

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors
September 25, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.**

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) conducted a regular meeting on Monday, September 25, 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: Rosemary Carroll, Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, Stacy McPhail, Julie Nania, Bill Nesbitt, John Perusek (via Zoom), Michelle Pierce, Mike Rogers, Don Sabrowski and Andy Spann.

Others present:

Kathleen Curry, CRWCD Representative for Gunnison County

Cheryl Cwelich, Water Resource Specialist I

David Gochis, UCAR/NCAR

Jesse Kruthaupt, Trout Unlimited

Andrew Lockman, Citizen, Crested Butte South

John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel

Luke Mecklenburg, Colorado Attorney General's Office (via Zoom)

Alana Nichols, UGRWCD Fellow (via Zoom)

Beverly Richards, Water Resource Specialist II/Office Manager

Tommy Rozman, Division of Natural Resources

Sue Uerling, UGRWCD Admin. Asst/Communications Support Specialist

1. Call to Order

Board President Michelle Pierce called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. Agenda Approval

Director Stacy McPhail moved and Director Rosemary Carroll seconded approval of the agenda. The motion carried.

3. Consent Agenda Items

Director Rebie Hazard requested the removal of the Monthly Budget Summary for further

discussion. President Pierce asked for a motion to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda items.

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director Bill Nesbitt seconded approval of the remaining consent agenda items including the August 28, 2023 Minutes and the August 2023 Expenses and late July 2023 Expenses. The motion carried.

Director Hazard questioned the overage of 133% to date for Board of Directors' Mileage expenses. Rebie wondered why this category is so far over budget. Sonja said she will have staff look into the matter to report back at the next meeting.

Director Hazard also asked if the building expenses category was over budget due to the acquisition of Suite A and Sonja answered that yes, with taking over utilities and some cleaning and maintenance on Suite A, this was likely the reasoning.

After the discussion, President Pierce asked for a motion to approve the Monthly Budget Summary for August 2023.

Director Mike Rogers moved and Director Bill Nesbitt seconded approval of the Budget Summary for August 2023. The motion carried.

4. Presentation on Overview of 2023 Water Year by David Gochis, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research

Dave Gochis provided a slide show on UCAR/NCAR's Water Supply Forecasting for water year 2023. He noted that their work in Colorado began in 2009 from radar and flood modeling to a major expansion in the past couple of years in ASO assimilation with the goal of improving water cycle prediction. Dave said he and his partners conducted observational activities from SnoLite sites at Tin Cup and Mirror Lake and also compiled data from Snotel sites and ASO flights to incorporate for a better modeling process. David reviewed the water year results from the various drainages in the basin and noted that even though the winter provided above average snowpack/precipitation, current observations are showing a fairly dry soil profile with current soil moisture levels measuring less than they were back in November 2022. Dave said this could have an impact on next spring's runoff and resultant stream flows. Dave reported that there was a lot less variability in their modeling thanks to the ASO assimilation.

Dave noted that his team has been packaging all of the data into regular reports throughout the year with weekly reports throughout the winter. He said these reports have been presented to the TLUG group at their meetings this spring and summer to help the representatives make recommendations on managing releases from Taylor.

Dave also reported that his team is looking into the possibility of putting a SnoLite observation site in the upper Tellurium Creek drainage, which could provide some valuable data in the upper northwest basin. Presuming the weather cooperates, he said they should be conducting a site visit in the next couple of weeks.

Director Don Sabrowski asked Dave what has to fall into place for the Tellurium Creek site to go forward. Dave replied that at the site visit, his team will determine if there is a suitable location that is not overly exposed to the wind and not too vertical as it needs to be a relatively flat area. Presuming a suitable location is found, then it will be a matter of working with landowners for permission to utilize the site. Assuming all of this is successful, his team would place an order for the equipment next spring and deploy next summer. His team would then coordinate with the NCRS to make sure the data feeds remain identical to the other data sites and are functioning properly. David said funding would also need to be secured.

