

## WCRC Minutes

July 10, 2002

**Intro of members:** Joe Burkett, Wason Ranch; Jim Matush, Creede; Les Dobson, USFS; JB Alexander, Creede; Chuck Barnes, Creede; Erik Sandvik, Creede; Leigh Ann Vradenburg, Watershed Coordinator; Dale Pizel, RGWCD; Andrew Ross, CDPHE; Kathleen Reilly, CDPHE; Gail O'Connor, Creede; Laura Coppock, USFWS; Mark Walker, CDPHE; Marvin Reynolds, CSU Coop Ext., Zeke Ward, Chairman WCRC.

**Additions/corrections to the agenda:** The Agro-Engineering update by Kelley Thompson was postponed. To accommodate the schedule of Dale Pizel, a discussion of the USGS scope of work was moved to the top of the agenda.

USGS Scope of work: Leigh Ann Vradenburg explained the Scope of Work submitted by USGS regarding sampling on the Rio Grande. The proposal was designed to characterize water quality during an extremely low flow year. There would be 2 sites: one above Willow Creek and one at Wagon Wheel Gap, which would be sampled in late August or early September. Measured parameters would include dissolved oxygen, pH, specific conductance, bacteria, nutrients, major ions, total and dissolved organic carbon, and 17 dissolved trace metals. The cooperator funds (\$2,780) would be split between WCRC and the Rio Grande Water Conservancy District. Dale Pizel asked if the WCRC thought that this was a priority study that would justify the cost. Zeke Ward described the work that was contracted to USGS for zinc and flow measurements at 4 sites in the Rio Grande in May. Currently, due to budget constraints and other plans for funding, the WCRC cannot justify the costs for the proposed USGS work. Motion to decline USGS scope of work made by Mark Walker; second made by JB Alexander. Motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of minutes:** Corrections to the June minutes were previously suggested by Les Dobson and incorporated. Motion to approve the June minutes as revised made by JB Alexander; second made by Mark Walker. Motion carried.

**Coordinator's report:** Leigh Ann Vradenburg informed the committee that Art Lange had submitted a report summarizing his findings from using natural potential geophysical investigations in the floodplain. Art staked out anomalies in the field. The committee decided to look over the report, but wait to make decisions on further actions until we received a report from John Nichol.

**In-Kind:** Forms were provided in hard copy for volunteers to track time and other expenses. Leigh Ann encouraged monthly submission of these forms so that records could be kept current.

**Old business:**

#### Agro-Engineering:

Leigh Ann informed the committee that Kelley was finishing the Technical Memo 2, which expanded on specific areas of flood concern and proactive measures. Kelley asked that persons interested in copies of the report contact Leigh Ann and request hard or email copies. He also asked that they complete a survey enclosed with the report. Zeke said that this information should be put on the website and that we should keep Colorado Water Conservation Board informed of our research.

#### Forest Service Money for Reclamation:

Les Dobson indicated that the Forest Service would not have funds available for a cost share agreement due to redirection to the fire effort. The next fiscal year starts in October, and funds may be available then. Zeke said that would be fine because 319 funds will not be available for awhile anyway.

Les asked if there were any updates on permission for site access for waste pile sampling. Zeke said that he had asked Anne Pizel, and she will talk with Charles van Duzer about accessing the Happy Thought. JB indicated that he had heard about a potential land exchange involving the Happy Thought. Zeke said that we should keep an ear out for any such happenings.

#### Mark Walker update on Nelson report:

Mark Walker acquired a copy of Martin Nelson's report regarding the Emperious Tailings pile. He did not believe that WCRC would have a current use for the report, but it would be good for our records. Also, we have permission from Hecla to contact Nelson as long as we keep them in the loop. Mark recommends that we follow up with Nelson to see if he knows more details about the depth of the pile and what is below it.

