted that a background check would be required for those driving and that the District could institute a policy that a staff member who is negligent with the vehicle would be required to reimburse the District for damages. There was discussion about the kind of vehicle the District would be interested in and Sonja said she would like to consider a truck with an extended cab and four doors to be able to transport several field workers at once. Sonja noted that there is no rush in purchasing the vehicle and that more research will be conducted.

Director Rebie Hazard moved to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee to purchase a field vehicle/truck not to exceed a purchase price of \$40,000. The motion carried.

Watershed Management Program:

Sonja referred to the memorandum in the Board packet and asked if there were questions. None were raised.

Grant Committee:

Sonja reviewed the memorandum included in the Board packet and said that the committee is scheduled to review grant applications on March 3, 2023.

Education Committee:

Administrative Assistant/Communications Support Specialist noted that a 2023 calendar was forwarded to all committee members with tentative dates for Education and Outreach activities and programs. Sue noted that the committee can meet later in the spring if necessary once the dates have been finalized.

Wet Meadows Program:

Water Resource Specialist Cheryl Cwelich referred to her memorandum in the packet and said she is really excited to kick off the 2023 season. She said the Wet Meadows group will be meeting on Friday to start prioritizing sites for projects.

Cloud Seeding Program:

General Manager Sonja Chavez noted increased costs for cloud seeding in 2023 due to national shortages of the silver-iodide and that this will be a hit to the 2023 budget of approximately \$10,000.

Water Quality Program:

General Manager Chavez said that the U.S. Geological Survey is scheduled to begin sampling in February for uranium and other heavy metals on Cebolla and Marshall Creeks.

Taylor Local Users Group (TLUG):

General Manager Chavez reported that the terms for TLUG representatives Andy Spann (irrigation interests), Roark Kiklevich (wade fisherman interests) and Pete Dunda (homeowners' interests) expired at the end of 2022. These openings were advertised in the area newspapers and on the District's social media platforms. Andy Spann and Roark Kiklevich both provided emails expressing their interest in renewing their terms. Pete Dunda submitted a letter to let the District expressing his desire to step back from TLUG. No other letters of interest were received to represent homeowners' interests. Someone inquired as to whether the board would consider a part-time resident. Sonja relayed that she felt the board would prefer a full-time resident. She said if any Board members are aware of someone who might be interested in filling the homeowners' interests position to please let her know. For now, she said the Board would just take action on renewing Andy and Roark's terms and that the District would look at advertising the homeowners' interests position again.

Director Rebie Hazard moved and Director Joellen Fonken seconded the reappointment of Roark Kiklevich as the TLUG representative for wade fishermen interests and Andy Spann as the TLUG representative for irrigation interests for two-year terms beginning January 2023. Andy Spann abstained from the vote. The motion carried.

Scientific Endeavors:

Director Rosemary Carroll reported that Western Colorado University (WCU) has received a grant from the Department of Energy's RENEW program called *Forest to Floodplains*. WCU and their students will work in collaboration with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories with a focus on the Taylor Park River basin. Jonathan Coop at Western University is project grant lead.

Gunnison Basin Roundtable (GBRT) Update:

Cindy McKee is stepping down as the GBRT Education and Outreach Coordinator. Savannah Nelson, a Gunnison High School graduate, will replace her. At their meeting on January 16th, the GBRT discussed a pond that was not permitted and illegally built by a developer in Montrose. Its water source comes from tailwater from the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association. The pond is experiencing dam failure. The City of Montrose has committed to put some money towards fixing the issue, and the homeowner's association (HOA) where the pond is located is also putting forth \$30,000 but not enough in her opinion. The GBRT has received a request for grant funds to both the State and Basin WSRF to remediate the problem. The pond is located in a high dollar development and according to folks who live in the area, it does not allow significant public access. It is also impacting the highway in the area. Sonja said she is not in favor of funding the illegally constructed project but would possibly consider a small dollar amount for engineering to fix the problem and she asked for input from the Board. Director Don Sabrowski and Director Rebie Hazard said they do not think the GBRT should be funding this at all. Director Sabrowski feels it could set a precedent that state monies could be used in the future to correct problems associated with illegally built structures.

Gunnison River Festival (GRF) Update:

GRF Director Cheryl Cwelich reported that the GRF had their annual meeting last week and the group has agreed that instead of focusing on one large series of weekend events, this year the GRF will financially support a variety of water-related activities that will be spread out across the summer. Events include the Sunny Gunny Costume Float and the Taylor Down River Race. The GRF is also reaching out to Scenic River Tours and Three Rivers Resort to serve as partners. This year's GRF will be a "Celebration of Our Rivers" with a focus on river safety, river smarts and river sport. Cheryl presented a beautiful plaque to former GRF Director Joellen Fonken to thank her for her long-time leadership and service to the Gunnison River Festival. The Board also expressed their gratitude to Joellen.

