

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 25, 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, August 25, 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: Stuart Asay (via Zoom), Rosemary Carroll, Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, John Perusek, Camille Richard (via Zoom), Don Sabrowski, Jeff Writer (via Zoom), and Brooke Zanetell.

Board members absent: Andy Spann and Brian Stevens

Others present:

Kelli Starritt, 7th Judicial District Judge (Division 2, Gunnison County)
Amanda Aulenbach, Wet Meadows Program Director
Stacy Beaugh, Strategic By Nature (via Zoom)
Curtis Beutler, Lawrence Berkley Laboratories (via Zoom)
Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD General Manager
John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel
Stacy McPhail, Former UGRWCD Board Member (via Zoom)
Luke Mecklenburg, Colorado Attorney General's Office (via Zoom)
Julie Nania, Former UGRWCD Board Member
Bill Nesbitt, Former UGRWCD Board Member
Carrie Padgett, Harris Engineering (via Zoom)
Beverly Richards, UGRWCD Office/Senior Program Manager
Robert Sabatka, Ag Water Policy Advisor, Colorado Department of Agriculture (via Zoom)
Sue Uerling, UGRWCD Administrative Asst./Communications Specialist
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 Rosemary Carroll moved and Director Rebie Hazard seconded approval of the agenda as circulated. The motion carried.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

Via Zoom, Judge Kellie Starritt administered the Oath of Office to Stuart Asay, who will represent Division 6, Ohio Creek Division.

4. RESOLUTIONS 2025-03 AND 2025-04 HONORING FORMER DIRECTORS STACY McPHAIL AND JULIE NANIA

General Manager Sonja Chavez read both resolutions and thanked former Directors Stacy McPhail and Julie Nania for their many years of service to the District.

Director John Perusek moved and Director Brooke Zanetell seconded approval of Resolution 2025-03 honoring Stacy McPhail for her service.

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director Rosemary Carroll seconded approval of Resolution 2025-04 honoring Julie Nania for her service.

5. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

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

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer John Perusek briefly referred to the Treasurer's Report in the Board packet. No questions were raised.

7. 2026 DRAFT BUDGET REVIEW

Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards reviewed the 2026 draft budget with the current data. She noted that most of the figures used for 2026 were based either on an average of actual income and expenses to date projected through the end of the fiscal year; included a five percent increase; or are actual amounts known for 2026. She reported that where there are line items with no figures for 2026 in the draft budget, actual amounts for these programs will be finalized over the next couple of months.

General Manager Sonja Chavez reviewed the timeline for the budget process.

The following questions and responses transpired:

Director Rebie Hazard asked for clarification on the vehicle income figure. It was explained that this is primarily income received from grant funding as either a cost per day or mileage recoupment for use of District vehicles.

Director Rosemary Carroll asked if the monies set aside in the 2025 budget for Aquatic Nuisance Species control are not fully utilized are they rolled over into the 2026 budget. General Manager Chavez replied that unspent funding from budget line items do not “roll over” and are returned to the general fund.

General Counsel John McClow explained that the increase associated with the Taylor Park Project Expense line item was the result of the new 2025 Taylor Reservoir Storage Exchange Agreement that updates the 1975 Agreement. He noted that this expense will be reviewed by the Four Parties every five years and updated if necessary.

Director Carroll asked for clarification on the “Regional Water Supply Improvement” income item. It was explained that this line item represents income received through grants or other joint funding agreements associated with programs like the Agricultural Return Flow study, cloudseeding program, airborne snow flights for water supply measurement and planning, etc. General Manager Chavez noted that the District is still waiting to hear from the several funding regarding shared expense for 2026.

Director Brooke Zanetell asked for clarification on what all is included in the non-operating expense category “Regional Water Supply Improvement.” It was explained that expenses for Airborne Snow Observatory flights, the cloud seeding program, the Taylor River Modeling program and the annual expenses for the Agricultural Return Flow study are all included in this category.

8. GENERAL COUNSEL UPDATE

Watershed Management Plan Final Report: Counselor McClow is reviewing the final report draft and editing as necessary.

New Board Member Orientation: Counselor McClow and staff are updating policies and editing the District manual. He noted that as an action item, a date needs to be set for the new board member orientation, sometime in September.

9. BASIN WATER SUPPLY REPORT

Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards referred to her memo included in the packet. In addition, she reported information from Aspinall Unit Operations meeting held on August 21st. It was reported that drought conditions were level D3 in May and recently increased to level D4, exceptional drought, in much of the western half of the state. They noted Gunnison County experienced its 10th driest year in the 130 year record. The runoff efficiency was only 48 percent of normal and soil moisture content is very dry at the moment. She said that although the forecast for the next 6 to 10 days and 8-14 days calls for an increase of precipitation, by the middle of September, conditions will return to above normal temperatures and little to no precipitation. The current climate pattern has returned to “neutral” which is likely to last through the end of the year. In January 2026, forecasters are predicting a return to a La Nina pattern, which historically results in dryer conditions for this area depending on where the polar jet stream sets up.

10. GENERAL MANAGER, STAFF AND COMMITTEE UPDATES

Employee Home Opportunity Program (EHOP) Review: General Manager Chavez reported that following the last meeting, senior staff reviewed the EHOP and edited the draft to include language to offer the program to *all* full-time employees in good standing in order to address concerns expressed by the Board regarding fair access to housing benefits.

Director Joellen Fonken commended staff for making this change and for taking actions to address the lack of affordable housing options in Colorado.

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director John Perusek seconded the motion to approve the updated UGRWCD EHOP program document, which includes language for all full-time staff in good standing to be eligible for the program. The motion carried.

