

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.**

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) conducted a regular Board meeting on Monday, July 28, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, 210 West Spencer, Suite A, Gunnison, Colorado and via Zoom video/teleconference.

Board members present: Rosemary Carroll (via Zoom), Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, John Perusek, Camille Richard, Don Sabrowski, Andy Spann, Brian Stevens, Jeff Writer, and Brooke Zanetell.

Others present:

Amanda, Aulenbach, Wet Meadows Program Director
Alex Baca, Seasonal Employee
Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD General Manager
John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel
Alana Nichols, UGRWCD Water Resources Fellow
Greg Peterson, Colorado Ag Water Alliance
Beverly Richards, UGRWCD Office/Senior Program Manager
Tom Rozman, Colorado Division of Water Resources
Tom Stoeber, Thomas Stoeber CPA
Sue Uerling, UGRWCD Administrative Asst./Communications Specialist
Katie Walton-Day, U.S. Geological Survey
Ari Yamaguchi, Water Resources Specialist

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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 Camille Richard moved and Director John Perusek seconded approval of the consent agenda items. The motion carried.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer John Perusek stated that in addition to what was included in his report, he has found that current interest rates are higher with bonds, but they have shorter call dates.

5. DISCUSSION WITH TOM STOEBER CPA REGARDING 2024 AUDIT

District CPA, Tom Stoeber, referred to the memorandum provided by the General Manager and included in the packet. The District's current auditor has been performing the District's audit for fourteen years. The recommendation of management is to try to find a new government auditor, consistent with best practices of changes auditors every 5-7 years. He recommended choosing a firm that is familiar with governmental accounting standards (GAS) and understands water districts and the types of grants that the District manages. He noted that currently, there are no such firms in Gunnison. Staff noted that the cost is likely to be substantially higher than what the District has been paying. The cost will also increase depending on the number of auditors who come with the firm and their location which will affect travel and accommodation expenses.

In addition, management is seeking board authorization to contract with Stoeber, CPA, to incorporate additional randomized inspections of accounts payable and receivable and government reporting. This step provides an additional external check of the District's financial operations in the case that we cannot find another auditor and it may also bring down the cost of hiring a new auditing firm.

General Counsel John McClow said the District is required by law to have an annual audit.

Director Brooke Zanetell moved and Director Rebie Hazard seconded the motion to authorize the General Manager to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) to try to find a new government auditor; and to authorize the General Manager to modify the District's contract with Stoeber-CPA in 2026, to incorporate random sampling of accounts receivable and payable and government reporting, help with Management's Discussion & Analysis (MD&A), and preparation of audit footnotes, etc., to strengthen our reporting and external controls. The motion carried.

6. 2026 BUDGET – BUDGET OFFICER APPOINTMENT

Director John Perusek moved and Director Camille Richard seconded the motion to appoint General Manager Sonja Chavez as the District's Budget Officer for 2026.

**7. PRESENTATION ON “Blue Mesa Reservoir Harmful Algal Bloom Study Results”
by Katie Walton-Day**

Katie Walton-Day with USGS presented data and results of the Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Study performed in Blue Mesa Reservoir. Below are some highlights of the research study:

- The project began in 2021 with discrete water sampling in Sapinero, Cebolla, and Iola basins.
- All three of these basins feed into Blue Mesa Reservoir and have different depth levels from shallow in Iola Basin to over 200 feet in Sapinero Basin.
- The objectives of the study included looking at when these blooms occurred, what the characteristics of the blooms include, and can these occurrences be monitored with remote sensing.
- The scientific drivers for the study included possible reasons for the blooms including increased nutrient loading, increased temperatures, and historically low water levels.
- The study identified possible causes for HAB development, and these include long term increases in air and water temperatures
- Results showed no major trends of nutrient loading but the presence of geogenic phosphorus was identified; and the increase of shallow, warm areas and/or turbulence as a result of reservoir management, likely recruiting algae from bottom sediments to favor HAB development.
- The study has also included the use of remote sensing.
- A final report and summary of publications will be provided by December 1, 2025.

8. PRESENTATION ON “Agriculture & Water; The Future of Colorado” by Greg Peterson, Colorado Ag Water Alliance (CAWA)

Greg Peterson with CAWA provided a presentation about the Edge of Field Water Quality Monitoring project coordinated and funded by the CAWA. Below are some highlights included in his presentation:

- The Edge of Field Water Quality Monitoring Project was a stakeholder driven process developed in 2022 to provide data on non-point source nutrient management associated with agricultural operations.
- Project now includes Mountain Meadow cow calf operations including one in the Upper Gunnison River Basin on Tomichi Creek.
- The objective of the project is to aid in developing best management practices that support nutrient management and water quality issues.

- The project monitored inflows, outflows, sediment, phosphate, nitrogen and other agricultural nutrients. The soil was also sampled annually for fertility.
- The project tested different methods associated with fertilizer application, the use buffer strips and characterized trends and impacts of flood irrigated mountain meadow systems on runoff water quality.

