

Coal Creek Watershed Coalition

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 10th, 2009 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Crested Butte Town Hall

Attendance:

Logan Reese, Anthony Poponi, Amy Weinfurter, Rodney Due, Wendy Brown, Mike Pelletier, Tara Tafi, Crystal Lambert, Arin Billings, Richard Stenson, John Hess, Steve Glazer, Harvey Castro, Rosemary Carroll, Perry Anderson, and Steve Renner

Announcements: (10:13-10:24)

- 1) The Coalition has been given office hours at Western State College, from 10am-12pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They will be sharing an office with Karen Hausdoerffer, along with the Office of Resource Efficiency and the High Country Citizens' Alliance.
- 2) The Coalition's 501(c)3 status has been approved by the Internal Revenue Service.
- 3) Steve Bogott, a student at Western State College, is still pursuing an internship project on magnesium chloride, with help from Dr. Pat Magee, the president of the Thorton Foundation, which may be able to provide some funding for the study. Dr. Kevin Alexander is also acting as a more formal mentor.
- 4) The Coalition has received unofficial notice that it is a finalist for the \$10,000 River Network/Miller/Coors grant, written by Amy with help from Anthony. While a voting process will determine which agency gets the grant, as a finalist the Coalition will automatically receive \$1000 to use at its discretion.
- 5) Steve Glazer announced that Thompson Creek has filed a Plan of Operations (POO) to do comprehensive monitoring and has completed its flora and fauna monitoring. On January 29th U.S. Energy filed a new application to conduct geotechnical operations, with more than 30 groundwater wells. At this time, they are not proceeding with geotechnical investigations in Elk Creek, which may indicate that they are not interested in building a reservoir up there. The Forest Service has received these plans and will take 30 days to decide if the proposal needs to be resubmitted. Thompson Creek will receive an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement, and hopes to conduct their proposed activities this summer. They are also opening an office in Crested Butte.

Approval of minutes

Steve Glazer motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the January 2009 meeting. John Hess seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously without abstentions.

Agenda Items

(1) Elect Board Members and Officers and Discuss Advisory Board (10:27- 11:00)

- Advisory Board

The Coal Creek Watershed Coalition (CCWC) bylaws call for the addition of a description of the advisory board to the bylaws. A draft of this new description was included in the packet of meeting materials. John Hess moved to make this draft an addendum to the by-laws, and Harvey Castro seconded the motion. However, after Steve Glazer raised a question about whether this motion was a matter for the board (and required a quorum) or for everyone in attendance at the meeting, the motion was rescinded and a discussion began. Harvey suggested that instead of listing CCWC stakeholder groups, the description should use language such as “the potential stakeholder groups include but are not limited to...” This change would ensure that no federal agencies or other entities are unintentionally discouraged or excluded from participating in the CCWC.

Anthony asked the attendees if they knew of any groups or individuals, such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Army Corps of Engineers, or the United States Geological Survey (USGS) that are not currently involved with the CCWC and might be helpful to or interested in the organization’s mission. John suggested engaging the BLM. Tara suggested Dave Lasorcheck, who works on abandoned mine lands (AML) issues and is based in Gunnison, as a BLM contact. Steve added that BLM is actively involved in the Lake Fork clean-up, and should be invited to CCWC meetings. The Department of Wildlife (DOW) was also mentioned as an agency that the CCWC could further engage; while it might not become a permanent stakeholder, the CCWC could learn from its knowledge of fish behavior and biology. Dan Brauch was suggested as a DOW contact to add to CCWC mailing lists. Richard suggested Jocelyn Mullen, a Water Quality Control Division staff person based in Grand Junction, as a CCWC contact. He also mentioned that the Colorado Geological Society (CGS) might be interested in water and soil quality, as a planning and review agency. It was also suggested that Dave Kanzer from the Colorado Water District be added to the distribution list. While the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District staff is not involved with the CCWC, Anthony has contact with Frank Kugel from his involvement in the Gunnison River Festival.

The CCWC also does not have representation from Irwin, or from groups involved in development in the watershed. Mike offered to forward the Irwin Homeowner’s Association (HOA) contact information to Anthony. This connection would be especially helpful as the CCWC begins to work on monitoring ISDS systems in Irwin this summer. The Trapper’s Crossing HOA was also suggested a contact to reach out to.

