

**Coal Creek Watershed Coalition
Board of Director's Meeting
September 9, 2010, 4:00 pm
Town Hall in Crested Butte**

Attendance: Harvey Castro, Anthony Poponi, Amy Weinfurter, John Hess, Andrew Breibart (BLM hydrologist), Wendy Brown, Richard Stenson, Steve Glazer

A sign-up sheet was passed around to record attendance.

Agenda Items

1) Update on the Oil Leak in Crested Butte: Richard Stenson (4:01 - 4:14)

Leaks from an abandoned heating fuel storage tank were detected last Friday afternoon at Sopris Avenue in Crested Butte. The tank has been removed, but saturated soils continue to leak materials into Coal Creek. The County is currently in the process of determining the content of these materials and the amount of materials that have entered the stream.

On last Friday afternoon, an oil leak was detected at Sopris Ave, in Crested Butte, from an abandoned storage tank from the 1980's, used for holding heating fuel. Richard met with Rodney Due, the fire marshall, sheriff, and other town representatives, as the situation was discovered. The tank and its contents have been removed, but the surrounding soil remains saturated, and materials from this soil continue to infiltrate Coal Creek.

At the moment, the County needs to identify the material leaking from the tank and determine how much material has entered the stream before determining the environmental and human health impacts. Lab results will be returned this weekend, and will help identify the materials in the tank; some people involved in the clean-up have hypothesized that benzene and other inorganic chemicals might be included. Dos Rios Water Treatment Plant supplies approximately 2,000 people with water that includes surface water from Coal Creek; it may be recommended that Dos Rios stop drawing water until more information about the contaminants is known. At the time of the meeting, Dos Rios only had capacity of water for another 30 hours, so this process would necessitate the use of bottled and other sources of water for these residents.

In response to questions about how this leak might be related to the algal blooms in Crested Butte, which have been more prolific than in the past few years, Richard hypothesized that the leak could have triggered a higher BOD (biological oxygen demand) level, which would foster algae growth. Because of the extremely low levels of nutrients in Coal Creek, even small changes in

chemistry can trigger algal blooms. John noted blooms are also occurring in irrigation ditches and ponds outside of Coal Creek. Wendy point out that algal blooms have been seen in the past, and that with leaves dying and entering the stream during the fall season, the cause for the blooms might be natural. Steve added that nitrogen deposition from the air could be another potential cause. Atmospheric deposition data and water quality data collected by the USGS in late August will be used to further investigate the source of the algal blooms. Richard noted that the County hopes to prevent leaks like this from happening again.

2) Discussion of Continuation of OSM*VISTA Contractor Support (4:16 – 4:26)

The board agreed to move ahead in the process of recruiting a fourth year VISTA, who will focus primarily on capacity-building activities. Interviews will occur next week; anyone interested in participating in interviews should send Anthony their availability as soon as possible.

The CCWC has an unusual opportunity to get a fourth year VISTA, who will focus on capacity building, and may not be able to take on some of the activities Amy has been involved in. The current work plan for this VISTA focuses on grant writing, board and steering committee recruitment and development, and volunteer training and recruitment. The costs to the CCWC include a \$3,000 cash match and \$2,200 to support rent, mileage and training or professional development opportunities. The Western Hardrock Watershed Team has recruited several candidates, which the CCWC would need to interview next week.

Steve would only be available to help with interviews on Friday; Harvey is available Monday-Wednesday, and John will be gone Friday and is not sure what the rest of his week will look like.

3) Director and Stakeholder Update (4:26 - 4:40)

- (a) A “Conversations for Board Presidents and Executive Directors” will take place on September 14, from 4:30 – 6:15 pm. Steve will not be able to make it, and Anthony plans to ask Mike and Robin if they would be able to attend. Anyone else interested in attending should contact Anthony.
- (b) Jeff Crane has offered to construct diversion structures at a discount for the CCWC’s project under the Colorado Watershed Restoration Fund. In light of this, Anthony requested that the board waive the need to put the project (which is over the \$7,500 threshold the board decided on) out to bid. After confirming the extent of the discount with a firm qualified in geomorphology – Andrew suggested Blackcreek Hydrology – Anthony will report back to the board.
- (c) The October meeting date was moved to 3:00 pm on October 14th.

(d) After a few changes to the wording and grammar of the letter supporting the role the Hidden Gems Wilderness Proposal would play in protecting the Coal Creek Watershed, Steve Glazer moved to approve the letter. John Hess seconded the motion. Harvey Castro abstained because of concerns about some of the letter's grammar.

4) Budget review (4:40 – 4:43)

At a finance committee meeting earlier in the day, the CCWC's 2010 budget was balanced; deliberations turned a deficit into a small reserve fund. The organization is able to meet all of its current expenses.

The CCWC will ask the Forest Service to cover Wendy's time and expenses during the fen water sampling. If they are not able to do so, the CCWC will cover her out of pocket expenses and will consider paying her time for labor should funds be available.

Steve Glazer moved to adopt the recommendations from the finance committee. Harvey Castro seconded the motion. The motion passed without abstentions.

5) BLM presentation: Andrew Breibart, Hydrologist, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Gunnison Resource Area (4:43 – 5:41)

Andrew presented an overview of the issues impacting the Slate River Watershed and the work he hopes to accomplish through a collaborative Slate River Watershed Assessment. The board suggested that he hold a meeting with all of the Slate River Watershed stakeholders to assess the interest, commitment, and resources they would bring to a watershed assessment. Depending on the results of this meeting, the CCWC might be able to contribute its experience with the 319 program and its background in water quality impairments from abandoned mines to the assessment and clean-up process.

Andrew gave an overview of the ownership of the Slate River Watershed, which includes the BLM, Forest Service, State and private landowners, including the Crested Butte Land Trust. The Slate River Watershed contains a number of issues of concern to the watershed's health: high levels of sediment, bank erosion, mining impacts, noxious weeds, roads and sedimentation along the Slate River, and impacts from road stream crossings.

A watershed assessment would engage the many landowners in this watershed, encourage collaborative projects, help to pool limited resources, and develop a holistic remediation plan. Potential funding sources to support this effort might include the 319 program, Title II funds, GOCO grants, local governments, the Southwest Conservation Corps, and funding from the Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). The BLM also

offers access to resources such as free macroinvertebrate sample analysis at Utah State and quick processing of Army Corps of Engineers permits.

John suggested calling a meeting of all of the Slate Watershed's stakeholders, including the BLM, Forest Service, Mt. Emmons Project, Crested Butte Land Trust, other private landowners, Gunnison County, and the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition to assess the levels of interest and commitment these groups have to a collaborative assessment and remediation of this drainage. At this meeting, the CCWC could help by explaining what's involved in the 319 proposal and grant program.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:41 pm.