STOR Update:

In Sonja's absence, Beverly Richards attended the STOR Committee meeting on January 26, 2023. Beverly reported that Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) gave an update on the recent award of Gold Medal fishing status to the Taylor and Gunnison Rivers. The CPW will continue to monitor thresholds to maintain Gold Medal status but could institute voluntary fishing restrictions if conditions require. The Crested Butte Chamber of Commerce is embarking on a stewardship campaign aimed at getting visitor information to an

increased number of locations throughout the valley. Bev noted that the group discussed the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund and 2023 projects submitted for consideration. Most of the projects were for trail maintenance but one of the projects was for restoration work on the Town Ranch parcel recently purchased by the Town of Crested Butte. The STOR Committee is also continuing work on their strategic plan. STOR Committee Chair Joe Lavorini proposed reaching out to agricultural producers in the county for more input. He wants to make sure that all stakeholders are represented and operating under the same understanding of the purpose of STOR.

10. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

General Counsel John McClow reported that Colorado and five of the other western states, excluding California, agreed on a consensus to cut water usage from the Colorado River just prior to the deadline, as required by the Bureau of Reclamation. Becky Mitchell, Colorado Commissioner to the Upper Colorado River Commission, just made the announcement about the consensus being delivered to the Bureau of Reclamation shortly before the Board meeting. John believes the new plan submitted is a good thing and that they are making progress.

Director Rebie Hazard asked General Manager Chavez if the District has sent out a letter to Saguache County yet about participating in the could seeding program. Rebie said she has not heard it brought up at a meeting. Sonja replied that “no,” letters had not been sent since the Colorado Water Conservation Board had increased funding for the program.

The Spencer Park Condo Association annual meeting was held on January 10, 2023. General Manager Sonja Chavez said they still have not found anyone to replace the roof yet and that we may have to look at roofers in Salida or Montrose.

Director Don Sabrowski said that the Colorado Water Congress conference exceeded his expectations and that it was really beneficial to have Sonja on one side and John McClow on the other to answer questions. Sonja noted that it was interesting to hear from approximately 50 ag producers on what water projects they are proposing under the NRCS PL-566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention funding. Sonja spoke to Cody Tusing, who was representing the City of Gunnison at the Board meeting, and said that she would like to meet with City of Gunnison staff about their breaking their project out into a separate proposal. She is afraid that if all of the proposed projects are combined into one big application, it may delay all of the projects as some are not shovel ready. She said that up to \$25 million can be requested.

Sonja made note of the large number of news articles in the Board packet and said that staff discussed sending out news articles to the Board via email once or twice during the month. This would make the news timelier and would reduce the amount of paper in the Board packets.

Director Don Sabrowski asked if Dan Brauch from Colorado Parks and Wildlife could be contacted to speak at an upcoming Board meeting to report on the progress of the Spring Creek outlet gate replacement. It was noted that Dan Brauch and Nancy Johnston are already scheduled to present on their recent creel survey at

the February Board meeting, so Dan could also give an update on Spring Creek at that time. Sonja also noted that she talked to Andy Mueller and Amy Moyer about give an update to the Board focused on System Conservation Pilot Program and Demand Management.

11. CITIZENS COMMENTS

Cody Tusing from the City of Gunnison noted that he was impressed with the projects the District has undertaken and that he appreciates being invited to the meetings. Luke Mecklenburg from the Colorado Attorney General's office agreed.

12. FUTURE MEETINGS

Information on future meetings was included in the Board packet.

13. SUMMARY OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS

District management will develop an outline of responsibilities for any drivers of the new District field vehicle/truck including addressing reimbursement for negligence. Background checks will also be conducted for drivers.

General Manager Chavez will set up a meeting with Cody Tusing and other City of Gunnison staff to discuss possible grants for city water projects.

Director Rosemary Carroll will follow up with Jonathan Coop at Western to discuss possible collaborations on their Department of Energy RENEW program.

Staff will contact Dan Brauch to ask him to be prepared to update the Board about the Spring Creek project in addition to his and Nancy Johnston's creel survey presentation at the February meeting.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Acting Board President and Secretary John Perusek adjourned January 30, 2023 Board meeting at 8:35 p.m.

APPROVED:

John Perusek, Acting President and Secretary

AGENDA ITEM 4

Legal and Legislative Matters

AGENDA ITEM 5

**Creel Study Presentation by Dan Brauch,
Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Nancy
Johnston, Colorado Trout Unlimited**

DINNER BREAK

AGENDA ITEM 6

Board Review

AGENDA ITEM 7

**Water Policy Discussions with Amy Moyer
and Andy Mueller, Colorado River District**

AGENDA ITEM 8

Basin Water Supply Report

AGENDA ITEM 9

Treasurer's Report

AGENDA ITEM 10

General Manager and Staff Reports

MEMORANDUM



TO: UGRWCD Board of Directors
FROM: Cheryl Cwelich, Water Resource Specialist
DATE: February 16, 2023
SUBJECT: Wet Meadows Program Update (February)

During the month of February, the following activities have commenced or been completed in the Gunnison Basin Wet Meadows & Riparian Restoration Collaborative (GBWMRRC):

Notable Activities Completed or in Progress:

- 2023 Pre-Season Planning:
 - Wet Meadows partners met on February 14th to discuss the 2023 field season. Contractors shared their remote desktop analysis to drive field work planning for the conservation crews. A site assessment form was presented that will be used by the crews during the summer to analyze priority reaches for project planning.
- Capacity Building:
 - Interviews were conducted with interested individuals who applied for the Seasonal Field Supervisor position in mid-February.
 - Staff is in final stages of finalizing a contract with Western Colorado Conservation Corp for two (2) conservation crew interns.
- Grant & Funding Opportunities:
 - The District is finalizing the five-year funding agreement with the BLM Gunnison Field Office. This will help to fund work crews, materials, contractors and other miscellaneous program costs.
- Outreach:
 - On February 23rd, staff presented “Get Your Feet Wet” to Western students on internship opportunities with the District.
- Research & Other:
 - The USGS is conducting preliminary watershed modeling that will be used to identify appropriate locations and types of monitoring and to develop work plans for the hydrologic study in Taylor Park.
 - Staff have completed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Wetland Assessment that will catalog current wetland areas in the Upper Gunnison basin, along with historic wetland loss and wetlands at-risk. This work will be funded by the America the Beautiful Challenge grant.
 - Updates on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Gunnison Sage-grouse (GUSG) Draft Resource Management Plan Assessment/Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS):
 - Preliminary Draft Alternatives are taken from how the BLM is managing Greater sage-grouse. Currently, Gunnison sage-grouse, which is under

greater threat, has less management than Greater sage-grouse. The BLM and biologists are suggesting that Gunnison sage-grouse be managed at least on par with how Greater sage-grouse are managed.

- One of the biggest changes in the Preliminary Draft Alternatives are suggested buffer zones around Habitat Management Areas of Occupied Habitat, Unoccupied Habitat, and Linkage-Connectivity.
- Another area of considerable change is the Travel and Transportation Objectives with each Preliminary Draft Alternative detailing different options regarding route access, limitations, potential closure, rehabilitation, permitting, vehicle types, and maintenance.
- There is also concern within the Cooperating Agency Team that the Preliminary Draft Alternatives under consideration may be in conflict with Gunnison Basin Candidate Conservation Agreements.
- The next cooperating agency meeting is March 2, 2023
- The Draft RMP Amendment/EIS will be released to the public for a 90-day comment period in July 2023.

MEMORANDUM



TO: UGRWCD Board Members
FROM: Beverly Richards, Water Resource Specialist
DATE: February 16, 2023
SUBJECT: 2023 Grant Program

Advertisements for the Grant Program were run in local papers beginning in November emphasizing the fact that funds were also being made available for pre-feasibility engineering. Applicants were required to contact staff prior to submittal and this requirement was complied with by all applicants.

The total 2023 grant budget was \$300,000 and the deadline was February 15 at 5:00 p.m. A summary breakdown of those grants is provided below:

- A total of 21 grant applications were submitted with two applications received after the 5:00 p.m. deadline. Late proposals will not be considered for District funding. Staff will reach out to the late applicants to advise them on other potential funding sources they might consider based upon the nature of their application request.
- Total project costs for the 19 eligible applications is \$6,272,796
- Total funding requests from the Grant Program is \$371,113
- Total matching contribution is \$1,444,300 thereby leveraging every UGRWCD District Grant Program dollar with outside funding or applicant in-kind services at a ratio of 1:4

Applications will be reviewed by staff and the UGRWCD Grant Committee and recommendations will be presented to the board at the March 27 Regular Board Meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 10

Gunnison River Festival Update

AGENDA ITEM 10

Scientific Endeavors Update

AGENDA ITEM 11

Miscellaneous Reports

AGENDA ITEM 12

Citizen Comments

AGENDA ITEM 13

Future Meetings

FUTURE MEETINGS/EVENTS

- ▶ Gunnison Water Smart Group-March 1, 2022 at 1:00 PM
- ▶ Grant Committee meets for grants review-March 2, 2022 at 3:00 PM
- ▶ Legislative Committee-March 4, 2022 at 8:00 AM
- ▶ Forest and Watershed Health Technical Group-March 9, 2022 at 10:00 AM
- ▶ Legislative Committee-March 11, 2022 at 8:00 AM
- ▶ Watershed Management Planning Committee-March 14, 2022 at 1:30 PM
- ▶ Legislative Committee-March 18, 2022 at 8:00 AM
- ▶ World Water Day-March 22, 2022
- ▶ Legislative Committee-March 25, 2022 at 8:00 AM
- ▶ UGRWCD Board of Directors Meeting-March 28, 2022 at 5:30 PM
- ▶ UGRWCD Board of Directors Meeting-April 25, 2022 at 5:30 PM
- ▶ UGRWCD Sponsors Gunnison Rotary Club Fishing Tourney-May 7 & May 8, '22
- ▶ Gunnison 4th Grade Water Festival at Elementary School- May 20, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 14

Summary of Action Items

AGENDA ITEM 15

Adjournment