Director Rosemary Carroll asked if there is a way to use past ASO data that was collected to use in the modeling. Dave replied that, “yes,” past data can help with predicting trends but that this cannot replace real-time data. He said that they can see where there are biases in certain areas, which can result in systemic biases in the model. He said you can’t assume that nature is going to express itself in the same way and so real-time data is crucial. He noted that in any given year, there is still so much variability even within the models that it would be hard to say, “we’ve got enough data, we’re good.”

Dave concluded by saying that not only was the low soil moisture content unusual this water year given the snowpack, but it was also surprising how much low elevation snowpack was prevalent this year. Dave said the ASO flights really helped his team observe these conditions.

General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that on September 13th, she and Water Resource Specialist Beverly Richards made a presentation at the ASO Annual Workshop to give attendees the local story about the importance of ASO data in the basin. She felt the presentation was well received and that some of the folks from California in particular were surprised by how much the data is used here. Dave noted that the Upper Gunnison River District has been one of the longest-term partners ASO has had in Colorado and can provide testament of how important the ASO flights are for forecasting in this region. He said the ASO folks were very appreciative of the District’s support of the program.

Sonja also reported that she has been approached by individuals from Applied Research about writing a letter of support to NOAA for a research project they’d like to do utilizing doppler radar to calculate SWE in snowpack, but she has not been able to learn much about their snow science experience or who they are and because of this, she declined to write a letter.

Director Rosemary Carroll commended the work UCAR/NCAR is doing in the state and

appreciates the how they utilize a “really good combination of high-level products with on-the-ground observations and data” which she said is “pretty cool.”

5. **Break (No dinner break taken as everyone grabbed food at the beginning of the meeting.)**

6. **2023 Budget Amendment Items**

Sonja reviewed the 2023 Budget Amendment memorandum in the packet which outlined the four items that were not included in the original approved 2023 Budget, which are: the purchase of the Toyota Tacoma truck; the purchase of Spencer Business Park condominium Unit A; the roof replacement of the entire Spencer Business Park building and the Water Budget/ Irrigation Return Flow study with the USGS. Sonja is still waiting on final cost estimates for the USGS study.

Staff will work with Tom Stoeber CPA to prepare the amended 2023 budget to present to the board and public for approval.

Director Rosemary Carroll asked if the District would be receiving a more detailed proposal from the USGS on the Water Budget/Irrigation Return Flow study as she still had some questions following their presentation to the Board last month. Sonja replied that she would definitely follow up on that and hoped to assemble a small group from the Board, perhaps Julie, Andy, Stacy, Rosemary and whomever else had questions, to meet with the USGS representatives to go over any concerns and what is expected from their deliverables.

Director Bill Nesbitt asked how this might affect the mill levy and it was pointed out that these amendments are for the 2023 budget and that there would be no need to change the current mill-levy.

7. **2024 Budget**

General Manager Chavez reported that just today, the District received a spreadsheet from Saguache County with revised property tax information with valuations based on Proposition HH. Sonja said she had not received this information from any of the other counties represented in the District and that she is still trying to understand the impact of Proposition HH on local budgets. President Pierce said that her understanding is that special tax districts will need to prepare a budget based on the assessed valuations as presented to date and then also have a budget prepared that takes into consideration the amounts listed on the Proposition HH spreadsheet.

Under Watershed Management Program Income, Sonja noted that the HAB’s Study income is broken down into two categories in order to separate Phase I and Phase. Sonja said that all partners of the HAB study are being asked to come up with approximately \$50,000 each for the study. The District still has about \$10,000 left from Trout Unlimited RESTORE income. There is about \$50,000 left from the 2023

District Grant Program that will be available for rollover in 2024. She pointed out to the Board that at this time, the 2024 budget will finish with nearly \$639,000 in surplus that can be rolled into reserves and that there have been no withdrawals from reserves to date this year.

With respect to the Spencer Avenue Business Park renovation, the estimate came in at \$209,000, which was more than the District wanted to take on at this point. Therefore, staff elected to remove the back deck, the additional kitchenette upstairs and not block off the stairwell from the front entrance. Sonja noted all offices will have their own individual locks and will be uniquely keyed for security purposes. Director Nesbitt asked about the back door to Unit A and Sonja responded that yes, it will be addressed and was included in the estimate. Following the changes, a revised estimate was received for approximately \$160,000. Director Nesbitt said it was unfortunate that the District only got one response to the request for an estimate on the Unit A renovations. General Counsel John McCloy replied that the District did receive four responses, but three of them just said “no thanks” to submitting a bid as their schedules were already full.

