

**DOLORES RIVER DIALOGUE
STEERING COMMITTEE**

Feb. 1, 2011

6 pages

Present: Vern Harrell, Bureau of Reclamation; Meghan Maloney, San Juan Citizens Alliance; Peter Mueller, The Nature Conservancy (by phone); and Don Schwindt, DWCD. Guests: Dale Smith, Trout Unlimited. Also Marsha Porter-Norton, facilitator; Ann Oliver, DRD science; and Gail Binkly, recorder.

Agenda: The agenda was approved with no changes.

DRD goals: Marsha presented for discussion a rough draft of a DRD goals document, including the existing DRD purpose statement, function, projects/activities and potential desired outcomes. She said Ann and Ken Curtis had reviewed this draft.

Some comments related to different sections were:

Functions of the DRD

- The DRD-SC agreed that, in the third bulleted item, Fort Lewis College should be added to the list of groups with which information and resources should be shared.

- Don said a bullet should be added about providing hydrology education regarding sideboards, law, contracts and constraints. He suggested it should be the second bullet, above the bullet about addressing scientific questions. Meghan agreed that order conveys a message, but said she is not sure that Don's bullet should be second.

Projects/Activities the DRD is Supporting in 2011

- Ann had raised a question about whether "technical review of DRD science efforts", as called for in the second bullet, would include peer review. She said such peer review would not have to be at the level required by technical journals. She said "technical review" might be a broader, more general term. Don suggested saying "peer review as needed".

- Meghan said the second bullet should call for the Science Committee to comment on the scientific aspects of new framework proposals, in order to be consistent with the third bullet, which calls for the Hydrology Committee to comment on hydrological aspects of new proposals.

- Regarding the fourth bullet, which calls for hosting "full DRD meetings biannually", Meghan said the DRD-SC had said there could be additional DRD meetings if needed because of new projects.

- Meghan asked whether there should be a statement describing the function of the DRD-SC. Marsha agreed and suggested adding, "DRD will ensure that a Steering Committee is in place" and describing its roles.

- Ann asked why the title of this section specifies projects/activities "in 2011". Others agreed with this concern, because there is a long-term process involved in many DRD projects. Marsha said adaptive management would naturally be a multi-year project. She said there could be a

preamble stating that these projects/activities are for the course of the next year, but some of these will be multi-year endeavors and will be revisited beyond 2011.

The Ways Success Will Be Measured (Administrative/Meetings):

- The committee agreed a bullet should be added stating, “The DRD will meet at least twice”. It was also agreed to add the phrase “or more” after statements about the number of meetings of the Hydrology and Science committees.

The Ways Success Will Be Measured (Do-able Alternatives)

- Vern asked why the second bullet specified that “at least two proposals” will go through the process and be sent to the DRD. He suggested stating that “all do-able proposals” will make it through the process. Dale commented that this bullet item is defining how to measure success, and one measure is if at least two proposals make it all the way through the process.

Vern said there may be proposals that take multiple years to complete. He thinks the DRD is successful as long as all the ideas are introduced and launched through the process. To say the DRD is not successful if only one proposal makes it through doesn’t make sense; there might not be two proposals each year.

Don said he could see value in both arguments and said maybe the thought process should make it through in a year, but the implementation would take longer. Meghan suggested attaching some of the Framework Process to the goals statement.

Meghan said having a specific number can be helpful because it sets a bar and a goal. There has been criticism of the DRD for not having accomplished many tangible things, but this statement makes it clear the DRD is aiming for a concrete goal. Vern added that, when applying for grants, it might be beneficial to have a specific number as a goal.

Marsha suggested keeping the goal of two projects, but including a preamble stating that this is an intention. Don said to keep that explanation in the bullet format rather than as a preamble.

The Ways Success Will Be Measured (Exploring an Adaptive Management Model)

- Marsha said adaptive management is a huge project involving many parties, and this section will require careful thought. She said maybe this will evolve into a proposal that there should be an adaptive-management mechanism in place to take advantage of opportunities and to try to meet the needs of various interests. This may move away from saying that the river is always managed for one or another particular interest.

Vern asked if this is creating an expectation that won’t be met. He said the Biology Committee makes recommendations and the Bureau of Reclamation wants to follow them, but it is not always possible, and the Biology Committee does not have the final authority. He said if an adaptive-management plan is developed, the BOR wants to do everything it can to further that.

