

Coal Creek Watershed Coalition

MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, March 11, 2009 4:00-5:30PM

Crested Butte Town Hall

Attendees: Perry Anderson, Mike O'Loughlin, Anthony Poponi, Amy Weinfurter, Steve Glazer, Wendy Brown, Tara Tafi, Harvey Castro, Kari Roberts (representing Buckhorn Geotech and her own personal interest), Eddy Balch (representing the Colorado Rural Water Association)

Housekeeping

Announcements (4:00 - 4:05)

- 1) Anthony passed around a description of the first amendment to the by-laws, which Mike has provided input on. If no one has any objections with the current draft, it will be passed onto Bookie Louise so it can be provided to the IRS. Mike O'Loughlin motioned to approve the by-laws document with his edits. Harvey Castro seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously without abstentions.
- 2) The CCWC received 996 votes in the MillerCoors/River Network Watershed Restoration Grant, finishing in 7th place. The week before the contest ended, CCWC was in fourth place, but the other groups must have drawn a lot of votes in during the final week: the winning organizations had over 2,000 votes. The CCWC will still get \$1000 to be used as we see fit. The CCWC needs to discuss how to use these funds in the future. Funding is available to cover one of the main projects proposed in the grant since the Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) has \$5000 set aside for the removal of batteries from the Forest Queen Mine site. Steve Bogott may be able to pull money from Western State College's Thorton Foundation to pay for the magnesium chloride and storm water studies.

The CCWC has also applied to the National Forest Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and will apply to an additional National Forest Foundation grant this June. Steve also found a lead for another grant administered by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, a \$15,000 Watershed Restoration Grant with a January 1st deadline (more details about criteria and qualifications available at cwcb.state.co.us). The CCWC will plan on applying for it this coming January.

- 3) The Western Hardrock Watershed Team training is coming up, and will take place in Ouray from April 27-29. The CCWC must bring a board or community member to receive training along with Anthony and Amy. Rosemary Carroll, John Hess, and Steve Renner all expressed interested in attending if their schedule allows. In the past, Wendy and Robin have also indicated an interest in attending, but have other commitments during those days.
- 4) The SMTAG meeting did not occur as scheduled during the CCWC's annual meeting in February due to time overruns on other agenda items. Anthony proposed conducting it after the SMAG meeting scheduled for 1:00-3:00 pm on March 31st. The group consensus

is to hold the SMTAG meeting from 3:30-4:00 pm on March 31st as well, but Anthony will email the rest of the group to make sure this works for the rest of the group as well.

Additions to the Agenda (4:10 – 4:15)

1) As a result of the stimulus package, the WHWT teams have funding to support summer associate and stimulus VISTA positions. The summer associate (SA) works for 8-10 weeks at no direct costs to the CCWC, though Harvey noted that advertising and staff time will form an indirect cost to the CCWC. The SA can perform direct service, and can start whenever the CCWC and the associate decide. WSC students and local teachers who have the summer off might be especially interested in participating. The CCWC will be responsible for recruiting the associate; Steve Bogott is interested, but the CCWC will advertise in case things fall through with his schedule. The group consensus was to try to hire a summer associate, reaching out to the local community to draw new candidates as much as possible.

The stimulus VISTA position involves getting an additional year-long VISTA member to focus on capacity building at a cost of \$2000. The group was skeptical that it had enough work to occupy two people throughout the course of the year, and decided not to pursue this position.

2) Amy was contacted by Reverb, an environmental organization working with IZStyle to help bands green their tours. They are working with the Pete Kilpatrick Band on a ski town tour that includes Crested Butte, and have invited the CCWC, along with several other groups, to table from 7am-4pm on Saturday and/or Sunday on Mt. Crested Butte. Anthony, Harvey, Mike, and Amy expressed interest in tabling. Amy will confirm the details with Reverb and email these details onto those interested in participating.