With respect to line 47 regarding the District Grant Program, Beverly Richards said she would like to have input from the Board to finalize the figure to use for the 2024 budget since at the last meeting there was discussion about whether to use the figure of \$200,000 or \$250,000, keeping in mind that there will be \$50,000 from the 2023 budget that is unspent and available to rollover in 2024. Director Nesbitt said that he would like to see the grant program stay strong and stable and continue to grow as it has in recent years. Therefore, his suggestion was to include \$250,000 for the grant program in the 2024 budget, which with a rollover of \$50,000, would provide a total of \$300,000 of available funding in 2024. Director Julie Nania agreed saying since the District will be carrying a significant amount into reserves and in the past, the grant committee has not funded certain applications in order to stay within the budget, she thinks the District will continue to see growth in the program. Sonja noted there were quite a number of delays in applicants getting their projects going this year and she said there will be a number of requests for extensions. Director Rosemary Carroll asked if there was a common denominator for why some of the grantees would not finish in 2023. Beverly replied that she felt a lot of the delays were due to weather as applicants were not able to get started on their projects until late spring. Beverly said there were also a couple of cases where Katie Jagt of Watershed Science Design made suggestions to improve projects and the applicants are now implementing the suggestions. Bill asked if there were any applications in 2023 that were not funded due to lack of District funding in the budget. Beverly replied “no” that there was just one that turned in the application late and therefore was not considered. The consensus was for Beverly to update the Grant line item to \$250,000 for the 2024 draft budget.

With respect to Line Item 54 for Public Outreach and Education, Sonja reported that staff was able to coordinate with Lake City Schools to get students to RMBL for field trips this fall, so additional funding has been designated in the 2024 budget for RMBL field trips for Lake City School. Director Bill Nesbitt noted that the District has consistently provided free water books to Lake City first graders for a number of years now. Sonja noted she requested that the Lake Fork Valley Conservancy utilize the \$10,000 the District provides to them each year to assist with coordinating educational activities with the local school.

President Michelle Pierce asked if there were any more comments on the 2024 proposed draft budget. No other comments were made.

General Manager Sonja Chavez said she wanted to inform Board members that an employment offer was made to Ari Yamaguchi, one of the Wet Meadows interns this past year. Sonja noted that with up to \$40,000 in grant income from Wet Meadows, Ari's hiring will have little financial impact to the District's payroll expenses in 2024. Sonja said Bev will be moving over to Medicare, which will free up some funds so that Ari can be a fully benefitted employee. Sonja said Ari has his master's degree and will be able to provide support with the water budget and irrigation return flow study, water quality, as well as for operation and maintenance of equipment for the study. Director Bill Nesbitt asked when Ari would start and Sonja said January 2024.

Sonja reported that the original contract with Tom Stoeber CPA LLC only went through August 2023 for bookkeeping and accounting services. This was so that Tom and Alisha would have time to become familiar with the District's finances. Tom has now submitted a new contract that will extend through the end of December 2023. Basically, it provides for \$3,000 per month for Alisha's time at her rate of \$100 per hour. Sonja said that Beverly and Sue have been working to have all invoices and payment requests ready to go when Alisha comes in, which has streamlined the process. Sonja said it is estimated that the 2024 contract for accounting services will come in at approximately \$51,000 per year, which includes extra for Tom to be able to help with the audit and other reporting as needed. Sonja said that by contracting out the accounting services, it is saving the District almost \$20,000 a year, not including any employee benefit savings.

Director Bill Nesbitt moved and Director Michelle Pierce seconded approving the agreements with Thomas N. Stoeber CPA LLC for the remaining months of 2023 and the new contract for 2024 to provide bookkeeping and accounting services for the District. The motion carried.

