

WILLOW CREEK RECLAMATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

1:00 PM, Creede Town Hall

Present: Zeke Ward, WCRC Chairman and Mineral County Commissioner; Jeff Graves, CDRMS (Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety); Don Dustin, Creede; JB Alexander, Creede; Jim Matush, Creede; Merl Jennings, Creede; Kelley Thompson, Agro Engineering; Rex Shepperd, City of Creede; Erik Sandvik, Creede; Erika McNulty, WCRC Intern; and Carishma Gokhale-Welch, WCRC Director.

Approval of minutes: Three changes were proposed. JB pointed out that the first sentence under EPA/Commodore is misleading. In correction, the words, “the Commodore pile” was replaced with “it”. There were two typos in the May minutes that were corrected; the word “Watershed” was replaced with “Water” in the second paragraph of the director’s report, and the word “out” was replaced with “our” under Bigger Rocks at “JB” park.

JB moves to approve the minutes from May 9, 2007, Don seconds. Motion carries.

Additions/corrections to agenda: Hydroelectric meeting was added as an agenda item under New Business.

Reports:

Director’s Report

Carishma thanked all the water sampling volunteers. The water sampling event took place on May 22. There were about ten volunteers, split into two groups. A total of 21 samples were taken from East Willow Creek, West Willow Creek, and Willow Creek. Jeff Graves took the samples back to the EPA lab in Denver, where they will be tested for total and dissolved metals, and sulfates. Carishma mailed the samples collected for isotopes to the EPA lab in OK, and took the duplicate from Windy Gulch to the Sangre de Cristo lab for analysis of total and dissolved metals (Zn, Cu, Cd, Al), and sulfates.

WCRC received \$2,510 from Virginia Christensen Trust (VCT) to be used specifically for a videographer to research, record, edit, and to produce a 5-10 minute video highlighting the history and accomplishments of WCRC. The money is not to be used for office expenses. Carishma expressed that in the past, WCRC has depended on VCT funds for office expenses, and wondered if it was possible to request half the grant be used for office expenses. The Committee agreed that since the grant had already been awarded, this was not a possibility.

We received a document from Peggy Linn, EPA about the Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Program that Peggy explained in the May 9 meeting. Copies can be made available if anyone is interested.

Letters of thanks to Steve Youchum’s supervisors (John Andrews and Allen Green) have been mailed.

Gwen Christiansen emailed Carishma asking for WCRC’s water sampling data. Carishma spoke to Bryan Williams, EPA’s HRS expert, who also wanted the data. WCRC’s consolidated water sampling data has been emailed to him.

Carishma shared the Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan with the Committee. There are several references to WCRC, and to the work being undertaken by the Committee. She also shared an article in the Valley Courier about WCRC based on the Zeke’s presentation at the Rio Grande Roundtable meeting.

Chairman's Report

Zeke reported that he has been in communication with Prof. Brunswick, at Penn State. Hecla samples have been tested and some test bricks have been made. The materials in the tailings pile could easily be used in making aerated autoclave concrete bricks. Due to the high clay and silt content, it results in a superior product. Tests that have yet to be carried out include an environment stability test, and leach test. The outcome is still unclear, but if there is a potential to remove the tailings pile, and have it pay for itself, it will be ideal.

The lieutenant governor of NM saw a copy of Zeke's Brownfields presentation made in MA last year, and invited him to discuss Good Samaritan ideas. Also present at the meeting were Ron Curry, Secretary of Environment, and Reese Fullerton, Secretary of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources. It was a good meeting that generated additional support for WCRC. They were impressed with WCRC's story, and the Committee might be invited to help them start a stakeholders group. He also stated that PA has some legislation that deals with Good Samaritan issues.

We have a proposal from David Bassler's group to do a prospectus about WCRC that can be used for fund raising efforts, and be given to potential donors. There is an offer from the Hitchcock foundation to pay for it. The fees presented in the proposal have been approved. Merl moves to approve the proposed prospectus, keeping track of WCRC staff time, JB seconds. Motion carries.