Anthony elaborated on the specific organizations and individuals included in the stakeholder list. At Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, the CCWC is in touch with Ian Billick and Bobby Pecarsky; at Western State College, Professors Kevin Alexander, Jerry Frank, and John Hausdoerffer are CCWC contacts; and Dennis Reich and Eric McPhail at the Colorado State University Extension are also aware of CCWC efforts. Rosemary suggested adding some contacts from Buck Horn Geotech, Joe Frank, Tim Lapello, and Kerry Roberts, as well as Jerry Burgess from SGM. Richard suggested adding Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited to the non-governmental organizations the CCWC contacts. Their expertise might be especially helpful in habitat restoration projects. Wendy asked if the CCWC's goal in gathering this information was to expand its membership. Steve responded by predicting that while these agencies may be future partners or interested in CCWC's work, few are likely to have the time and resources to regularly attend meetings. John proposed holding quarterly or semi-annual meetings, like this annual meeting, that would address CCWC concerns most relevant to these potential stakeholders. Tara also brought up the CCWC's teleconferencing abilities; if a stakeholder would prefer not to travel or is only involved in a short portion of the meeting, this tool allows them an easy way to listen and give their input.

Anthony will present a revised draft the duties and roles of the Advisory Board at the next CCWC meeting, and will confer with Bookie Louise about these changes to the by-laws.

-Elect Officers

Steve Glazer, Mike O'Loughlin, Harvey Castro, Robin Jones and John Hess currently serve as the CCWC officers. According to CCWC's by-laws, these terms must be staggered: the CCWC needs to clarify who, between Robin and John, is serving a one-year term, and who is serving a two-year term. Anthony suggested a re-nomination of John, since he is so instrumental to and knowledgeable about the state's Non-Point Source Grant. Mike's expertise as a lawyer was also mentioned as a valuable asset to CCWC, even though he may not be able to attend meetings regularly. Steve convened a meeting of the Board of Directors, and John moved to re-elect Steve Glazer to President, Mike O'Loughlin to Vice-President, and Harvey Castro to Secretary/Treasurer of the Board of Directors, as well as for Robin Jones to serve a three-year term on the Board of Directors, and for John Hess to serve a one-year term on the Board of Directors. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

(2) Budget Update (11:00-11:45)

-Non-Point Source Program

The CCWC has spent \$45,114 of the State funds available from the Non-Point Source Grant as of 12/31/08. The CCWC is \$17,000 ahead of schedule on meeting its required 40% match. For the project total, another \$40,000 of matching funds is required, and the CCWC is on track to meet this goal.

In Table 1, "Summary of Expenses for the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition Restoration Plan," the cash match and 319 add to the total 319/Non-Federal Budget. Support from the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District will also help cover the purchase of sampling supplies, an area which is currently over-budget. There is additionally a \$2000 shortfall on the funds for macroinvertebrate studies that needs to be addressed.

The decrease in the amount of Gunnison County's support for the CCWC (from \$5000 in 2008 to \$3000 for 2009) means that the board's in-kind contributions to CCWC will be increasingly important in meeting the grant's match requirements. Anthony asked CCWC members to inform Anthony of any work or research they complete on the Coalition's behalf outside of meetings, as this time can be counted as an in-kind donation to the CCWC.

Anthony will also use funds to secure contractors to help develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the watershed. Western State College Professor Kevin Alexander, who is currently on sabbatical, may help design the preliminary research for implementing BMPs, helping the CCWC determine what data needs to be collected and how to divide different aspects of the work. Tara suggested using Kevin's classes to collect data, rather than paying top dollar to Frontier Services or other consultants. CCWC staff and volunteers will collect the data, and the EPA will analyze the metal data from the samples. Mike pointed out that Gunnison County also needs to be involved, to ensure that the BMPs will work in the real world, a point everyone agreed with.

The CCWC also has extra funds allocated to public outreach that could be used for other items, such as those in Task 1. Brad Taylor may bring the Dean at Dartmouth to speak on the state of the watershed for River Awareness Week.

Table 2 outlines the "Summary of Expense for the Coal Creek Watershed Restoration Plan." The grant funding for this plan ends in March of 2010.