8. Basin Water Supply Update

Water Resource Specialist Beverly Richard said western Colorado is drying out and as Dave Gochis pointed out, the soil moisture content is very low at this time. Director Rosemary Carroll noted that ground water levels are not coming back up in spite of good snowpack last year. This will likely have an impact on stream flow efficiency and might affect Taylor River operations in the spring. Bev said August 2023 was the 10th warmest August on record across the state. Director Rebie Hazard noted that she was thrilled that Blue Mesa filled to 95 percent this year, even though some wondered how that happened. General Counsel John McCLOW reported that in the packet he had included the detailed explanation from CO Water Congress on the Colorado River Water Recovery Program. As of September 30, 2023, Congress has appropriated \$173,552,000 in support of the Program and authorized \$115,774,000 in Colorado River Storage Project Colorado River Project hydropower revenues to support the Program.

Total program costs FY 1989 through FY 2023 were \$478,919,000, including non-federal contributions and credits to participants for various activities.

9. General Manager's, Committee and Staff Reports

Treasurer's Report – Treasurer Bill Nesbitt reported that the Federal Reserve did not raise rates at their most recent meeting. He noted that there is still a 45% chance in November and 48% chance in January that they will raise rates a quarter point each time. Of the five area foreclosures Bill noted at the last meeting, he said three have been resolved and two are left pending foreclosure. He said the current federal prime rate is 8.5% and it is a little higher here in Colorado. Consumer spending is still up, and the US debt has now climbed to \$33.108 trillion. The City of Denver is in the process of buying 16 commercial buildings to convert into housing. Bill noted that over 43 million people in the US are getting food stamps. He said the District is in great shape and that District investments are earning a good average rate of return even through the recent down cycles and that the investments are laddered well for maturities. He noted that in working with the District's investment counselor, they have elected to stay pat on existing investments and not buy anything new at this time. Bill said that if anyone sees advertisements for CD's earning seven percent interest, these are one-year rates from credit unions, and the District is not allowed to invest in credit union offerings. Bill noted that farm income is expected to decrease overall for 2023, but futures on cattle are expected to increase by 13 percent. Director Rebie Hazard asked if the District has come to any decision about switching banks locally and Sonja reported that staff is still working on researching alternatives.

General Manager's Memorandum:

- A. Spencer Avenue Business Park Update:** As reported during the 2024 budget discussion, Sonja said the estimate came in at \$160,000 for the renovations on Unit A of the building.
- B. Colorado Employer's Benefit Trust (CEBT) Medical Insurance Premium Increase:** Sonja reported that there will be a medical insurance premium increase of approximately five percent in 2024. She noted that this amounts to \$50.60 per employee and felt this was something that could be absorbed into the District's general fund with the Board's approval. Sonja will also be talking to CEBT about the possibility of staff being able to purchase voluntary life and AD&D supplementary policies. President Michelle Pierce asked for a motion to approve the increase.

Director Stacy McPhail moved and Director Bill Nesbitt seconded the approval of the CEBT 2024 renewal rate with the five percent increase and approved submitting the documentation by the deadline of October 15, 2023. The motion carried.

- C. Informal Mill Levy decrease discussion with Saguache County Commissioners:** Sonja reported that she attended the Saguache County public meeting about the possibility of temporarily reducing the mill levy in order to give some relief to Saguache county residents. The Hinsdale County School

District noted that, while they understood the sentiment for reductions, the financing requirement for some of their bonds does not allow for such reductions. Sonja said it was a respectful discussion with several tax districts represented. Sonja noted that for the UGRWCD, the difference in tax income collected from \$8,500 in 2023 to \$11,000 will not provide much relief to their constituents. Sonja said they appreciated the discussion and she said she would be happy to draft a letter to that effect if the Board advised her to do so. The board asked that she send a letter to Saguache County.

D. Water Quality Update: Sonja reported the annual water quality and quantity meeting was held on August 30, 2023. With regard to the cost of the annual program, the USGS informed their partners that they will see a 5.1 to 10.7 percent increase in annual program costs because of supply chain issues, increasing travel and laboratory costs. The District will see a 7.6% increase in 2024 which amounts to \$7,488. The total cost for the District in 2024 is \$106,550. USGS is having to pass on costs to all partners as federal funding under their Cooperative Matching Program has remained flat.

