

Vallecito Creek/Pine River Workgroup

Meeting 2 Summary

July 15, 2010

draft - 2 pages

NOTE: The Web site for the River Protection Workgroup, including the Vallecito/Pine Workgroup, is <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/riverprotection>.

Facilitator Tami Graham explained that this meeting was essentially a second kickoff for the Vallecito Creek/Pine River Workgroup. Last month's meeting was attended almost entirely by members of the River Protection Workgroup (RPW) steering committee. Since then, RPW members have tried to spread the word about the Vallecito/Pine process in order to attract more stakeholders.

Overview of RPW and workgroup process: Chuck Wanner and John Taylor described the process by which the RPW was organized and how five separate workgroups were launched under its auspices to study different rivers and streams in the basin. (See meeting summary from Meeting 1, June 15.) They explained that this is an attempt to encourage people who live on the Vallecito or Pine, who use and enjoy these streams, to talk about what sort of management they want. The goal is to try to protect the values in the watershed while still allowing use of the stream. The outcome of the process is not pre-set; although this process is designed to discuss alternatives to Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation, WSR remains on the table. John said that many diverse interests came together during the first workgroup process, Hermosa Creek's, and were able to reach agreement on a management plan.

Tami reviewed the ground rules, three-phased process, and consensus concept for the workgroup.

Expectations of workgroup members: Tami said this process is open to anyone who is interested. Ideally, workgroup members would attend every meeting because it will make the process move more swiftly and smoothly if new people aren't showing up after several meetings and asking questions that have already been covered. However, the process will not be closed to anyone at any point. Tami said there will probably be a total of eight to 10 meetings, but if the workgroup finishes in fewer meetings, that is fine.

Decision to proceed: At the first meeting, the stakeholders tentatively decided to proceed but said more stakeholders are needed to make a definite decision. At that time it was decided to have at least two more meetings.

Ham Wright said the group should proceed only if a new designation such as WSR status would protect the river more than the current wilderness protection does.

Barbara Jefferies of the La Plata-Archuleta Cattlemen's Association said she had heard that ranchers had their grazing allotments reduced as a result of the Hermosa Creek Workgroup process. Chuck Wanner, Jean Taylor, and others who were part of that process said that was untrue. Jimbo Buickerood of the San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA) said a grazing analysis was being conducted by the U.S. Forest Service at the same time as the HCW process, but they were not connected. Chuck said the

workgroup process is not a Forest Service process but is the first effort of its type in the state. It was started jointly by the SJCA and the Southwestern Water Conservation District.

The group said it would like clarification on how this process and possible WSR designation would affect grazing, because there is a perception that the HCW process resulted in a grazing cutback.

The group reached consensus to proceed with the Vallecito/Pine process but urged that it be kept as short as possible.

Initial information sheet: The sheet was compiled by Ann Oliver using information from the steering committee. Participants were asked to read it at their leisure and offer suggestions about anything missing or incorrect. Some suggestions for additional information topics to be included in the sheet were:

- Conservation easements that may be held by some ranches in the watershed that could affect the streams.
- More about the lakes in the watershed. Water Commissioner David Hoffman said the lakes are all natural lakes, including Emerald Lake, the cribbing that raised it a few feet having mostly disappeared.
- The ditches involved, including the Pine River/Weminuche Ditch and the Weminuche Pass Ditch.
- Historic water flows on the streams.
- More from the San Juan National Forest's draft land management plan about the values in the streams and how WSR status could affect their management. Jimbo agreed to provide the specific paragraphs from the document.

John also commented that, in addition to the terrestrial wildlife listed on the information sheet, this area was once grizzly habitat and was the place where the last grizzly in Colorado was found in the 1950s.

Other information: Winn Wright provided a handout on the Pine River Watershed Group with links to helpful data.

Outreach to other stakeholders: The stakeholders at tonight's meeting agreed the group needs more members. It was noted that the group would like a county commissioner to be involved. Tami, Jean and others said a broad spectrum of interests have already been invited to the table, but suggestions for others are always welcome. Suggestions about stakeholders who should be contacted should be sent to Meghan Maloney at meghan@sanjuancitizens.org or Steve Fearn at fearneng@rmi.net.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be in August at a time and location to be determined.