Letter of Comment RE Homestake Alternatives Analysis: General Manager Chavez and Water Resource Specialist Ari Yamaguchi reviewed the UGRWCD Letter of Comment to the Water Quality Control Division regarding “Alternatives Analysis Related to Homestake Mining DSV Request”.

With respect to the alternatives suggested in the letter, Director Rebie Hazard asked if Saguache and Gunnison County were involved in the meetings or had been consulted with respect to the letter. She questioned whether or not Saguache or Gunnison Counties could or actually already do perform some winter maintenance on the road to the mine. Director Fonken also noted that there is a snow cat that grooms that area for cross-country skiing in the winter, so she wondered why that could not be used to access the mine during the off-season. Ms. Chavez offered that the letter could be shared with representatives from both counties.

Director Rosemary Carroll motioned and Director Brooke Zanetell seconded approval of sending the UGRWCD Letter of Comment to the Colorado Department of Health and Public Environment Water Quality Control Division regarding the “Alternative Analysis for a DSV” submitted by Homestake Mines. The motion carried.

Approval of the Upper Gunnison Drought Plan (DCP Plan): General Manager Chavez stated that only 5-6 public comments were submitted on the Draft DCP by the public and a few more items of input from members of the Drought Task Force, but no major changes were required. She commended the committee and Savannah Nelson, who provided the graphic design and website development, for their efforts in creating a very good product.

Director Joellen Fonken asked how the plan will be distributed to be sure it is utilized in the District. General Manager Chavez explained that partners prioritized steps in the action plan, and all partners have responsibilities in carrying out certain steps in the plan and that the Task Force would be meeting regularly.

Director John Perusek moved and Director Rosemary Carroll seconded approval of the final draft of the Upper Gunnison DCP Plan to be forwarded to the Bureau of Reclamation. The motion carried.

Taylor Local User’s Group (TLUG): TLUG Chair Don Sabrowski reported that the TLUG representatives met on August 5th. Based on declining hydrology a decision was made to reduce flows from 250 cfs to 225 cfs to try to conserve some storage due to the recent dry, hot weather. He noted that the rafting/boating recreators agreed to the reduction and determined that they would need to reduce the number of individuals in rafts to be able to overcome the lower river conditions. The next meeting is September 4th at 8:30 a.m.

Director Sabrowski also reported that at the meeting, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) reported that the dam at Spring Creek is failing and they are considering options going forward including an option for dam removal although CPW believes this is an unlikely option to be selected. General Manager Chavez noted that the District would hate to see the loss of this storage and hopes that there will be better alternatives to consider. She did offer at the meeting that the District could help CPW with fund raising in support of dam repairs. Director Sabrowski noted that the Spring Creek dam has had issues since it was erected back in the 1960’s and the impacts of the storage restrictions were impacting Wilders downstream water availability.

Scientific Endeavors: Director Rosemary Carroll reported that she is excited about a partnership between the Colorado River Sustainability Campaign (CRSC) and DOE to conduct research relating to improving forest health and ultimately hydrology by using active forest management. The CRSC is a nonprofit foundation that provides expertise, capacity, and collaboration support

for the protection and conservation of the Colorado River. Through this partnership, Director Carroll noted that they will be developing models in the East and Taylor River basins to assess snowpack when trees are removed. She is excited that renowned hydrologist Joel Peterman will be leading the modeling.

11. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Colorado Water Congress (CWC) Summer Conference: Directors Joellen Fonken and John Perusek reported on their experiences at the CWC conference in Steamboat Springs August 19-21. Both felt the conference was very informative about water issues affecting the West and the challenges in determining water rights and allocation.

Office Park Maintenance: General Manager Chavez reported that the Spencer parking lot has been re-sealed and striped. She asked the Executive Committee to consider dates provided to conduct performance reviews for her and Counselor McClow. She also noted that the Upper Gunnison Valley is in a flash flood watch until 12:00 a.m. on August 27th.

New Board of Directors Orientation Date/Time: After discussion with the new board members appointed in 2025, it was determined that the New Board of Directors Orientation would be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, September 29, 2025.

12. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Former UGRWCD Director Bill Nesbitt provided current directors with a copy of a news article from *The Epoch Times* entitled “If Water Has Memory, What Is it Remembering?” Mr. Nesbitt also asked for the District’s continued support of the Gunnison Recreation Center’s free swimming lessons program. He said the program was instrumental for young children to learn water safety and reaches 450 families. It was noted by staff that the District did support the free swimming lessons program this year with a \$750 donation.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS

In addition to the meetings included in the packet, it was noted that a tour of the Homestake Mine will be offered on Monday, September 22nd at 1 p.m. (prior to the September Board meeting).

14. SUMMARY OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS

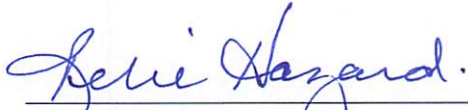
- General Manager Chavez will share the “Letter of Comment Regarding Homestake Alternatives Analysis” with representatives from Saguache and Gunnison Counties. John McClow noted that the titles of the individuals the letter would be sent to are absent and should be provided.

- Staff will share information about the USGS workshop. The link for further information is provided here:
<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/colorado-water-science-center/news/2025-usgs-stream-workshop-science-technology-research>
- Staff will confirm the New Director Orientation on Monday, September 29, 2025 with all new Directors, including Brian Stevens, who was not present at the meeting.

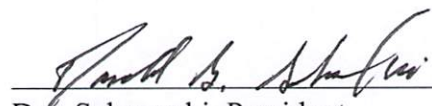
15. ADJOURNMENT

Board President Don Sabrowski adjourned the August 25, 2025 regular Board Meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rebie Hazard, Secretary



Don Sabrowski, President