Director Julie Nania asked if the USGS can be of any help in providing additional monitoring of the Taylor Reservoir for any impact from dissolved nitrogen. Julie noted with it being a small reservoir and being a gold medal fishery, while she is not worried about increasing temperatures, she does feel nitrogen is something to stay on top of since it impacts so many different kinds of users. Sonja offered to check into this.

The District hosted the Water Quality Control Commission for their Annual Planning Retreat in Gunnison on September 11th and 12th. Commissioners were treated to a boat tour of Blue Mesa Reservoir where the harmful algae bloom study was discussed. The District provided funding for the camping/evening barbecue site and stand-up paddle boards for recreational entertainment.

Director Rosemary Carroll asked if there is a government shutdown, would that affect water quality testing, possibly causing delays. Sonja said she had just talked to Katie Walton-Day today about this and she mentioned that they may switch to relying on partner funding sources during a potential government shutdown in order to keep testing going.

Director Bill Nesbitt noted that Gunnison County is the only county in the state to have all 17 species of bats within its boundaries.

E. Drought Contingency Planning (DCP): UGRWCD Fellow Alana Nichols reviewed the memo included in the packet and said the DCP task force met at the District offices on September 8th with 16 task force members present. It was noted that their next meeting will be October 26, 2023, and Cheryl Cwelich will also be transitioning into being the project lead. Likewise, Erin Wilson of Wilson Water group will provide water rights consultation support. Sonja said the State of Colorado Drought Planning task force also has been meeting and asking for public input. The first hour of every meeting is dedicated to taking public input and members are being sent home with homework in order to be able to facilitate them moving through discussions. Their next meetings will be on September 28th and

October 12th respectively. Anyone can listen in to these meetings, so if Board members are interested, Sonja can send the meeting link.

F. Water Budget and Irrigation Return Flow Study: Sonja said the District will compile a small work group to get together to come up with information the District is hoping to learn from the study so she asked if anyone else on the Board would be interested in coming to the work group meeting besides just Director Nania, Director Carroll and Director Spann. Director McPhail also would like to attend.

G. Town of Crested Butte Water Protection Planning: The second meeting for this group will be the following week after the Board meeting, so staff will provide an update at the October meeting.

H. Wet Meadows Program: Program Director Cheryl Cwelich provided a memo in the Board Packet and there was a brief discussion about the prairie dog vaccination bait administration. Cheryl noted that this was a reciprocated project for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, since they are a partner in the Wet Meadows Program.

I. Education and Outreach: Committee Chair Director Mike Rogers reported the group met on August 31st to formulate the action plan and budget needs for 2024. He noted that 2024 will be the 65th Anniversary of the UGRWCD so there will be some celebrations planned as well as a ribbon cutting for Suite A when it is finished. He said the committee is recommending a total of \$61,485 for the 2024 budget for education and outreach activities and projects. There was also discussion about holding a Board and Staff Retreat during the winter months.

J. Taylor Local Users Group: Chair Don Sabrowski reported that after cruising through the summer with plenty of water, September has been a challenge as inflows into Taylor were significantly lower than the model predicted. He noted that it has been a challenge to meet the needs of all of the water users through the end of the month, primarily the rafters and ag users, while assuring the group meets the end-of-year storage objective of 75,000 acre-feet. Don also noted that the group must take into consideration that brown trout spawning occurs in mid-October and that it's important to stabilize flows by then to protect the macroinvertebrates. Director Andy Spann added that he felt the group had done a pretty good job of finding common ground among all of the users but that there are always different points of view when it comes to the fishery, as Ernie Cockrell does not necessarily agree with the recommendations of Dan Brauch from the CPW that the fishery will do fine with a flow of 75 to 100 cfs. Andy said he will be interested in seeing the figures that Erik Knight, from the Bureau of Reclamation, comes up with based on a couple of scenarios the TLUG suggested for decreasing flows to meet the year-end objective. General Manager Sonja Chavez said she had just gotten those figures from Erik right before the meeting and will share them with the group afterwards. Director Rosemary Carroll asked how the group compensates for a forecast that is either a little too high or a little too low and Andy noted that it is much more difficult during a dry year. Chairman Sabrowski said that in hindsight, he thought the group should have elected to have decreased some of the flow rates at the beginning of the summer to hold back more for September when both ag users

and rafters need the water. He said the scenario of dealing with lower-than-expected water availability seems to be a problem every year with the models in September. Sonja noted that she feels the group is starting to lean more towards using the WRF Hydro forecasts as they have been a little more accurate. The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 27 at 1:00 p.m.

