

**DOLORES RIVER DIALOGUE
STEERING COMMITTEE
Oct. 29, 2013**

Present: Don Schwindt, Dolores Water Conservancy District; Vern Harrell, Bureau of Reclamation; Jerry Koskie, San Juan Basin Farm Bureau; Amber Kelley, San Juan Citizens Alliance; Peter Mueller, The Nature Conservancy; Matt Clark, Trout Unlimited. Guests: Mike Preston, DWCD. Contract staff: Marsha Porter-Norton, facilitator; Gail Binkly, recorder.

Agenda: The agenda was approved with no changes.

Implementation Team and Plan update: Peter said during the last year, the team has primarily focused on revising the plan's goals and measures section and its baseflow section, both of which have been challenging. The IT is now working on the chapter about spill management, which is less controversial because it is focused on creating benefits without any possible cost to users. The team will be discussing this chapter at their meeting tomorrow and then will send it for review to the DWCD and MVI boards. A key question is: At what point are the boards comfortable that there is a sufficient water surplus to allow for an early release to suppress temperatures (and delay native-fish spawning)?

Peter said this section originally included hydrographs for 25, 50, 100, and 200 thousand acre-feet, but a 66-thousand-acre-foot profile is being added because the Definite Plan Report for the Dolores Project used that number. These hydrographs serve as guides to help BOR and DWCD manage releases to benefit recreation and the fishery. Peter emphasized that the IP is an advisory resource, not a mandate.

The last chapter of the IP will involve dealing with non-native predators and stocking native fish. Peter said the IT hopes to have had all the chapters reviewed by the end of the year.

Mike described several other important improvements in the goals/measures chapter:

- It now examines the three native fish distinctly over different reaches. There is more description of their unique needs and how they are faring in different reaches and below the San Miguel River.
- The baseline for monitoring has been set at the year 2004. The cycle between then and now contains years with a wide variety of different conditions.
- Instead of concrete targets, the IP looks more at trends for all three species. For instance, the roundtail-chub population is fairly stable even through drought periods.
- A structure for monitoring has been added, examining which variables have positive effects for the native fish.

Regarding the baseflow section, Mike said there is no discussion of where additional water would come from. This chapter ends with a table of all known water sources, and nothing stands out as available.

Both the goals/measures and baseflow chapters have been reviewed by the DWCD and MVI boards, and their comments and concerns have been incorporated, so those two chapters are essentially finished for now. The team hopes to have all the different pieces reviewed by the end of the year. Then the document will need to be assembled in one piece so stakeholders can

review it as a whole. It is hoped it can be ratified early in 2014. Once the IP is finished it will still be part of an adaptive-management process and there will be annual evaluation reports.

Jerry said monitoring of water temperatures will be important for spill management. Peter said adding a temperature-monitoring component at Slickrock/James Ranch was a useful step. Mike said the PIT array there is also helpful. He said there has been discussion of adding another array and where the best place might be.

Don said some thought should be given to how to inform and educate the larger community about the latest draft of the IP. He believes the schedule for complete approval has been highly optimistic. Don said he is comfortable with the direction of the IP, but more outreach to the broader community is needed.

Amber said another key stakeholder group to be considered is the boating community. They also submitted comments about the first draft of the IP, but the IT has not had an iterative process with them as it has with the water boards.

Possible venues for obtaining broad community input were discussed, including DWCD and MVI board meetings, annual meetings of the livestock association and other groups, and a meeting of the full DRD.

Mike said he can present an overview at the livestock association's and other groups' annual meetings, but those are not good forums for discussing the IP in detail.

Amber said it is good to have different interests engaging in discussion with each other, rather than just with the IT. The committee agreed and said this is why the DRD was created. **There was consensus that a full DRD meeting would be a good venue for discussing the IP with the broader community, but that it will be important to do outreach ahead of time to make sure there is interest in coming to the meeting.**

Mike said people need to know that their input on the IP was listened to and incorporated into the revised plan. Peter agreed and said it would be good to emphasize the differences between the "before" and "after" chapters, perhaps through a summary sheet. The group agreed.

Marsha said the Legislative Subcommittee has to be in the loop as well.