Additional information on the study can be found: [USGS Edge of Field Monitoring](#)

9. GENERAL COUNSEL UPDATE

Stream Access Conversations Happening at the State Level: General Counsel John McClow reported that staff will share the link for the stream access workshop hosted by Colorado Water Congress State Affairs Committee, and which will occur on August 12th, 2025.

New Board Member Orientation: General Counsel and staff are continuing to edit the Board members' manual and are preparing for the new board member orientation scheduled to happen in September. Date to be determined.

10. BASIN WATER SUPPLY REPORT

Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards reported that the current precipitation has not improved drought conditions and that conditions have not further declined. The previous 30 days did see some precipitation but mostly to the south and east of Gunnison County. The next seven days could see some improvement in precipitation, particularly in Saguache County where some areas could see up to two inches. Streamflows are still well below the historical average for the most part, but some gage sites are now recording higher percentages of that average indicative of low flows at this time of year. She also presented a streamflow decadal graph from the Gunnison Basin Round Table that shows the current 2020's decadal average total streamflow at the Gunnison River near Grand Junction which is well below the average of the Dust Bowl years in the 1930s.

11. GENERAL MANAGER STAFF AND COMMITTEE UPDATES

Wet Meadows Technician Contract Extension: General Manager Sonja Chavez referred to the memorandum in the packet regarding extending the contracts for the Wet Meadows Technicians. The cost of the employment extension will be fully covered by federal grants. Since the cost exceeds her \$10,000 authority and given that this cost was not included in the 2025 budget, this requires Board approval.

Director Camille Richard moved and Director Brian Stevens seconded approval of the contract extension for the Wet Meadows technicians as proposed. The motion carried.

Employee Home Opportunity Program (EHOP) Review: General Manager Chavez and General Counsel McCloy shared a memorandum and Excel spreadsheet showing details of how the EHOP would be administered by the District. There was some discussion about how District staff who do not qualify for the EHOP program or will not be using the program might receive an equitable benefit to those proposed by the program. General Manager Chavez offered to research alternative benefit options for these staff members and will bring them back to the board.

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director John Perusek seconded the motion to finalize and implement the UGRWCD EHOP as part of the District's benefit package and to research alternate benefits options for staff who do not qualify for or who will not use the EHOP. The motion carried.

Taylor Local User's Group (TLUG): TLUG Chair Don Sabrowski reported that the TLUG representatives are in a transition period where the irrigators are not diverting because they are drying out fields for haying and recreators are wanting higher flows for rafting/boating through the end of August. He noted that this may be a real challenge as water supplies and inflow continue to deteriorate. The next meeting is August 5th at 8:30 a.m.

Gunnison Basin Roundtable (GBRT): There were a couple of guest speakers at the July 21st meeting, including Rebecca Mitchell, Upper Colorado River Commissioner and the Bureau of Land Management's related to the Escalante Ranch Acquisition Project. Staff will send a copy of this presentation to the Board.

Scientific Endeavors: Director Rosemary Carroll said that she had nothing further to report at this time and that she appreciated the presentation given by Katie Walton-Day.

12. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

General Manager Chavez reminded the Board of the Colorado Water Congress Conference in Steamboat Springs July 19-21.

13. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Water Commissioner Tom Rozman was asked if he had any updates on the status of the Spring Creek Reservoir dam. To his knowledge, the reservoir had not filled at all during spring runoff due to dam restrictions and problems with the siphons, and they would not be filling it under the current water conditions. He believes the dam is to be inspected on July 30, 2025. General Manager Chavez offered to contact Ryan Unterreiner with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife for further details.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS

Director Brian Stevens asked if a meeting could be scheduled with staff to review the Fire Management section of the Watershed Management Plan final document. General Manager Chavez will reach out to him directly to get his input.

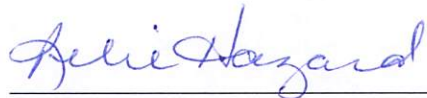
15. SUMMARY OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS

- The registration link for the stream access workshop on August 12, 2025 will be shared with the Board.
- Staff will share the GBRT presentation regarding the Bureau of Land Management's Escalante Ranch Acquisition Project with the Board.
- General Manager Chavez will schedule a meeting with Director Stevens to discuss fire management information included in the Watershed Management Plan.
- General Manager Chavez will contact Ryan Unterreiner regarding the status of dam repairs on Spring Creek Reservoir.

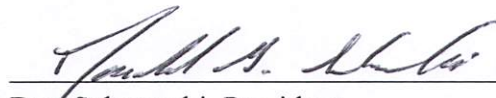
16. ADJOURNMENT

Board President Don Sabrowski adjourned the July 28, 2025 regular Board Meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rebie Hazard, Secretary



Don Sabrowski, President