The implementation of BMPs during the summer of 2009 is being more fully developed. Wendy asked if it seems like there is a large problem with sediment in the Watershed. At the moment, the CCWC does not have any data to indicate a firm answer one way or the other. The total suspended solids (TSS) data collected during the summer of 2008 was all baseline data and was not collected during storm events. Wendy remembered Rodney's predecessor, Larry Adams, collecting some TSS data during his time with the town. This may be a helpful source of information to search for and investigate. ISCO samplers can also be programmed to catch storm water, and Steve Renner offered to lend sub-meter accuracy GPS' to this effort. The CCWC will also generate in-kind from Mike Pelletier when it begins its ISDS monitoring, and gets GIS assistance from the Town of Crested Butte.

NOTE: This agenda item is discussed further after lunch.

(3) Lunch (11: 45 – 12:10)

Tara and Steve showed a video of the Peanut Mine clean-up, a partnership of two CCWC stakeholders, DRMS and John Hess (who also serves on the board of Crested Butte Land Trust). The large reclamation project began after spontaneous coal fires increased concern about the safety of the old coal and silver mine/mill site. The coal slag along the highly used Lower Loop trail posed a risk of spontaneous combustion. The site also included pools of red acidic water from silver mill waste, along with a strong sulfuric smell. A single beaver dam provided the primary barrier between tailings runoff and the Slate River. The winner of the national award for the best abandoned mine service award, the project brought together resources and contributions from the DRMS, OSM, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Great Outdoors, Crested Butte Land Trust, EPA's Brownfields Program, and Colorado Department of Health. Since the remediation work, over 4,700 trees have been planted by community members, little erosion has occurred, and plant life has regenerated.

(2) Budget Update Continued (12:10 -12:30)

After lunch, the group discussed what features of the budget the board would like to see on a quarterly basis. Steve Glazer noted that the board is ultimately responsible if the CCWC goes over budget, and would benefit from knowing if and how the CCWC budget missed the mark. Wendy suggested discussing the budget before and after the summer sampling season, when most of the money is spent, to plan and evaluate the budget. As Harvey noted it might be inefficient to read line-by-line through the budget with a diverse group of people, Steve Glazer and Wendy suggested creating a special budget committee to hold periodic supplemental meetings. Steve Glazer, Wendy, Tara, Steve Renner, and Harvey expressed interest in being a part of this committee. Steve Glazer also suggested reviewing fundraising activities, and Harvey advised keeping quarterly reviews focused on big-picture items unless a specific item calls for particular attention.

-Upper-Gunnison River WCD

The CCWC will start to use the funds from the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District in the spring and summer, to buy water sampling supplies.

-Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund

Three thousand dollars of the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund grant has been used for the OSM VISTA member cash match. It will also contribute to the ISDS studies and to microbial sampling.

- Chamber of Commerce

Anthony asked the group their opinions on using \$175 of the CCWC's funds to purchase a Chamber of Commerce membership, to put the CCWC in the eyes of local business and community members and to display CCWC information at the visitor's center. While advertising through the Chamber may reach more tourists than community members, it's possible a visitor may be interested in supporting local non-profit groups.

The price includes a spot on the Chamber of Commerce's webpage. Currently, the CCWC has a web presence on the DRMS, Colorado Watershed Assembly, Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District, Town of Crested Butte, and Gunnison County websites. The Community Foundation and River Awareness Week websites may be good places to try and link from as well. Anthony has also met with Mark Reaman from The Crested Butte News about publishing stories about the CCWC's summer field work. In light of these other opportunities for strategic placement of our website links the board decided to forego a Chamber membership.

(3) Strategic Planning (12:30 - 1:18)

-Goals for 2009

The order of items listed on the "Goals for 2009" handout in the meeting materials is significant as it presents the most pressing items first, often as determined by existing grant requirements. During the next annual meeting, the sheet will be revisited to see if the CCWC did or did not accomplish these goals.

The OSM VISTA position is funded through October of 2010. Additional funds for travel and conferences would supplement the \$3000 base funding needed. The Watershed Restoration Plan needs to be finalized. Future goals as part of this effort include compiling information on the Forest Queen Mine, the Keystone Mine, the iron fen, and the use of BMPs along Kebler Pass Road. Another upcoming project will be to study the effects of magnesium chloride application to Kebler Pass Road on the watershed. The CCWC will follow up on these results and develop BMPs to counteract any negative impacts. Anthony announced his intent to invite Gay Austen to present a general introduction to the fen at the March board meeting.

