

Upper Gunnison Drought Contingency Plan: Task Force

Minutes

November 28th, 2023

Task Force Attendees:

Jesse Kruthaupt (Trout Unlimited)
Susan Washko (Western Colorado University)
John Coy (Hinsdale County)
Brandon Diamond (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)
Lisa Brown (Wilson Water Group)
David Stoner (Ute Mountain Ute Tribe)
Julie Nania (High Country Conservation Advocates)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Carolyn De Groot (Town of Crested Butte)
Nicole Gibney (National Park Service)
Rebie Hazard (Saguache County)
Steve Moore (Coal Creek Watershed Coalition)
Shannon Hessler (Mount Crested Butte)
Dave Fisher (Taylor Local Water Users Group)
Steve Anders (USGS)
Jonathan Houck (Gunnison County)
Hannah Cranor-Kersting (Gunnison County Stockgrowers)
Ashley Bembenek (Coal Creek Watershed Coalition)

Staff/Consultants:

Carrie Padgett (Harris Water Engineering)
Stacy Beaugh (Strategic By Nature)
Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Cheryl Cwelich (UGRWCD)
Alana Nichols (UGRWCD)

I. Introductions, Agenda Review and Working Agreements:

Following introductions, Carrie Padgett reviewed the meeting agenda. She emphasized that the meeting's primary objective is to obtain approval for the detailed workplan for the Upper Gunnison Drought Contingency Plan. After approval, the discussions will focus on forthcoming activities, including drought monitoring, vulnerability assessment, and the development of a stakeholder engagement plan over the next few months.

II. Review Comments and Approve Detailed Workplan:

Carrie Padgett reviewed the comments and revised the detailed workplan, incorporating insights from discussions during the last task force meeting. She updated the timeline and established a schedule for

meetings, interviews, and tasks. Carrie sought further comments or questions from everyone before finalizing the workplan.

Susan Washko provided an update on the availability of additional data resources for stream temperature and soil moisture in the Gunnison Basin, as discussed in the previous Task Force meeting. She confirmed that, following her inquiry with the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL), there are at least two sources of soil moisture data with soil temperature and annual water temperature for East River and upstream above East River since 1994 and 2007. These datasets could be utilized for the Upper Gunnison Drought Contingency Plan.

Carrie Padgett inquired about the accessibility of this data, asking Susan whether it was available online or if a direct request was necessary.

Susan Washko clarified that the soil moisture and temperature data is available at www.rmbl.org. Alternatively, reaching out to the scientists responsible for collecting these individual datasets is an option.

Julie Nania mentioned sending comments to Stacy and Cheryl but was unsure if they had been incorporated into the detailed workplan.

Carrie Padgett requested Julie to email her comments, assuring that they would be added. She also asked Julie to provide a brief overview to the task force, so they are aware of the upcoming additions to the workplan.

Julie Nania reiterated her comments from the previous meeting, emphasizing the inclusion of instream flow conditions and recommending data to address calls during low-flow periods and aquatic conditions. She highlighted the importance of understanding when instream flow conditions weren't met and why call information is beneficial.

Carrie Padgett will add Julie's comments to the detailed workplan.

Stacy Beaugh asked the task force if they were ready to approve the workplan for submission to the Bureau of Reclamation.

The task force members unanimously agreed to approve the detailed workplan.

Carrie Padgett stated that once Julie Nania's comments were incorporated, she would email the final version to the task force. Following that, the workplan would be submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation with the hope of approval by the end of December.

III. Website Review:

The District created a webpage for sharing information about the Upper Gunnison DCP to the task force, stakeholders, and the public. Alana Nichols provided an overview of the Upper Gunnison DCP webpage contents. The webpage can be accessed on the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District website under "Projects & Programs," specifically under the "District Programs" section. Upon reaching the Upper Gunnison DCP webpage, a brief description of the purpose of the Upper Gunnison DCP is prominently displayed. As users scroll down the page, they will encounter a "Learn More" section, which provides a list of task force members. Additionally, an "Upcoming Meetings" section provides details such as the next meeting date and time, meeting agenda, and Zoom link for both task force and stakeholder meetings. For reference to past discussions, the "Previous Meetings" tab contains meeting

minutes for all task force and stakeholder meetings that occur. The "DCP Schedule" tab outlines the dates for anticipated DCP tasks and meetings, indicating their expected completion dates. Located at the bottom of the page, a flow chart highlights the current task being undertaken for the DCP, along with its corresponding date. This webpage is expected to serve as a valuable tool for task force members and stakeholders, offering centralized information and facilitating their engagement in the DCP process. As the DCP progresses, additional content will be incorporated into the website to provide ongoing support and information.

IV. Review Meeting Schedule and Process:

Carrie Padgett provided an overview of the Upper Gunnison DCP timeline calendar and the In-kind tracking Google Sheet, noting that both will be accessible on the Upper Gunnison DCP webpage and distributed via email to each task force member. The In-kind tracking form is intended for task force members to monitor the time invested in DCP tasks, including stakeholder engagement, interviews, and research.

Carrie mentioned that the consultants proposed monthly meetings for task force members, scheduled for the 4th Wednesday of every month starting in January 2024. Meetings highlighted in orange are virtual-only, while all others are hybrid, with the goal of consultants visiting the Gunnison Basin every other month for in-person interactions. The first significant stakeholder kick-off meeting is set for March 2024, emphasizing the importance of task force members' attendance and outreach to stakeholders. The public comment and draft period for the Upper Gunnison Drought Contingency Plan is scheduled for February 2025.

Stacy Beaugh added that calendar invites would be sent to each task force member for future meetings, but confirmation of the dates is to be determined. Carrie Padgett will send the calendar to everyone for confirmation and feedback on meeting times.

During the discussion about meeting preferences, Stacy Beaugh inquired if task force members preferred morning meetings. Some members expressed a preference for morning sessions, and Stacy and Carrie will provide official meeting times following further consideration.

Stacy Beaugh informed the group about the creation of survey and interview questions for stakeholder and task force member engagement. She would refine the questions with UGRWCD staff and send them via email to task force members. Members will be encouraged to provide comments on the survey and interview questions. Stacy planned to schedule individual interviews with task force members, aiming for completion by mid-January. The In-kind tracking Google Sheet, survey, and interview questions will be emailed within the next two weeks.

Carrie Padgett reminded the group of the upcoming meeting on January 24th, 2024, focusing on 101 presentations from each water sector to enhance understanding of water usage in the Gunnison Basin.

This meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m. by Stacy Beaugh.