Meghan said the word “explore” is in the title and in the sentence. She doesn’t believe this goal sets any expectations beyond continuing to talk about it. She doesn’t think it is necessary to be very specific.

Don said the chart on Page 4 showing desired outcomes and ecological objectives needs to be reworked because it ignores constraints. He suggested the following additions:

- Adaptive-management strategy appears to be a natural outcome.
- Acknowledge that adaptive-management strategy may be very difficult to get to.
- Respect existing contracts and authorities.
- Acknowledge the complexity of the scientific knowledge given the reality of the hydrology.

Don said no baseline is in place that would allow the establishment of specific ecological goals on the river. Rather than waiting for that to happen, the DWCD and BOR are trying to move forward with some goals in mind. He said the spill has already been manipulated in some years to help native fish, so we are already in an adaptive-management scheme. The question is, will we take bigger steps?

It was suggested that the DRD could be a facilitator to realistically explore adaptive-management strategies. Marsha suggested just saying that the model will be explored and DRD-SC will facilitate the discussion.

Don said it isn't necessary to hide from this or make it too generic and it would be good to define some of the strategies. Meghan said a conclusive list would not be desirable because there may be other opportunities that aren't known yet.

Ann said adaptive management is nothing but a process. It starts with deciding to try something and projecting what it will accomplish, then seeing if it does that. The hard part has been agreeing on the measures to try. She suggested adding this into the functions of the DRD with language such as, "Continue discussions to find places of agreement on actions to try in an adaptive-management framework." The group agreed this could be added under the DRD functions.

The Ways Success Will Be Measured (Science Committee)

- It was agreed to add a new bullet, "Work with the Hydrology and Steering committees".
- Meghan asked about the \$50,000 grant mentioned in this section and described as "related to Native Fish on the Lower Dolores River". She asked whether it will duplicate "A Way Forward".

Marsha said the idea for the \$50,000 grant came from the Science Committee. The original application was for \$95,000. After the DOW expressed concerns about the proposal, the CWCB denied it. Then late last year Linda Bassi informed Mike Preston that \$50,000 of it had been granted. Marsha said the proposal has some of the same elements as "A Way Forward", but these are two separate efforts. The CWCB wanted to combine them and the DRD-SC said no. Marsha said the Science Committee is to give recommendations about possible uses for the money, and the DRD-SC is to submit a revised work plan in July.

Ann said the grant was originally about addressing non-native fish in order to help native fish. She thinks it can be made more complementary to "A Way Forward". Marsha said dovetailing the two efforts makes sense.

Meghan said in the future it would be good to make sure all the DRD-SC members know about grant applications to make sure there is not such overlap. Marsha said she understands the confusion, but \$50,000 to do scientific research will be beneficial as long as the committee agrees with the direction of the research. The Science Committee should talk in March about how best to use the money and will bring those recommendations back to the SC.

The Ways Success Will Be Measured (Hydrology Committee)

- It was agreed to add a new bullet, “Work with the Science and Steering committees”.

The Ways Success Will Be Measured (LDWG/A Way Forward/Legislative Committee)

- It was agreed to add a new bullet, “Work with the Science and Hydrology committees”.
- Dale suggested adding clarification to the first bullet to show that the Lower Dolores Working Group is a committee of the DRD.

Other comments

- Meghan said the Biology and Spill committees seem to be missing from the document. Marsha said perhaps they could be included under the functions section because some people in the DRD are part of the Spill Committee.
- Meghan said she believes American Whitewater will have comments on Page 4. She will check.
- Don said for him to be comfortable with Page 4 the hydrology needs to be included. Marsha said discussion of Page 4 should be left for later, and all agreed.

Big Gypsum report: Ann said she had received comments about the report from David Graf and Don, and she did her best to incorporate them into the document. David’s were technical comments regarding some of the data and indicating to temper some of the conclusions. Don’s were about acknowledging the complexity involved in managing the river and the difficulty of establishing baseline conditions given the different eras of hydrology on the river and the sideboards, contracts and constraints. Ann said she still hasn’t fully incorporated Jim White’s comments.