DRMS has set aside approximately \$5000 to remove the abandoned industrial batteries at the Forest Queen Mine, but this money must be spent before June 30th or it will be transferred to another project. Since the batteries are not yet leaking, there should not be too many complications to removing them. If the CCWC receives one of the grants, such as the MillerCoors/River Network contest, the DRMS money could be used to conduct analysis on the site's settling ponds.

The CCWC will also research the source of contamination in storm water runoff from the Keystone Mine. Anthony asked Perry to have a Keystone Mine representative speak to the CCWC about their work, as Anthony has a few questions about their data and the historic activities at some of their sampling sites.

Anthony asked if the CCWC wanted to consider a private fundraising goal. Steve Glazer suggested that the current economic conditions, when many disparate local groups are competing for local resources, make this a bad time to begin private fundraising. John suggested placing an ad in local papers with the CCWC's needs. Rosemary asked if the CCWC has identified new grants available to it with its new 501(c)3 status and Anthony replied that it has. Harvey suggested that private fundraising be put on the back burner, and that staff time would be better spent pursuing grants. Wendy asked if the CCWC website has a way for people to donate online; adding a sentence about fundraising possibilities to the website's contact information might increase private donations.

John suggested CCWC inform town council of the first six items on the list (funding for the VISTA member, the complete watershed restoration plan, the storm water and BMP study, battery removal and sediment analysis at the Forest Queen Mine, and Keystone storm water study). He also proposed that Steve Renner could show the Peanut Mine video and inform the Council of DRMS's work.

Richard asked if the CCWC's outreach takes place on a local or larger regional scale. He pointed out that sharing the CCWC's work could provide an incentive for other communities to conduct similar work, and for the CCWC to share its experience and resources. John replied by describing conferences as a concern for a different economic time. Anthony said that the CCWC typically employs a case-by-case approach for considering the use of funds towards conferences. So far, the CCWC has presented formal presentations only at the Water Workshop in Gunnison. Harvey mentioned the different returns each conference has for the CCWC as the main criteria in the board's decisions, and the discounts presenters and volunteers at conferences often receive as helpful ways to reduce conference costs. At the upcoming River Rally, the CCWC has asked for such a discount for Anthony.

Steve noted that the list of goals for 2009 did not include information on the effort to inventory ISDS systems. This project will include collecting GIS locations, and conducting volunteer sampling to help ISDS owners meet compliance with the town regulations. This item will be added to the goals for 2009.

-Goals for 2010

Stream restoration is listed as a priority for 2010. A visual inspection of the stream has already been administered, and could be repeated this summer. Habitat assessment will be a key element of overall stream assessment, as Coal Creek has the potential to be a source of aquatic life to the Slate and other larger rivers. Andy Herb with Alpine Eco has offered to assist conduct a brief assessment of the area if he is in town this summer, details of expenses for this effort have yet to be determined.

Funding for an OSM VISTA member is provided for a third year, after which the cash-match is no longer provided. Loretta Pineda of DRMS is very supportive of the VISTA program, and may help the CCWC with funding assistance if necessary.

John pointed out that the Non-Point Source Grant terminates in early 2010, and asked if the CCWC would be eligible for additional grants after this point. The findings at the Forest Queen Mine and the results of this summer's research may shape the answer to this question. Before applying to the Non-Point Source Grant for assistance with stream restoration, the CCWC must prove a need for this remediation. John suggested talking with Bonnie from the Non-Point Source Grant program now, to learn how she sees the CCWC moving forward, and to start looking at other places if necessary.

(5) Review Mission and Goals of Organization (1:18 - 1:51)

The meeting moved to a discussion of the CCWC's mission and goals. Robin had suggested earlier that the CCWC embrace an area larger than the Coal Creek Watershed, specifically becoming involved in Redwell Basin. The Town of Crested Butte is largely interested in Coal Creek because it provides its raw drinking water supply, however, and may not be as involved in the efforts of the CCWC if this organization changes its focus to include other geographic areas. The CCWC could facilitate the creation of a group that would directly address Redwell Basin, but Steve Renner pointed out that this could potentially create competition for funding in a small geographic area. John mentioned the possibility of the town supporting the remediation of Redwell Basin because of improved fish habitat (and therefore better fishing sites for residents and tourists). If the town chooses not to become involved in Redwell Basin, John could choose to attend only the relevant parts of future CCWC meetings.