#### USACE money:

Leigh Ann related her conversations with Eric Pease (USACE) regarding the potential \$50,000 that they have available for Willow Creek this year. Eric needs to submit a scope of work by July 26 to get the funding. Laura stated that it would be in the best interest of WCRC to pursue this if we could do a general scope of work now, and get the details later. Zeke said that a scope should include 4 wells, a core of the Emperious tailings pile, and some soil samples. Zeke wants Leigh Ann to confirm with Eric that there is no match required and that the work could be done soon. Motion to move ahead with Zeke's list for USACE to develop scope of work made by Kathleen Reilly; second made by Laura Coppock. Motion carried.

#### Underground work:

Leigh Ann handed out copies of the Bob Kirkham's summary of underground work from June 13, 2002. Due to the absence of parties involved in that work, further discussion was postponed.

#### **New Business**

### TMDL's:

Andrew Ross briefly summarized the results of the rule making hearing by the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC). He indicated that although there were no substantive changes for the Rio Grande, it was good that the WCRC had shown interest and participated in the meetings.

Andrew said that the 2002 303(d) list was coming out the week of July 15. Rio Grande Segment 4 will be listed for cadmium to Wagon Wheel Gap and for zinc from Willow Creek to Del Norte. Willow Creek Segment 7 will be listed for pH. The standard range is 6.5-9.0, and Willow Creek ranged 5.9-7.5. Andrew emphasized that the standards are being revisited.

Zeke said that in establishing TMDL's, we need to determine attainability; however, what if our attainable level is not below TVS?

Andrew indicated that we would have to petition to WQCC and EPA that this level is either 1) ambient, or 2) the lowest attainable according to the Use Attainability Analysis. He emphasized that this approach would work best for a particular segment. Andrew had previously discovered a flush of high metals in the winter at the start of the upward trend in the hydrograph, especially in the San Juans. He said that he may have a statistician look at mixing issues with Willow Creek and the Rio Grande.

Andrew identified the steps in developing and implementing a TMDL:

- 1) Characterize the river- flow and concentrations as they relate to seasons or months
- 2) Finish the Watershed Management Plan (WMP) and the proposed TMDL- in order to do this we need to come up with projects and determine levels that we think we can get to by lowering the load from the watershed.
- 3) Make WMP into Use Attainability Analysis (UAA)
- 4) Get USFWS and EPA on board
- 5) Petition WQCC for site specific hearing
- 6) If WQCC approves the UAA/TMDL, then submit it to the EPA
- 7) If EPA approves the UAA/TMDL, then the segment comes off the 303(d) list
- 8) Start the proposed projects
- 9) We have 20 years to come within our standards.

Zeke indicated that we need more biological sampling to monitor improvement.

Laura said that we could also compare inverts from impaired and unimpaired streams. She will locate some papers on the subject.

Andrew asked what other things he could help the committee with. Zeke said that in the future he could review a draft of the Watershed Characterization Report/Plan, identify data holes, and ensure the validity of the data.

Andrew said that he would send a copy of the Animas report for guidance. JB and the rest of the committee thanked Andrew for all of his help and continued interest.

Emperious sediment sampling:

As discussed previously, sediment sampling of the Emperious pile will be included under the USACE scope of work. The XRF method may be used.

URS open work order:

Leigh Ann indicated that she had discussed the potential for an open work order with Scott Randall to help with the final reports. She asked if this was something the committee had done before, and if they thought it was the best way to ensure that all of the reports were completed on time. Zeke said they had open work orders in the past, but only for short term projects that did not total more than \$2,000. Zeke said that he and Leigh Ann would work together to decide the best way to prioritize and organize report production. No motion was proposed.

Coordinator salary:

Zeke indicated that Leigh Ann was near the end of her first six months as coordinator, and therefore eligible for salary adjustment as deemed appropriate by the committee and the budget. He indicated that Leigh Ann had assumed responsibility for virtually all of the coordinator tasks, and did not have to hire any assistants. Motion to increase Leigh Ann's salary by \$2,000 per year made by JB Alexander; second by Joe Burkett. Motion carried.

Final Items:

Kathleen informed everyone of the Nonpoint Source Monitoring Workshop and Colorado Watershed Assembly Conference in Breckenridge September 8-13.

The next meeting will be August 7, 2002.

Meeting Adjourned 4:12 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Leigh Ann Vradenburg