Agenda Items

1. Assessing Riparian Condition (4:24- 4:31)

The Colorado Riparian Training Team, an interagency, interdisciplinary team, is inviting interested individuals in Colorado to attend a 2-day training session in from June 9-10 in Canon City on how to assess riparian/wetland condition. The conference is free, and its training would fit well with the goals the CCWC outlined at its annual meeting. The money donated by High Country Citizens' Alliance to support the VISTA could cover Amy's expenses in terms of mileage, lodging and meals. The group decided to authorize using these funds to pay for two days at the conference. Upon returning, Amy will write a report to share what she's learned with the board.

The group decided to also send Anthony to the same conference, as the information would be helpful to his work in conducting riparian assessments. The money to fund his travel and lodging costs would be reallocated within the budget. Wendy clarified that the money would come from extra funds rather than being taken away from an area in need and Anthony supported this concept.

2. Western Water Roundtable (4:31 – 4:37)

The Western Water Roundtable is another area that might use excess money in the Non-Point Source budget. The roundtable is hosted by Trees, Water, and People, and includes meals and lodging. If Anthony attended, CCWC funds would cover mileage and staff time.

Steve asked whether these conferences would deprive Anthony of work he needs to do in Crested Butte. Anthony replied that June and May (when the Western Water Roundtable and Assessing Riparian Conditions Workshops occur) are fairly busy but not as busy as July and August, while April (when the WHWT Training occurs) will be a fairly calm time. He added that the Roundtable will offer the CCWC nice exposure to some of the bigger players in the region. Harvey suggested that Anthony donate his time, and noted that with so much training coming up, he may not be as receptive to Anthony attending similar conferences in six or eight months. The group decided to send Anthony to all three conferences: the WHWT training, Assessing Riparian Conditions Workshop and the Western Water Roundtable.

3. Consultants (4:37 -4:48)

Request for Proposals

The meeting materials include a Request for Proposals (RFP) the CCWC will shop to the engineering community. Tara did not receive one, so Anthony will email her a copy. Money for hiring this consultant is included in the Non-Point Source budget. Tara asked if the RFP called for a specific engineering service or general engineering help. Anthony indicated it calls for a bit of both. Wendy and Tara also suggested including a cap on the total amount of money to be spent by the CCWC to pay for these services, as well as a unit cost to be provided in proposals. The group suggested a limit of \$3500 in total CCWC expenses. Harvey proposed adding dates and parameters, while Steve recommended contacting several engineering firms in town, such as Buckhorn Geotech, SGM, and CTL, since this would reduce concerns about availability and travel expenses. Anthony mentioned that he was also going to send it to Frontier, since CCWC has a relationship with them. As the RFP includes an April 3 deadline, it will be sent out to local papers immediately. The ad will include a short description of the work and a refer interested parties to the CCWC website, where the entire RFP will be available for download.

The meeting materials also include a proposal from Bio Environs, the company Dr. Kevin Alexander is affiliated with. Dr. Alexander could not be at this meeting, but will attend future meetings. He will assist the CCWC with sediment analysis; beyond this, Steve Renner will help with other issues at the Forest Queen Mine site. The group decided that Dr. Alexander's contract should mention this coordination with other engineers, since they will be working in the same area, addressing similar issues.

Steve Glazer motioned to authorize the coordinator to enter into a contract to implement the proposal by BioEnvirons for Kevin Alexander's services as described in the proposal. Harvey Castro seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously without abstentions.

4. Macroinvertebrate Data Presentation (4:49- 5:24)

Wendy presented the results from the macroinvertebrate sampling conducted in the Coal Creek Watershed from 2006 to 2008. She prefaced her presentation with some general trends that showed up throughout the data: the high runoff in the spring of 2008 generally improved the health of the macroinvertebrates; Elk and Coal Creeks have partially recovered from the remediation of the Superfund site; and both Irwin and/or the Forest Queen Mine and Crested Butte indicate there are slightly negative effects from the creek. Wendy also suggested that the sample site below Irwin Lake should be moved downstream; this site is more of a pond or lake site than a stream site due to its proximity to the outfall at Lake Irwin.