TAC Report

Amethyst final construction details: Jeff presented an almost complete draft of the Amethyst final construction details. It is the recommendation of the TAC to the WCRC to approve the final draft details per comments. JB moves to go forward with the proposed project, Merl seconds. Motion carries. As further discussion, Rex asked about the life expectancy of the terrace. Jeff said that based on the cost-effectiveness, the terrace as shown in the plan has a pretty long life expectancy.

Erik Sandvik's Air Exclusion Project: Erik gave out a handout and a presentation on the benefits of sealing off air entry to the Nelson Tunnel complex, while still allowing water to drain. The TAC discussed that the calculations are useful, but it happens to be a difficult proposition given the complexity of the mine. The calculations can be used to gauge other efforts, and to justify load reductions.

Nelson Tunnel Dewatering Results: Jeff presented a hydrograph with some interesting information to the Committee.

Steve Youchum's Stream Restoration Report: This was an agenda item as an opportunity for anyone to make comments on the report. JB commented that the report included a lot of history. Don commented that the report still leaves significant questions unanswered. Kelley commented that there should be flexibility as to how the creek would meander. Zeke commented that the report would be of significant help when we try to raise money. There are too many variables in the equation at the moment – will Hecla donate land, how much money will be raised, etc. Another big uncertainty is getting cooperation from the Wason Ranch. We need to get accurate information to the public. In Zeke's opinion, the Wason Ranch people have not been given accurate information by their Board of Directors.

Old Business:

Commodore/EPA

Zeke reported that Benny Poxson responded to the letter sent by the EPA, and will be meeting with them. Bob Lawrence, Poxson's lawyer has asked for some time to become familiar with the case, and EPA has recognized that. Zeke met Bob Lawrence, and is invited to the meeting with the EPA.

MCFA

The current status is that Mark Arnold is very close to finalizing the construction details. Mark asked if WCRC is willing to do performance testing. WCRC can do the testing, but we don't have a trained person at the moment. The target is to be moving dirt before the end of July.

Tom Schillaci video

Carishma reported that if we are to use the 319 grant to pay Tom Schillaci's out-of-pocket expenses, WCRC will have to approve it as an allowable expense under Objective 6 of the NT project. The Committee does not approve it as an allowable expense. Merl moves to pay Tom \$727.81 (from DRMS) to cover his out-of-pocket expenses, Don seconds. Motion carries.

RGBRT (Rio Grande Basin Roundtable) Funds: flume repairs

Mike Gibson asked Carishma for a brief write up about the flume repairs project, and offered to send it to Rich Brown of CWCB, for comments. Merl moves to send in the required documents, Don seconds. Motion carries. As further discussion, Kelley commented that we have \$18,000 from DOLA towards the Windy Gulch project that we haven't spent yet, that could be used towards the flume.

Adopt-a-Highway

It was scheduled to collect trash along the highway on Saturday, June 23 at 10 a.m.

New Business:

Bigger Rocks at "JB's" park

We need to get some big rocks that can't be moved along East Willow creek below Solomon, at "JB's" park. Les might have a machine up there, and we could request him to move some big rocks, large enough to keep cars out. It would also be good if the city could get a dump truck out there to pick up the trash.

Hydro meeting

A meeting to discuss hydroelectricity in Creede is scheduled for June 14 at 10:00 a.m. in City Hall. Jim Mietz is bringing people from REC; the coop manager will be present. This will be an opportunity to discuss the potential of hydro power in Creede. JB presented 4 places as possible spots to harness hydro power, as they are close to town, have access to power lines, and roads. REC might be interested, but there should be a potential of at least 1MW. (REC seems interested even at lower capacity, and a minimum potential of 1MW is not necessary, based on new information).

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM; the next meeting will be July 11, 2007 at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carishma Gokhale-Welch