

# **Coal Creek Watershed Coalition**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 4:00-5:30PM  
Crested Butte Town Hall

### **Attendance:**

Robin Jones, Steve Glazer, Perry Anderson, Anthony Poponi, Amy Weinfurter, Harvey Castro, Rodney Due, Wendy Brown

### **Sign-up Sheet**

A signup sheet was passed around to record attendance at the meeting.

### **Announcements** (4:00-4:10)

1. The Town Council Meeting on Monday, December 15, includes an EPA presentation summarizing their work. Advisory Committee members are invited to attend.
2. Anthony passed around an invoice for the \$3000 payment to Trees, Water and People for the second-year OSM VISTA member, to get consensus to send it to the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund. The money from the Healthy Rivers Fund will be sent to Trees, Water, and People, the non-profit that sponsors the VISTA position, once it is received. Steve Glazer motioned to authorize payment of the invoice in support of the VISTA program for \$3000. Harvey Castro seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously without abstentions.
3. The sixth issue of the Friends of Coal Creek newsletter has been completed. Copies are available at the meeting and will be distributed throughout town.

### **Approval of minutes**

Steve Glazer motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the November 2008 meeting as amended. The amendments were related to grammar and typographical errors and not related to content. Robin Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously without abstentions.

### **Agenda Items** (time in minutes denoted in parentheses)

#### **1. 2008 August Data Review (4:15 – 4:44)**

Anthony summarized the feedback he received after the November 2008 meeting: several Advisory Group members suggested that his presentation of data could take a broader scope, and highlight only the most important details. He prefaced his presentation with his intention to follow these suggestions, and asked attendees to ask him to elaborate when necessary.

Before discussing the results of the August 2008 sampling, Anthony referred the attendees to page 2 of the meeting materials, which reviewed the connection between total phosphorous, and nitrate- nitrite to Individual Sewer Disposal Systems.

Anthony directed the group's attention to Table 1, which reported phosphorus data from sampling 2006-2008 as well as a summary of total phosphorus data from one site, Coal-00, from 2000-2008. Historical sampling data for Coal-00 from 2000-2008 was compiled using United States Geological Survey (USGS) data for all sampling dates prior to August 16, 2006 after which, the Coalition began monitoring the site as well. The high phosphorous levels at sampling sites Coal-30 and Coal-10 in the August 20 2008 sampling data stood out as especially significant. In response to a question from Steve, Anthony confirmed that the data was reported in units of milligrams per liter. Weather was ruled out as a cause for the high phosphorous levels at these sites, as the samplers remembered that the weather had been normal on the sampling data, and other Advisory Committee members recalled that the sampling had occurred during a time of low rainfall.

The data summarized in Table 2 showed very limited nitrate-nitrite detections, in keeping with historically low levels of these nutrients at the USGS site at Coal-00. Anthony reviewed the detection limit, the lowest level a nutrient can be detected at, as well as the reporting limit, the lowest level a nutrient will be reported by the laboratory. Due to quality assurance and quality control standards, reporting limits are often higher than detection limits. Nutrient criteria is expected to be in place for Coal Creek by 2011, so collecting this data now will provide important historical background for understanding future trends.

In Figure 1, high total phosphorous levels at Coal-30 were not correlated with similarly high E. coli levels. Additionally, the high E. coli levels at Coal-02, Coal-01, and Coal-00 were not correlated with high total phosphorous levels. This disconnection between phosphorous and E. coli values suggests that ISDSs may not be the sole source of these nutrients or pathogens in Coal Creek.

Data presented in Figure 2' did not show a link between total coliform and E. coli levels in August of 2008. Data from site Coal-10 revealed unusually high levels of nitrate-nitrate and total phosphorous, which could be due to septic or other sources. Robin clarified that high levels of both fecal coliform and phosphorous would indicate a septic source of these nutrients. Anthony confirmed this point, adding that the City of Gunnison's Dale Picard explained total coliform does not conclusively indicate the presence of human remains. As it is, the current data for Coal Creek does not support or nor refute the presence of contamination from septic systems. Wendy and Steve suggested that garden fertilizer or pet waste could also be sources of these nutrients in the water body. Sampling at Trappers was also discussed, but Rodney informed the group that very effective, high-end treatment systems are in place there, likely due to the new county regulations.