Next steps:

→ The DRD-SC will wait for a go-ahead from the IT before taking steps toward further outreach. It may be desirable to have a team that does specific outreach before the full DRD meeting.

Question from July DRD meeting: Don brought up a question that had been raised by an audience member about a statistic cited in the 319 watershed plan regarding the number of acres irrigated by MVI, which was given as 37,500. This was discussed at the DRD-SC's Sept. 3 meeting, and Don said he and Marsha had discussed it later by email. Don said if the watershed plan were still in draft, he would suggest inserting a phrase identifying where the statistic came from. However, he and Marsha believe the source is implied in the language, and because the plan is final, they believe it's best to drop the matter.

There was consensus to do this.

Next steps:

→ Don will call the audience member who raised the question to let him know.

Finance issues: Marsha provided handouts breaking down the total costs of the watershed plan and showing the DRD budget for 2013 and 2014. She said the DRD is operating at a deficit because of the watershed plan, as discussed at the last meeting. She said the plan cost more than anticipated, but it is a good document. She thanked the DWCD for carrying the deficit, which is \$16,733, but said this should not continue indefinitely.

Marsha said she, Peter and Don have talked about the budget and believe there is an opportunity to obtain more funding from partner matches and from the Southwestern Water Conservation District. They left the September DRD-SC meeting with approval to ask SWCD for a grant of \$10,000 to \$15,000 to help fund the DRD. They were not ready to apply in time for SWCD's September funding cycle; the next cycle is in February.

Vern voiced concern about the total cost of the watershed plan and asked where it had gone awry and how to make sure something similar doesn't happen in the future.

Marsha said writing the plan took considerable time. After the original consultant, Chester Anderson, moved to California, the DRD-SC tried to keep him on board because of his familiarity with the area. However, ultimately he didn't produce a plan. Jeff Kane and Ann Oliver were then asked to take over the plan and proved very effective. She said the resulting document is solid and substantial.

Marsha said the plan needed to be finished because DWCD had already received the state grant for the project, and if it were not completed, the district would be out \$26,000. She said one lesson learned was that it is important to track expenses better.

Marsha suggested establishing a financial subcommittee to help keep abreast of budget matters because budgets and finances are not her area of expertise. Marsha asked if a visioning or goal-setting session would also be helpful.

Peter said in order to stay within the budget, it's important to make sure the DRD and DRD-SC are meeting for a purpose and not for the sake of meeting. He said it's also important not to look to a consultant prematurely on a project.

Don suggested staff people might be able to do facilitating and recording for the DRD in order to save money. Mike said he could not possibly assume all Marsha's duties as facilitator, but DWCD can provide other support, such as help with the financials. He would like to maintain continuity in the facilitation but find ways to take some of the load off Marsha.

Amber said that halfway through a two-year budgetary cycle it is not unreasonable to need to raise \$16,000. It was agreed that the DRD has achieved many accomplishments over a two-year period, including a dialogue, the IP (indirectly), the watershed plan, and progress toward legislation for a National Conservation Area. Peter said the DRD is the spark for all this shared work. The work could happen outside the DRD, but the DRD inspires it and finds support for it.

The IT has specified changes in spill management that work for everyone and has helped improve monitoring; those are also victories for the DRD.

Mike said what makes this effort unique is the broad base and diversity of participation, and the fact that it is a sustained effort.

It was agreed that financial reports should be produced for each meeting, using a standard template, in order to keep up-to-date on the budget. The group also agreed that concerns about the watershed plan's budget should be put in the past and that there should be better tracking of expenses moving forward.

Next steps:

- Financial reports will be produced for each meeting, using a standard model. Don, Marsha and Peter will work on the template, with help from DWCD.
- Better tracking of expenses will be done in the future.
- A grant application will be submitted to SWCD for its February cycle.
- If a retreat is needed in the future, the DRD-SC will have one.

Watershed plan: Marsha said an idea had been suggested for moving forward with monitoring by tying the IT's monitoring work into the watershed plan. According to Ann Oliver, who is the coordinator for the Animas River watershed plan, it is not necessary to have a state-approved plan on record to write a grant for implementation. The grant would be under the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's nonpoint source management program; the application is due Jan. 8. Marsha said the direction would have to be defined, and the purpose would define the amount of money requested.