K. Scientific Endeavors: Director Rosemary Carroll said she has been working in “proposal mode” for a proposal that is due in early November. She noted that her colleague, Ken Williams, had attended a meeting with folks from the beaver dam analog project and the US Forest Service where they discussed some baseline monitoring that will begin in the Taylor Reservoir at Trail Creek as part of a Department of Energy (DOE) grant. She feels this is an exciting opportunity for those groups and the District to overlap for data purposes. She said she will be attending an online workshop by the USGS NGWOS (Next Generation Water Observing System) that will be offered online beginning Thursday, September 29th. Rosemary offered to share the link with anyone interested. Director Bill Nesbitt asked why the DOE is interested in the beaver dam analog project. Rosemary explained that the beaver dams offer a unique “wet up” and “dry down” scenario for studying what happens to neighboring and sub-surface water and the effects on water quality and quantity. She noted that the DOE works with massive Earth-scale computer models that will generate high-fidelity, real-time data on water quantity, water quality and power generation to support modern prediction and decision-support systems that are necessary for informing water operations on a daily basis, as well as assist with decision-making during water emergencies. Sonja noted that this is a great opportunity to get pre-study and post-study information related to the impacts of forest management on quality and quantity. Sonja said that the meeting with the U.S. Forest Service was primarily meant to get them up to speed with all the specific details the study will entail and to get them to sign off on the initial clearances (NEPA). Rosemary explained that while you might not get the exact data you are wanting out of the study it is important to not let the “perfect” get in the way of the “good” that can come out of it.

Sonja reported that the Colorado Water Conservation Board had called her to ask for her help in finding a landowner in the District who would be willing to have an eddy covariance flux tower which would monitor evapotranspiration. Sonja said she had a couple of ideas of landowners and that the more data collected in the basin the better for the District. Director Carroll and Director McPhail offered to help with suggestions.

On that same note of the more data, the better, Director Stacy McPhail reported that CB Ranches and Gunnison Legacy are now part of an \$18.5 million five-year national study to look at groundwater interaction. She said a carbon flux tower was just installed at a ranch in Brush Creek on non-irrigated rangeland and that Ken Williams is aware of this study. The study is being funded primarily by Noble Research Institute, which recently switched from a foundation to a company who will provide research on agricultural challenges. The study is being led by soil bio geochemists from Michigan State University and University of Wyoming with help from several other universities with an agricultural

focus. Stacy said this will be an interdisciplinary study which is based on normal grazing practices in the highest elevations.

Director Bill Nesbitt asked if the science was pushing the grant dollars or if grant dollars were pushing the science. Director Carroll acknowledged that she understands where Bill's question is coming from but said she would argue that the science is very important right now with all of the overlapping water challenges, particularly in the west, and she feels the science is appropriate and is driving the dollars. She also noted that the funding is determined by Congress, so it is really up to them.

General Manager Chavez said she recently heard from Neil Bracken from Advance Radar Company in Boulder and that their Board is having issues determining priorities for radar sites and therefore, Neil is concerned that it may not be possible to get the proposed radar site installed on the mountain prior to snowfall. He is offering to install a mobile unit on a temporary sight and then look at the permanent installation in the spring. Sonja asked Director Carroll if it might save time to go back to one of the previous sites that her colleagues had previously used at CBMR. Director Mike Rogers asked what the size is of one of these units and David Gochis of UCAR answered on Zoom chat that they are about the size of a double outhouse. There was discussion about possibly using W Mountain or the airport as a site. Rosemary encouraged Sonja to reach out to Ken Williams since he had already done some research on sites in the past.

L. Gunnison Basin Roundtable (GBRT): General Manager Chavez said at their meeting the education and outreach team gave an update about the PEPO program and the advertisements they have been running in various papers throughout the basin to educate adults about water issues and water rights. Sonja said it sounded hopeful that the group will receive more PEPO funding in November.