Additionally, Anthony pointed out that sampling so infrequently could also be affecting the data, and that the Coalition should consider looking into funding more sampling next year. In addition to collecting data from Coal Creek, Dale Picard of the City of Gunnison also suggested mapping and sampling around leach fields. Steve reiterated the need to work with Joann Williams and David Baumgarten at the County to work out the liability issues for sampling ISDS systems this summer.

The trends in Figure 3 reflect concentration data but not loading data. According to the Figure, cadmium values have decreased in Elk-00 from 2006 to 2008, and a similar decrease has also occurred at Coal-15, though Steve pointed out that all of these values remain higher than both the acute and chronic table value standards. (Note: The temporary modifications

to the table value standards only apply further downstream in section 12, where the ambient hardness is higher.) Steve also expressed surprise at the decrease in 2007. However, since the data came from grab samples, the lower numbers are not conclusive; concentrations may have been usually low at the time of sampling. At Coal-10 and Coal-11, which is downstream from approximately 9 tributaries adjacent to or draining from the Fen and Keystone Mine, loading to Coal Creek occurs but not consistently. Coal-05 displays a similar trend as Coal-10 and Coal-11. Coal-06 was not added to the sampling locations until 2008, so it is not included in the figure.

Figure 4's trends are similar to Figure 3's, with Coal-05 also displaying an inconsistent decrease in zinc concentrations. Zinc values frequently exceed the chronic table value standard from Coal-15 to Coal-10, before the temporary modification begins. The water quality of Coal-06 is not consistently degraded when compared to Coal-10. Steve asked how the Coalition was monitoring the Town's return flows from the water treatment plant and sediment. Anthony relayed that due to a lack of funding, the Coalition is monitoring the Town's return flows on a rotating basis, alternately sampling different locations, and is not currently monitoring sediment at any sites. Wendy suggested more sediment monitoring by the Forest Queen Mine would provide helpful data.

Additionally, the Water Quality Control Division gave Steve a map indicating the Keystone Mine discharged upstream of the town's current intake from the 1950's to 1970's; there may be significant metal contamination still stored in the sediment of the reservoir. Wendy suggested a long-term goal of moving the town's intake above the Fen; if the cadmium standard is lowered far enough, updating the current treatment plant to meet these criteria may become more expensive than building a new facility. Perry inquired as to whether the town had an underground water source, and Steve replied that the slate is made up of loose unconsolidated alluvium, with unreliable pockets of minerals, making it an unlikely future water source.

Data from Figure 5 displayed similar trends. The low values at Coal-15 could potentially be within the range of normal variation. Cadmium levels in the Bog-00 site are consistent but far exceed the table value standards. Coal-10 and Coal-11 display similar trends, and an intermittent loading of cadmium. Overall, the data indicates the potential for chronic effects on downstream wildlife, and acute effects of wildlife in some upstream reaches. Steve noted that the Fen data looked consistent. While Anthony concurred that the Fen's cadmium output is steady, he also pointed out that its zinc output is inconsistent. He indicated a need to evaluate loading data to get a more complete sense of the amount of these minerals present in the water body.

In Figure 6, no sample was collected at Coal-15. Steve noted that higher concentrations may occur at higher flows, while Wendy hypothesized that the Fen's tributaries may have been diluted by snow melt. The figure suggests loading may have occurred between Coal-11 and Coal-10. Steve suggested a need for groundwater data for these sites, and Perry informed the board that plans for groundwater monitoring are under way, but not for 2009. Key-00 shows a large drop in zinc values in August.

## 2. Funding & Budget Update (4:44 – 4:52)

- **County Community Based Awards**  
The Coalition requested \$5,000 from Gunnison County, and received \$3,000. The Advisory Group will need to discuss ways to find an addition \$2,000 in-kind match for the Non-Point Source budget.
- **Non-Point Source Budget Update**  
Anthony has not been able to meet with John Hess to discuss and finalize the Non-Point Source budget, but will be able to give the Advisory Group members a complete overview at the February meeting. To complete the budget, Anthony will also need the December invoices, and Robin suggested he wait until February to provide a full report, so that it will be complete. In response to Perry's question, the Non-Point Source grant is briefly described as a 319 grant that is worth \$141,296 in total to the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition.
- **Upper Gunnison Funding Request Update**  
The Coalition requested and received \$4,750 from the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District for 2009. In response to a question from the group, Anthony affirmed that the CCWC, not the Town of Crested Butte, receives the money.
- **Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund Update**  
The Coalition is ready to begin spending the grant received from the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund; an invoice for the \$3,000 OSM/VISTA member cash match was passed around earlier in the meeting. The Coalition is waiting for Gunnison County to confirm that Amy is allowed to carry out ISDS surveys to begin moving forward with that project. This winter, Amy and Anthony will map out leach fields so that they can begin work as soon as the snow melts.  
  