Don said given the budget discussion, it is difficult to think of such a next step. He feels comfortable with DRD's grant application to SWCD, but the group may not be ready to tackle the next piece. Don said the DRD-SC needs to prioritize its time and efforts first, then start tackling the top priorities and deciding how to fund them.

Matt said the DRD-SC does not have to take this next step, but the IT may decide to seek funding for monitoring. Peter said the DRD-SC needs to identify priorities for monitoring and needs to seek CPW's advice first.

There was consensus that it would be best to wait and determine budget priorities before pursuing funding for projects under the watershed plan.

Marsha said these grant cycles recur periodically. If the group ever wants to seek funding for a watershed-related project, she thinks this will be available again.

Next steps:

- Marsha will ask Ann how often these grants become available.
- It was suggested that Peter discuss this grant briefly with the IT.

Update from the Legislative Subcommittee: Amber distributed the most current Legislative Parameters document and gave an update on the subcommittee's activities:

- The IP has been an important part of the subcommittee's recent agendas.

- The subcommittee has had discussions with the BLM regarding its policy manuals regarding units in the National Landscape Conservation System.
- The final version of the San Juan Public Lands resource management plan has been released and the subcommittee learned about the other two native-fish species being included as ORVs on the Lower Dolores.
- The subcommittee is continuing to build a list of issues related to the legislation. At each meeting they want to discuss a couple of issues. When an issue is completed it will be added to the Legislative Parameters document, but some won't need to be addressed in the legislation.
- The subcommittee continues to work with San Miguel County to get maps in order to work on the boundary. There is a protocol when maps are produced for a legislative effort and they have been unable to obtain what is needed so far, causing delays in the boundary work. They may work with the counties to obtain maps for the time being in order to move forward. Amber said they still need to meet with landowners, especially in the Slickrock area. Marsha said the DRD might be able to provide some resources to help with the maps.
- Ernie Williams continues to be involved in outreach to Montrose County. A group from the subcommittee will probably meet with some Montrose officials in November.
- The subcommittee has been waiting for the IP to be completed to tackle fish and water issues.
- The parameters document hasn't really changed since the last time this group saw it. This will be the basis for the legislation.

Don said the last time he looked at this document, he had concerns about bullet points that might be in conflict with each other (such as protecting ORVs vs. protecting water rights). He said this needs to be wrestled out.

Marsha said the section on fish and flows has been the most challenging part of the legislation. The subcommittee has been waiting for the IP to be largely completed and for it to have broad support; then the subcommittee will see how that informs the legislation. The subcommittee has talked about having representatives of the conservation community and the water community meet to work out ideas on the fish/flows section, then take their work to the full subcommittee for its consensus. After that, the ideas would go to the Lower Dolores Working Group, then to DWCD and MVI, other environmental groups, etc. The legislative language would flow from that. Marsha said three more meetings of the LDWG may be necessary so they can become fully familiar with the issues and ideas.

Peter suggested a change in the process, saying maybe the subcommittee shouldn't develop a document and give its consensus, then seek input afterward. He said maybe the DRD should send out an electronic document for comments earlier in the process.

Marsha said the DRD-SC needs to make sure it is not changing the document outside the LDWG. If the legislative proposals need to be vetted, the LDWG should do it first.

Amber said anyone with concerns can take them to individual members of the Legislative Subcommittee. She said it has been a long time and she hopes the group can move forward,

now that the IP is being finished. Within the next few months she hopes the parameters document will be completed and ready to go out for feedback.

Don said the support of the broad community will be key. Marsha said the process for obtaining community support needs to be figured out.

Don discussed some language suggested by Cole on making sure a WSR designation downstream will not affect the Dolores Project. He said this should be included. Amber said Marsha will find that and put it on the issues list for the subcommittee.

Minutes: The minutes of Sept. 3 were approved with one change.

Next meeting: The next meeting of the DRD-SC will be Tuesday, Dec. 3, at 9 a.m.