Since the townsite has the potential to influence water quality, adding a sample site above it could also help illuminate its effect.

While the high runoff generally helped macroinvertebrate life, it also shifts the life cycles of the insects, so it was as if the samples were collected 2 to 3 weeks earlier than usual. In response to a question from the group, Wendy clarified that the high runoff benefits macroinvertebrates by scouring sediments and rolling the rocks. When rocks get “cemented” to the stream floor, there is less food and habitat available for these insects. The % EPT (Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, and Trichoptera) represented on the first graph refers to the percentage of a sample that contains more sensitive species of bugs; the rest of the sample contains “junk bugs” that are more tolerant of polluted or bad conditions or the effects of pollution on those species is not well understood. Mayfly, stonefly, and caddisfly species vary in their tolerance to heavy metals. While this will change with the species represented, of the examples on the slide, the caddis is the most sensitive, the mayfly the most tolerant, and the stonefly moderately tolerant to mining pollution, while all are intolerant of organic pollution.

As the group discussed the % EPT results, the drying of some sites was mentioned as a possible contributor to the negative results at near the Forest Queen Mine and Crested Butte. Anthony asked why Splains Gulch scored so poorly, and if its low hardness might account for it, while the increased hardness throughout the middle portions of the sampling sites could be responsible for creating a better habitat for the macroinvertebrates. Wendy noted that benthic data is also inherently variable, because of the distribution of insects along food and current paths; as such, multiple samples over several years are necessary to make sure the results do not simply reflect the patchiness of an area. In response to a question from the group, she also clarified that very little correlation exists between the macroinvertebrate and fish populations since insects reproduce in such large numbers that their numbers are not significantly affected by predators.

When the sampling results were analyzed using to Fore’s Benthic Index of Biotic Integrity, a metric for heavy metals impacts on a stream, the results showed trends similar to the % EPT analysis. There was significant improvement near Elk Creek after the clean-up of the Standard Mine Superfund site, and poorer results near Crested Butte and Irwin. Splains Gulch was the site in the best condition according to this metric, while the sites between the Forest Queen Mine and Elk Creek are in poor to fair condition. The Butte Avenue Bridge site looks impacted, possibly as a result of drying or due to storm water inputs from the town. Wendy mentioned that if any records about when Coal Creek dries exist, they would be very helpful to interpreting the data. Steve responded that Richard Rozman’s records of diversions should contain this information.

The sampling results were also analyzed through the EPA’s Biological Assessment Tools for Colorado, which includes measurements of species richness (i.e. the greater the number of species, the higher the richness). In the Coal Creek Watershed, species change over the summer, often emerging from the water as they mature. Most sites improved in 2008 according to this metric, although sites near the Forest Queen Mine and Crested Butte still looked slightly impacted. Notably, the drinking water supply showed considerable improvement. The percentage of oligochaetes, worms that indicate pollution from sewage, fertilizer or sediment if found in large numbers, was a bit high at Totem Pole Park, but their numbers still suggest a clean stream overall. The percentage of net spinning caddisflies (or

hydropsychidae), an insect tolerant to many types of pollution, was very low at Splains Gulch. The percentage of clingers – which might not be the best metric for this watershed since bugs must be clingers to live in rocky, high gradient streams such as Coal Creek – also indicated a higher level of sedimentation near Irwin and Crested Butte. The Hilsenhoff Biotic Index, a metric for organic pollution, reflected the same trend.

Wendy will present more data in April and work with Anthony to pick things to include in the Water Quality Monitoring Report. The Water Quality Monitoring Report will also refer the reader to Wendy's entire presentation.

5. Water Quality Monitoring Report (5:25-5:30)

The Water Monitoring Report will be sent out to a smaller group that expressed interest in reviewing it: Mike, Tara, and Wendy. After their changes are incorporated into a new draft, it will be sent to the rest of the group for review.

6. Follow-up on Agenda Items from Annual Meeting

The discussion of the board evaluations was tabled for the next meeting.

Adjourn - Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, April 8th