Work on Redwell Basin will begin in 2011 at the earliest; at this point, the CCWC might or might not have completed its work at the Standard Mine and Forest Queen Mine. Harvey stated that the CCWC's mission is to focus inside the watershed, and that the organization's plate keeps getting fuller. Steve concurred, noting that local residents relate to concerns over their drinking water, and that the CCWC should not risk diluting its focus and energies. At the moment, the CCWC has not yet reduced its work load on the Standard Mine Superfund site. John countered, pointing out that while the CCWC currently has a full agenda, preparation for finding funding for Redwell Basin would need to begin approximately a year in advance of the project. Sampling to establish baseline data might also need to occur for one to two years before remediation work begins. Even if the CCWC currently has a full plate, it would need to start preparing for its next projects ahead of time.

Richard drew attention to the physical connection between the watersheds, and the presence of a larger mission beyond the success of one project, in terms of the outreach as well as the focus of the program. Wendy asked about the point at which geographically similar projects need to be coupled in the eyes of federal or state

agencies. Steve Renner responded that as budgets become increasingly restricted, assistance is becoming scarcer and projects with efficiency of scale (one group, one coordinator) become increasingly attractive. He does not know when Redwell Basin might be funded; while he is very interested in working on this site, a lot of sampling needs to be conducted beforehand to determine if the disturbances are natural or man-made. Steve Renner suggested that he could work on gathering data and keep the CCWC in the loop. John proposed revisiting this topic in six months, when the CCWC will have a better picture of the state of its projects in the Coal Creek Watershed; the group agreed to this.

Tara mentioned that in 2011 the Upper Gunnison will likely be a priority watershed, with positive implications for the funding available in 2012. Steve Glazer added that the recent October sampling data showed no metals loading in Coal Creek; and maybe within the year, further improvements may be seen. Redwell Basin's discharge would probably be considered the highest source of metals loading into the upper reaches of the Slate River, which could also give it priority as an impaired segment of the watershed. On the day before the meeting, an 1872 Mining Law reform bill was re-introduced in the House of Representatives, and may be likewise introduced in the Senate. If it passes, it could be a likely source of funding for cleaning up abandoned mine lands.

(6) Sampling Strategy Recap (1:53 – 2:15)

At the previous CCWC board meeting, Robin asked for a summary of the ISCO samplers' capabilities, which was provided on the "Sampling Strategy for 2009" page in the meeting materials. The 2009 sampling, in addition to utilizing the samplers, will attempt to trace the fen tributaries. One such tributary is perennial, while the rest are seasonal. In the past, Gunnison County added a ditch that directs water to the Bog-00 site; the CCWC is not sure if there is a way to remediate this and convert the surface water back to ground water without causing slope destabilization.

The Forest Queen Mine impacts waters in Coal Creek but does not lead to exceedances of standards. However, the sediments in nearby ponds and downstream in Coal Creek are problematic and exceed the guidelines for aquatic life. Coal Creek scours frequently, but the pond sediments do not and could be a threat if they are suddenly released. The CCWC would also like to examine the waste rock piles at the site for leaching potential. Steve Renner knows the property owners, but the CCWC and DRMS do not yet have permission to go on site to conduct sampling and remediation work. The owners also will not want any of the site's cultural features to be removed or altered. A recent court decision could also limit the work DRMS can do on draining adits until a Good Samaritan Act is passed.

Another area the CCWC will research in 2009 is the effects of the application of magnesium chloride to Kebler Pass Road. Based on the CCWC's data so far, it appears levels of chloride in Coal Creek remain low and within the background

range for a normal Colorado stream. However, the sampling has not been timed with magnesium chloride applications or storm events after applications, when larger amounts of these chemicals may enter the watershed. This summer, the CCWC will use the ISCO samplers to focus on these events. Plant defoliation along the roadside is also a concern. Magnesium chloride is used because of the problems of dust deposition for air quality standards and for plant life; it might also be beneficial to conduct a study comparing the effects of dust and the effects of magnesium chloride on roadside habitat. Gunnison County tries to be very frugal with the expensive application and has improved its application techniques. Several board members noted dust generation from Kebler Pass affected air quality in Crested Butte prior to magnesium chloride being used.

All of the other agenda items were tabled. Anthony will send the evaluation results out through email, and the group will discuss them, along with the other agenda items not discussed at this meeting, at the March board meeting. The SMTAG meeting will be tabled until the next SMAG meeting.

The next CCWC board meeting is scheduled for March 11, at 4 pm in Town Hall.