

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District  
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 23, 2026 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, March 23, 2026 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, Rosemary Carroll, Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, John Perusek, Camille Richard (via Zoom), Don Sabrowski, Brian Stevens, Jeff Writer, and Brooke Zanetell.

Board members absent: Andy Spann

Others present:

Amanda Aulenbach, UGRWCD Wet Meadows Program Director  
Frank Campo, City of Gunnison Project Manager (via Zoom)  
Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD General Manager  
Bailey Friedman, UGRWCD Water Resources Project Manager  
Jules Iovino, UGRWCD Water Resources Fellow  
Leon Katona, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (via Zoom)  
John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel (via Zoom)  
Carly McGowan, City of Gunnison Engineer  
Beverly Richards, UGRWCD Office / Senior Program Manager  
Tom Rozman, Colorado Division of Water Resources  
Sue Uerling, UGRWCD Administrative Asst. / Communications Specialist  
Olivia Wilson, Gunnison Country Times  
David Wykoff, Barrick Corporation-Homestake Mine (via Zoom)  
Ari Yamaguchi, UGRWCD Water Resources Specialist

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

President Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**2. AGENDA APPROVAL**

**Director Rebie Hazard moved and Director Stu Asay seconded approval of the agenda. The motion carried.**

### **3. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 23, 2026 BOARD MEETING MINUTES:**

**Director Stu Asay moved and Director Joellen Fonken seconded approval of the February 23, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes with one correction to the Treasurer’s report, noting that Director Asay asked about the increase in the accountant’s invoice. The reply was that the increase was due to additional activity to prepare for tax season. The motion carried with the correction noted.**

### **4. TREASURER’S REPORT**

Treasurer John Perusek referred to his Memorandum in the packet. He reported that the District has reinvested some funds into bonds and a treasury note for a higher yield.

### **5. CITY OF GUNNISON WATER TREATMENT PLANT UPDATE**

Peter Rice, Director of Public Works, Frank Campo, Project Manager, and Carly McGowan Engineer, all with the City of Gunnison, gave an update on the City of Gunnison Water Treatment Plant. Mr. Rice reported that Project 1, the design phase, is completed. He said that Projects 2 and 3 are about 30 percent complete. These two phases involve the installation and construction of the intake structure and continued fundraising. City staff are currently reviewing the proposals of eight pre-qualified contractors. The total project cost is \$43 million and the City is hoping not to take out any loans for the plant to minimize rate increases for residents. The window for the construction and installation of the intake structure is between September 15<sup>th</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. They reported that a sandbag system will be used to reduce the natural flow of the river at the construction site. Approximately 20 percent of the river will remain open and flowing through this section during construction. City staff are hoping this will have minimal impact on the fishery. There will be a public outreach effort closer to the start of construction informing recreationists and the general public about the partial closure in that section. Discussion followed regarding the chlorination process and treating contaminants like PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances – forever chemicals). The water treatment plant is scheduled to be fully completed by 2030.

### **6. GENERAL COUNSEL UPDATE**

#### **Legislative Update:**

Counselor John McClow reported that the two pending bills regarding data centers in the state are not yet calendared in committees. Sponsors are planning to bring back the legislation with amendments.

Mr. McClow was asked about Governor Jared Polis’s activation of the state’s Drought Task

Force. Mr. McClow said the task force will involve a number of state agencies and drought experts to collaborate on a statewide response to worsening drought conditions.

## **7. BASIN WATER SUPPLY UPDATE**

Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards reported that this water year is the warmest to date since 1895 with 64 percent of the state in moderate or worse drought conditions and 37 percent of the state in severe or worse drought conditions. Weather forecasters are predicting continued warmer and dryer conditions throughout the spring. This past winter, snowpack was the lowest it has been in 40 years. Ms. Richards said that SWE peaked on March 9, 2026. Director Rosemary Carroll noted that peak runoff is early by about a month this year.

**Larkspur Update:** Tom Rozman, with the Colorado Division of Water Resources, reported that the Larkspur Development up near Skyland in Crested Butte is planning on 80 plus residences in the development. They have only purchased 32 units of augmentation water, which is decreed for indoor household use only. Division 4 Engineer, Bob Hurford, will be inspecting the Larkspur Development and will follow-up with a letter to residents and the developers regarding these concerns. Mr. Rozman noted that he regularly deals with failed water augmentation plans in the Upper Gunnison Valley which is a concern.

## **8. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

**Letters of Comment on Draft Environmental Impact Statement:** General Manager Chavez noted several EIS letters of comment were shared in the Board packet: UGRWCD, Colorado River District, State of Colorado, and Conservation Organizations. Counselor John McClow reported that there were no major differences in these four letters. He did say that the Conservation Organization's letter was basically following the same track as the others. They have implied the need for the Upper Basin states to contribute to the shortages, a proposal that both the State and District oppose. They have also taken a different approach to the participation of the Upper Initial Units which is contrary to the State's position.

Ms. Chavez also said she attended a debriefing with other west slope water managers and Senator Michael Bennett. She felt the meeting was helpful in outlining all of the western slope water resource concerns.

Counselor McClow noted that even though the final deadline has passed for the seven states to present a consensus alternative for post 2026 reservoir operations, the states are still meeting and attempting to work on a temporary short-term agreement to get through the next two years.

## **9. STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Water Resources Projects:** In addition to her memorandum included in the Board Packet, Water Resources Project Manager, Bailey Friedman, reviewed the location and criteria of several agricultural improvement projects the District is spearheading.