Marsha said the DRD-SC may want to have a detailed discussion about this at the next meeting. Ann said she doesn’t believe there were any conflicts between David’s and Don’s comments but she would like to have both of them present for the talk.

Don said on Page 6, in the background section, he asked Ann to add a paragraph to summarize the Correlation Report’s findings regarding hydrology and he wanted excerpts from that report to be put in as an appendix, but he didn’t see those changes. Ann said she didn’t add such an appendix because the Correlation Report is available on-line. Don said there are already large appendices attached to the Big Gypsum report and having an appendix regarding the Correlation Report would give more it emphasis than a link to the web site. Ann and Marsha agreed it would be all right to add such an appendix.

Don also said he would like additional language about the complexity of establishing the appropriate baseline to look to for improvement of the downstream environment, and regarding different eras of hydrology on the river.

Ann said she would be willing to include such statements regarding eras if there is data to support them. Don said he thinks such data is in the Correlation Report. He suggested adding a timeline depicting the different eras; Ann said that would be a good idea. She thinks it would help to interpret the data in the report. Meghan said that is acceptable to her if it is a visual interpretation of existing data.

Don also said he will draft a paragraph he would like to see added.

Meghan said the Correlation Report was created through a larger group of people and she is comfortable with using it, but if anything is to be added beyond what is in the Correlation Report, that needs a bigger discussion. Meghan said she is comfortable with data from the report being added, but not an interpretation of that information.

Don said his paragraph may not be completely derived from the Correlation Report, but he believes hydrology is getting short shrift in the goals statement and he is trying to correct that. He said he doesn't believe what he writes will be an interpretation of fact, but simple fact. He said this information about hydrological eras needs to be updated beyond the Correlation Report, which was produced in 2006, and he will try to be fair.

Meghan said that is acceptable as long as the process is transparent, because the discussion involves a small subset of people. The DRD-SC could sign off on the language and somebody outside the group could find it unacceptable.

It was agreed that Don will draft a paragraph and send it to Ann, and everyone can review it.

Marsha said the Science Committee needs to review the Big Gypsum report and discuss it in April. Then she will put two hours on the DRD-SC May agenda for discussion of the report, and she and Ann can still meet the May 31 deadline for the next grant application.

Don said the Hydrology Committee also needs to review the report. Marsha suggested asking Ken Curtis and the Hydrology Committee to change their April meeting to a joint meeting with the Science Committee to review the report. This was agreed upon.

Marsha said this is a good lesson for subsequent reports. In the future it would be good to have a draft document, then a joint meeting for review of that draft by Science and Hydrology, then a joint recommendation from those committees to the DRD-SC. Marsha said the Hydrology and Science committees fill the role of the old Technical Committee.

Southwest Basin Roundtable: Meghan said she and Mike Preston are sharing responsibility on developing an inventory of consumptive and non-consumptive projects in the Roundtable's area. She is addressing the basin east of Mancos east and he is addressing everything from Mancos west. The roundtable has asked that the DRD be listed on the non consumptive project list. Meghan said she just wanted to keep everyone informed and that she would work with Marsha on completing a worksheet describing the DRD.

Hydrology Committee: Marsha said the DWCD board agreed to support a new SnoTel site at its Jan. 13 meeting. Vern said the Natural Resources Conservation Service is interested in only one new site at present.

Funding was discussed. Vern said the DWCD has \$2,000 left over from the funding for the Sharkstooth SnoTel site. Meghan said she will pursue with Peter and her group how to obtain funding for the remaining \$10,000 needed from local groups.

Science Committee: Ann said it was meeting this afternoon and would look at ecological outcomes that were discussed earlier, as well as planning for the next two years. plus the idea of the joint meeting in April.

Grant application to SWCD: Marsha said she had not finished the grant application. She reviewed the proposed budget for the DRD, and suggested instead of asking SWCD to fund a budget involving the past (2010 and 2011) requesting funding for 2011-12 in the amount of \$60,000. She still plans to discuss the request with Bruce Whitehead of the CWCB before making the application. The next application deadline is May. Meghan said she can help if needed.

Public comment: Dale said he believes Marsha is shorting herself on the two hours a month for general coordination included in the proposed budget. Marsha said the number is fairly accurate.

Meeting notes: The Jan. 4 minutes were approved with no changes.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be March 1.