

WCRC Minutes

November 5, 2003

Intro of members: Leigh Ann Vradenburg, Watershed Coordinator; Zeke Ward, Chairman WCRC; Jim Matush, Creede; Jim Mietz, SLV RC&D; Marvin Reynolds, CSU Cooperative Extension; Stanley Perkins, Creede; Mark Walker, CDPHE; Jeff Graves, CDMG.

Approval of minutes: Leigh Ann noted that the only correction to the October minutes was that references to "Hecla" should say "Creede Resources". Motion to approve the revised October minutes was made by Marvin Reynolds; second made by Jim Matush. Motion carried.

Additions/corrections to the agenda: Items 6a. Nelson Tunnel Flume, 6c. Underground Update/Future Funding, and 7a. Trust Negotiations with Hecla were tabled until December. Mark requested a discussion of next year's plans to be added as 7d.

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.

Coordinator's Report: Leigh Ann informed the committee that Les Dobson with the Forest Service was currently Acting District Ranger. He will be in this role until February or until they hire someone.

Leigh Ann spoke with Austin Buckingham, CDPHE project manager for Summitville, regarding a broken Atomic Absorption analyzer that they reportedly had on site. She looked into the AA with her lab people, but no one was aware of any broken equipment. She suggested that we call her if we found out more information.

Leigh Ann met Joe Ryan, a professor at the University of Colorado, at the Colorado Riparian Association meeting. Joe indicated that there was an opportunity for funding for some of his students to do water quality investigations in Willow Creek. He indicated that he would submit a general request for funding, and then he would discuss ideas for projects in the future.

Leigh Ann also met Marc Cittone, a graduate student in political science at UC Boulder. Marc is interested in watershed groups, and he would like to work with the WCRC and the Lefthand Watershed group. He might be in touch with some of the committee members to discuss the aspects of the organization.

The El Pomar banquet recognizing the WCRC as a finalist for an Award for Excellence will be December 4th in Colorado Springs. Four representatives from WCRC can attend. Jim Mietz

asked whether Harold Anderson or Chuck Barnes with San Luis Valley Resource Conservation and Development might be appropriate representatives because of the partnership with the WCRC. Leigh Ann said that either of those gentlemen or Jim Mietz would be appropriate representatives. Zeke indicated that he would have to check on his availability when the date was closer.

Old Business:

Erdman willow leaves: Jim Erdman gave a brief overview of his past work using phreatophytes (plants that obtain their water from the zone of saturation) as indicators of groundwater contamination. For the Willow Creek study he used willows, which are phreatophytes and zinc accumulators. He distributed maps that he had created to display the results of his preliminary willow leaf study. Background levels of zinc and cadmium in willow leaves, as sampled near Marshall Park, were 90 and 0.4 ppm, respectively. In contrast, levels in the Willow Creek floodplain were as high as 2200 ppm Zn and 47 ppm Cd. Results near the seep below the La Garita bridge on the Rio Grande were not as strong, but did show up to 490 ppm Zn and 4.6 ppm Cd. Jim Mietz asked what the benefit to the WCRC of further studies would be. Erdman said that his results so far had confirmed what was known about water quality. Zeke asked how the effects of groundwater could be separated from surface material contamination. Erdman said that the leaf study could be used as a preliminary indicator of areas of concern. Zeke asked if there were enough willows to do an adequate job. Erdman said that he would have to look at the floodplain again. Zeke asked if there would be a benefit to taking soil samples at the same time as the leaves. Erdman indicated that this would be informative, but would be costly due to the number of samples necessary for adequate characterization. Mark asked if there would be the benefit of using this method to identify natural sources. Zeke indicated that that is a secondary goal, but that there would be an advantage to identifying natural sources and decreasing clean up amounts. Leigh Ann said that the La Garita investigation was an example of how the method could be used to identify natural sources that could not easily be characterized with water sampling. Erdman indicated that he would write up a report of the study for the committee to review. Zeke asked if the committee thought that this was something that should be passed on to the TAC for the December meeting. Leigh Ann expressed three concerns about pursuing a more extensive willow leaf study at this time: 1) because this study had originally been undertaken to identify the location of the contaminated groundwater plume, she questioned the ability of the method to isolate surface from groundwater influences (based on the fact that the results for leaf analyses near well MW3 were high, despite relatively low metals concentrations in the groundwater there); 2) if further investigations of the plume were desired, the bulk of the work would need to be conducted on Wason Ranch property; and 3) there is no funding for an extensive study at this time. Zeke asked if willow leaves taken throughout the watershed could be used as an indicator of reclamation progress over time. Erdman said that he would have to think about it. Zeke indicated that Erdman should develop a proposal to bring to the committee if he wants to pursue an extensive study.

New Business:

MSHA training: Leigh Ann said that she needed to schedule the refresher course for MSHA certification in January. She said that they would probably go with Condor Geotechnical again unless CDMG had someone available to do the training in Creede. She also said that she needed to get the 40-hour course. Jeff said that he would check on scheduling through CDMG. Zeke said that if we used Condor again, he wanted to get a copy of the PBS documentary that

they showed last time.

Wason Notice of Intent to File: Zeke said that the WCRC had received a letter dated October 13, 2003 indicating Wason Ranch's intent to file a citizen initiated suit under the Clean Water Act. The defendants listed in the letter were Hecla Mining Company, Chevron Texaco Corporation, Barrick Gold Corporation (as parent to Homestake), and A.O. Smith Corporation. Zeke believed that the WCRC should post a statement on their website indicating that we had received the letter, that we will not be a party to the lawsuit, but that we will continue to work with Wason on other issues. Mark asked why Zeke thought it necessary to take a stand on this. Zeke said that the reason was to give assurance to our stakeholders that we were abiding by our original commitment to voluntary and cooperative measures.

Next year's plans: Zeke indicated that Leigh Ann had drawn up a plan for 2004 at the October meeting. Leigh Ann said that the details of the plan in terms of projects and funding sources were in the minutes and that she would email them to Mark. Mark asked if there had been any discussions of an Administrative Order on Consent for the Solomon wetlands. Zeke said that no one in the past was willing to take on the responsibility, but that we could look into it again. In the past, there was hope for Good Samaritan legislation, but now it seems that an AOC might be an alternative.

Other:

Jim Mietz indicated that we now have insurance.

Leigh Ann had copies of the Biological Report and the Geophysics Comparison Report available for review. These are also on the website.

The next meeting will be December 3, 2003.

Meeting Adjourned 3:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Leigh Ann Vradenburg