Sonja said the GBRT reviewed three grant applications as follows: one for some emergency piping for the Highland Ditch; one for ASO snow flights gap funding in the North Fork Valley; and one for \$25,000 for Tongue Creek Meandering project to return the creek to its natural, meandering flow.

Sonja said that Amy Ostdiek gave an update about some interstate issues she is working on and the Colorado River District reminded attendees that they have funds available for engineering consultation.

Director Bill Nesbitt added that CRWCD Raquel Flinker brought forth CRWCD's 5 Basic Principles with respect to the Colorado River Drought Task Force process. Director Nesbitt noted that it primarily focused on agricultural users and so he mentioned that to be all inclusive, there should be a component that focuses on municipal water usage.

10. Miscellaneous Matters

The Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) annual conference will be held in Las Vegas December 13-15, 2023, and any directors interested in attending should contact the office as soon as possible for reservations. Director Don Sabrowski said that personally, he got a lot more out of the Colorado Water Congress conference than he did out of CRWUA last year. He felt the CRWUA meeting was more talk than substance and more finger pointing than a presentation of solutions. Sonja reminded the Directors that the next Colorado Water Congress conference will be January 31 through February 2, 2024 on the front range.

Director Don Sabrowski asked if the District is aware of any impact to the Ohio Creek drainage from the Lowline wildfire. He wondered if the District should be taking action now before the snow falls to address any water quality or quantity problems that might arise in spring during runoff. Sonja noted that there may be ASO flights over the area in the winter and that she would like to be able to get in there to conduct some water sampling but she believes the Forest Service currently is not allowing any access to the area. Director Stacy McPhail said that in studying the maps provided by Katie Jagt during her assessment, she feels there is a good depositional area below the burn area that could accommodate ash and other debris and that the landscape is not extreme there, like it would be in Taylor Canyon, for instance. She does not feel there would be a huge sedimentary movement. Director Sabrowski asked if it might be wise for the District to pay for a professional to get up there now to assess the impact. Director Julie Nania noted that Katie Jagt is a professional who would be qualified to conduct such an assessment and that it might be a good idea to see if she would be able to access the area. Tom Rozman of the Division of Natural Resources was in the audience and said that the two drainages directly below the Castleton Ranch where the majority of the fire burned, typically will not see both ditches, Squirrel Creek and the Price Creek, running at the same time and that they are pretty small creeks, so he does not think the runoff will be a problem. He said it would take a pretty significant event, most likely a heavy rain event, for them both to drain in excess downstream. It was also discussed that there might be a possibility of putting in a temporary structure to help mitigate any sedimentary movement. Sonja offered to reach out to the Forest Service to see if it might be possible to get access to the area soon.

11. **Citizens Comments**- No citizens offered any comments.

12. **Future Meetings** – President Pierce referred to the future meetings listed in the packet.

13. **Summary of Meeting Action Items**

Sonja will direct staff to research the budget summary issues that Director Hazard questioned with respect to Board travel and building expenses to report at the next meeting.

Sonja will reach out to the USGS about possibly redirecting some funding to local partners to prevent a delay in water quality testing in the event of a government shutdown.

Sonja will follow up with Director Stacy McPhail and Director Rosemary Carroll about some possible

location options for installing an eddy covariance flux tower.

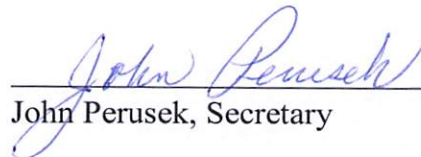
Sonja will reach out to Director Rosemary Carroll and/or Ken Williams about some possible alternative sites for a doppler radar station.

Sonja will reach out to Dayle Funka at the US Forest Service to see if it might be possible to have Katie Jagt access the burn scar area to conduct some water assessments based on the impacts of the Low Line wildfire.

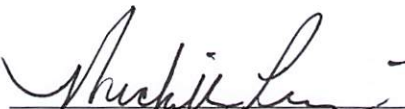
14. Adjournment

Board President Michelle Pierce adjourned the regular Board meeting on September 25, 2023, at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John Perusek, Secretary



Michelle Pierce, President