Additionally, Kai Allen at the Forest Service is currently reviewing a draft of the education signage to go in the watershed. While the sites for these signs have not been selected yet, Elk Avenue crossing, Totem Pole Park, the bridge by Izzy's, and Butte Bridge are all suggested as possible locations. Steve Glazer asks Anthony to make sure the board has a chance to review the signage before it is posted in the watershed. Anthony confirms that the sign will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee and will also be presented to Crested Butte's Board of Zoning and Regulation, and the Forest Service.
- **Center for Watershed Protection Grant**  
The Coalition applied for a \$5000 grant from the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP), which was not funded. After asking for the CWP for feedback, Anthony learned that the CCWC received a high 8.5 score out of a possible 10. The CWP suggested more developed outcomes and outputs. Anthony speculated that this was because the Coalition did not have many details about the board member training they proposed. In response, Harvey suggested identifying a database of conferences that board members could

select events from. The grant's next application deadline has not yet been announced, but the CCWC will reapply if it is offered again.

### **3. Retreat Discussion (4:52- 5:18)**

#### **- Discussion of Agenda Items and Date (Tentatively 2/11/09)**

Anthony recapped last year's schedule for the CCWC's annual retreat, which ran from 10am to 2pm, with lunch during the middle of the event. Anthony asked the group if they would prefer an alternative schedule in the morning or afternoon. A quick poll showed that Perry, Harvey, and Robin would prefer to meet in the morning, Wendy would prefer to meet from 3:00pm to 6:00pm, and Rodney was unsure of his schedule but generally has morning meetings. Anthony will contact absent members through email to see what the rest of the group would prefer.

After some discussion of the purpose of the retreat it decided that it should focus on items with broader, long-term, scope versus the type of items on the typical monthly agenda. Robin and Harvey suggested prioritizing the schedule, putting the most important agenda items first to avoid redundancy and make sure these issues are discussed. The group also removed the conflict resolution discussion from the proposed schedule. Anthony asked the group if moving the Standard Mine Technical Advisory Group (SMTAG) meeting to a different time could be another way to rearrange the schedule, since this would also allow give the SMTAG time to evaluate its own long-term goals. No firm decision was made on this. Many seemed to like the idea of moving the SMTAG meeting to a new time, but some members suggested including the SMAG meeting to create a solid three-hour block.

The retreat agenda items will include a strategic planning and funding update, including the year three of the OSM/VISTA member, budget concerns, and general goals and plans for the coming year. Steve suggested devoting time to an expanded water quality monitoring review. Robin suggested devoting a January meeting exclusively to examining the water quality monitoring data report, and reserving the retreat for discussion broader, longer-term goals. Anthony proposed presenting an outline of the report in January, to allow the group to review it and give their comments and suggestions. The group consensus is that past models have worked well, including both technical data and a clear summary of the implications of these findings. The group agrees to move this discussion of the report to January.

Pointing out the Coalition's large investment in the ISCO samplers, Steve suggested devoted time to brainstorming how these can best serve the CCWC's interests, and adding more time to the sampling strategy agenda item. Currently, the ISCO samplers are involved in potential strategies for monitoring the fen and storm water, and the Forest Queen Mine could be an additional area of interest. Part of using these instruments will be learning how to trigger them to collect data during storm events.

The group also proposes adding additional time to discussing the third agenda item, expanding the scope and mission of the organization. In regards to the fourth item, the board self-evaluation, Anthony will share his experiences with

this process with the group in January. Steve asks to add additional field trips for the entire Advisory Group to the discussion, and to see if Tara Tafi of DRMS would be interested in phoning into CCWC meetings.

**4. Additional Agenda Items (5:20 – 5:30)**

Steve announced that the discharge permit appeal has been set for April 22, and will probably occur in Denver.

**Adjourn** - Next Meeting Date: January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 4PM