

WILLOW CREEK RECLAMATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, July 11, 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); Jim Mietz, SLV RC&D (San Luis Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council); Bobby Manning, Creede; Don Dustin, Creede; JB Alexander, Creede; Jim Matush, Creede; Merl Jennings, Creede; Rex Shepperd, City of Creede; Merl Jennings, Creede; Randy Randoll, NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service); Cathee Wilson, NRCS; David Doty, NRCS; Terry Jensen, SLVREC (San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative); Dave Mixa, SLVREC; Erik Sandvik, Creede; Phil Bethke, Creede; John Villyand, SLVREC; Erika McNulty, WCRC Intern; and Carishma Gokhale-Welch, WCRC Director.

Approval of minutes: JB noted that under "Hydro meeting", a minimum potential of 1 MW was not necessary, and that REC seemed interested even at a lower capacity. Erik suggested that the word "possibility" be replaced with "benefits" under the "Erik Sandvik's Air Exclusion Project".

Rex moves to approve the minutes, as amended, from June 6, 2007, JB seconds. Motion carries.

Additions/corrections to agenda: There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

Reports:

Director's Report

We received the results from the May water sampling event from the EPA. Copies are available at the office for review. Carishma would email the results to the TAC, and it could be discussed at the next TAC meeting.

Carishma received an e-mail from Barb Horn, River Watch wanting to know if we needed their assistance for water sampling in the fall. The Committee decided to discuss it at the next TAC meeting.

Carishma attended the June and July Roundtable meetings. Three projects were presented for SB 179 funds, all of which were approved. They will now have to be approved by the Colorado Water Conservation Board. The Alamosa River Watershed Restoration project was met with enthusiastic support, and is similar to the Willow Creek Stream Restoration idea.

Carishma sent in a paragraph to Mike Gibson regarding the applicability of the flume repairs project for SB 179 funds. She is still waiting to hear from him.

Erika reported that the trash collection event held on June 23, 2007, was a success. About seven volunteers showed up, and trash was collected between highway mile marker 20 and 21.

Tom Schillaci has been paid \$727.81, as was decided at the previous meeting. Tom sent in a formal letter of interest for making the WCRC video, using VCT funds. The Committee decided not to start the project till we had a better idea about what its content should be. It will be discussed at the August TAC meeting. Jeff volunteered to speak to his boss, Loretta since she has significant experience making such videos, and could perhaps assist with the process.

Carishma reported that the phone currently in use in the WCRC office belongs to Ali, and will have to be returned to her soon. Rex moves to purchase a new phone with an answering machine, Jim Matush seconds. Motion carries.

A free grant writing workshop is being hosted by the EPA on July 18 and 19, and Carishma was wondering if it would be useful (it includes Brownfields grants) to attend. Jim Mietz said that RC&D has a grant writer that could help if we made the necessary technical information available.

Carishma reported that she would be in India, on vacation, for about three weeks in January 2008.

Chairman's Report

Zeke said there was nothing to report at this time.

Old Business:

Commodore/EPA

Ben Poxson and his lawyer, Bob Lawrence, are in negotiations with the EPA, to reach a reasonable settlement. Zeke talked about how the new EPA tool, with a more streamlined Administrative Order on Consent (AOC), could be more efficient. It grants limited release/responsibility to citizens. It will open the door to partial cleanups, instead of full compliance with the Clean Water Act, but it still doesn't protect citizen against lawsuits.

MCFA

The final construction details were received from Mark Arnold. Carishma prepared a bid document, which is available on the WCRC website. The pre-bid meeting is scheduled for July 24 at 11:00 in City Hall.

Amethyst/ Last Chance project

The bid documents for Amethyst and Last Chance projects are posted on the WCRC website. A pre-bid meeting for both the projects will be held on July 12 at the Creede Mining Museum at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. respectively. We haven't yet received a signed letter of consent from Ben. Poxson. Zeke made a follow up phone call during the break, and reported that it was Ben Poxson's intent to sign the consent form. He gave his verbal consent over the phone.

New Business:

Hydroelectricity

JB did a recap of the June 14 hydro meeting that took place in City Hall. REC was invited to participate, and determine if they would be interested in the small quantities of hydro that we can generate. JB has identified four possible spots, with easy access, which could potentially be used to generate hydroelectricity. Based on some rough calculations, JB has estimates of the quantity of power that can be generated during high flow and low flow. REC seems interested even at lower capacity, not necessary 1 MW, as discussed at the previous meeting.

We need to investigate the power usage in Creede (summer vs. winter), to determine if the existing distribution system can be used. Also, even though it would be a non-consumptive use, we need more information on other obstacles that we might be faced with.

REC would be willing to help with the project, as they have access to engineers, and support from Tristate. The next step is to do a feasibility study, and take into account preliminary cost estimates.

JB asked Jim Mietz about the availability of funds to do a feasibility study. Jim presented the 'Handbook on Renewable Energy Financing for Rural Colorado', which has numerous sources for possible funding.

Carishma reported that Kelley has phoned earlier with some comments. He presented the project in three different ways – pure hydro, hydro as part of flood control, and hydro coupled with water treatment (keeping West Willow separate). According to him, the third option might be the most economical one.

JB was concerned about disputes that might arise regarding the distribution of benefits. Zeke hoped that any such disputes would not impede the process, and that the greatest value would be for the greatest number of people to benefit. It is important to keep people well informed. We have to give people the opportunity to be present when these issues are being discussed.

The applicability of WCRC meetings as a forum to discuss this issue was discussed. If the discussions move beyond the mandate of the WCRC, a political sub-division can be made or a 501 (c)(3) can be formed. It might be prudent to have an oversight board be in charge, perhaps by creating an energy district.

JB proposes that while initial pilots or feasibility studies are being carried out, WCRC could be the home for this project; it would require some of the Director's time, and some discussion at the monthly meetings. JB moves to make WCRC a public forum to discuss hydroelectricity, and function in an advisory capacity, Merle seconds. Motion carries.

Jim Mietz thinks that it would be appropriate to write a letter to the EPA to inform them of the present discussion, and potential of hydroelectricity on Willow Creek, and inform them that WCRC will be hosting these operations. It would also be wise to notify the US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, Division of Water Resources, etc.

Adjourn:

Merl moves to adjourn the meeting, Rex seconds. The meeting is adjourned at 3:05 PM. The next meeting will be held on August 1, 2007 at 1:00 PM, with a TAC meeting preceding it at 10:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika McNulty