**Taylor Local User's Group (TLUG):** Chairman Don Sabrowski reported that TLUG held its first meeting of the season on March 10, 2026. Due to the low runoff predicted in the March 1<sup>st</sup> Taylor Operations Report, the group elected to reduce releases from 80 cfs down to 60 cfs through May 1<sup>st</sup> to try to conserve some water for later in the season. He noted that data from the ASO flights this past week will be very helpful going forward in confirming conditions for TLUG.

**District Grant Program:** Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards reviewed each of the applications that were received for the 2026 District Grant cycle and noted that the requests totaled roughly \$100,000 more than was allocated in the 2026 budget for grants. She explained the Grant Committee's deliberations for each application and noted that the group came to a consensus on applications to be awarded, amount of the awards, and any contractual contingencies.

Grant Committee Joellen Fonken thanked the staff for their time, effort and input in compiling the applications.

**Director Joellen Fonken made the motion to approve the District Grant Committee's 2026 recommendations to award 14 grants totaling \$269,666, which includes \$19,666 of unused and budgeted funds in the 2026 budget for 2025 projects. The motion carried.**

**Education and Outreach Committee:** District staff Sue Uerling and Jules Iovino provided photos from the Ice Masters Fishing Tournament in February and Capitol Day in March. Ms. Iovino reported that the District's social media audience continues to grow. Ms. Uerling reported that the District will undertake a targeted advertising campaign later this spring and throughout summer to educate residents and visitors alike about changing drought conditions and to enlist their help in minimizing negative impacts. Staff will share the video that was created for use at the Capitol's Water Day with the Directors.

**Wet Meadows Program:** Program Director Amanda Aulenbach reported that she received 12 applications for the two 2026 seasonal technician openings. Interviews with selected candidates will begin April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Aulenbach gave an overview of grants that were submitted or awarded since January and said the Program's success was highlighted as a case study in *Riverscape Restoration Networks* March newsletter.

General Manager Chavez commended Ms. Aulenbach for her input on the case study and noted that the Upper Gunnison River Valley community were also selected as one of Trout Unlimited's national chapter "Top 5 Conservation Towns for 2026."

**Water Quality and Quantity Program:** Water Resources Specialist Ari Yamaguchi reported that Homestake Mining Company is continuing to pursue a Discharger-Specific Variance (DSV) on Indian Creek, which may permit the concentration of uranium in Marshall Creek to exceed the state standard if there are no other viable and reasonable options. This process is driven largely by Homestake with the process being overseen by the Water Quality Control Division and various other stakeholders working in collaboration as part of a technical team. The District is one of those stakeholders. We have also offered to assist Homestake in ensuring that the community is well-informed about any public input processes.

Mr. Yamaguchi reported that current arsenic standards are impossible to meet since the current stream standard is lower than current instrument detection capabilities. Mr. Yamaguchi noted that the triennial review process is underway and will culminate in the release of the next 303(d) List of Impaired Waters for the Gunnison Basin in May 2027.

He also reported that he has been in touch with Rachel Gidley of the USGS and they are coordinating and planning around data collection needs and schedule for the Ag Return Flow Study for this coming spring and summer.

**Gunnison Basin Roundtable (GBRT):** General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that currently, the GBRT has membership openings for Delta County Municipalities, Gunnison County Municipalities and the Environment at Large. She said the Public Education and Public Outreach (PEPO) committee reported on the 2026 Education Grant awards. The GBRT also awarded three WSRF grant applications. The GBRT meeting ended early so that members could attend the Montrose State of the River event that evening.

**Scientific Endeavors:** Director Rosemary Carroll and General Manager Sonja Chavez will attend the Science Informed Spring Runoff Management in Western Colorado Conference in Glenwood Springs on March 31<sup>st</sup>. By invite only.

Director Carroll also reported that she participated in a retreat put on by the Department of Energy for Mapping Groundwater in the East River. She has also been involved in training related to how Artificial Intelligence might be matched with current models to provide more data on groundwater and evapotranspiration.

**Gunnison River Festival:** General Manager Chavez reported that the festival has been moved

forward one week to June 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> in order to avoid a conflict with FIBArk.

#### **10. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS**

The 2026 Board vacancies were shared with the Board to remind those Directors who will need to reapply for their seats by May 22, 2026. These directors are Stu Asay, Division 6 (Ohio Creek); Andy Spann, Division 7 (Gunnison River); and Brian Stevens and John Perusek, Division 8 (City of Gunnison.)

Counselor John McClow reported that he does not see a conflict of interest if a current Board member wanted to provide a letter of support for a director seeking reappointment.

#### **11. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

No comments were offered.

#### **13. FUTURE MEETINGS**

Board members were reminded that May 2026 Board meeting will be on a Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. instead of the usual Monday meeting.

#### **14. SUMMARY OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS**

- General Manager Chavez will reach out to representative Jeff Hurd about coming to the Upper Gunnison Basin. Perhaps possibly attending the CWCB Board meeting in July as they are meeting in the Upper Gunnison Basin.
- The District will assist in helping spread the work on any temporary river closures associated with the construction of the intake valve for the City Water Treatment Plant.
- The District will review how to best reach the recreation community on the low streamflows this summer, respecting private property rights, and most boatable sections.
- Staff will forward the Water Day at the Capitol video to the Directors via email.
- Staff will follow-up on developing a UGRWCD Emergency Drought Declaration.

#### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

Board President Don Sabrowski adjourned the March 23, 2026, Board Meeting at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rebie Hazard*

Rebie Hazard, Secretary

*Don Sabrowski*

Don Sabrowski, President

