

## WCRC Minutes

June 1, 2005

**Intro of members:** Leigh Ann Vradenburg, WCRC Director; Zeke Ward, WCRC Chairman; Jim Mietz, SLV RC&D; JB Alexander, Creede; Jim Matush, Creede; Kelley Thomson, Agro Engineering; Bill Gallant, Seacrest Group; Shannon Phelps, Seacrest Group; Rod Clark, NRCS; Erik Sandvik, Creede; Frank Bassett, Creede

**Approval of minutes:** No revisions to the May minutes were proposed. Motion to approve the May minutes made by JB Alexander; second made by Kelley Thompson. Motion carried.

**Additions/corrections to the agenda:** A report from Rod Clark regarding the NRCS flood restoration project was added as part of the Director's Report. A report from the TAC regarding Jim McLaughlin's Nelson Tunnel Study was added as Old Business B.

**In-Kind:** Forms were provided in hard copy for volunteers to track time and other expenses. Leigh Ann encouraged monthly submission of these forms so that records could be kept current.

**Coordinator's Report:** Rod Clark, engineer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, said that his agency had responded to a request for help from Leigh Ann last week. Under the Emergency Watershed Program, the NRCS is able to bring technical and financial assistance to Creede to address places damaged by the flood and of immediate concern. He said that there were six places that would be addressed: a building at the Commodore, the debris in the creek bed below the Commodore, the toe of the slope under the road by the ore house, the sewer line and bridge to East Willow, the confluence of East and West Willow, and a culvert on East Willow. He said that the County was interested in starting at the bridge/sewer line as their top priority, and the work there should take a couple of days. Rod had estimated that the total project would cost around \$100,000. Under the NRCS program, which has a 75/25 match, they will provide \$75,000, and the County and others will provide the 25% match through in-kind, donations, or cash. Jim Mietz asked if anyone was taking pictures. Zeke said that many local people were taking pictures and Ken Wyley had taken some video. Leigh Ann said that she had taken many pictures since last Tuesday.

Leigh Ann said that things were moving forward with the MCFA project. Leigh Ann said that they had done a survey of the property and that she was currently analyzing soil samples so that the consultants with American Geological Services could determine the depth of contamination. She said that an update on the clean up would be discussed at the Public Meeting on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

Leigh Ann said that she had attended the River Rally in Keystone as she had discussed in the last few meetings. She said that she displayed the Committee's current poster and passed out a current tri-fold brochure. She said that approximately 25 brochures were picked up during the conference. She said that she also put up a sign on the message board that advertised that the WCRC was searching for a new Director. She said that she had attended several sessions on

fundraising and had brought back several informational packets. Overall she thought that it was a great experience.

Leigh Ann said that the Committee was currently advertising the Director position in the San Luis Valley Courier and on the WCRC website. She said that there had also been an announcement on the River Network Job Postings page and on the Colorado Watersheds listserve. She said that she had received one application so far, but that she hoped there would be several coming in at the last minute before the deadline on June 6.

Leigh Ann said that she had developed a newsletter for the summer season like the one she had done last year. She said that this newsletter was targeted at the local community. She had finished it two weeks ago, but had waited for any comments from the committee. Once the flooding happened, she decided that it would be best to revise the newsletter to include some of the information that the community would like to see regarding the WCRC's post-flood restoration work. She said that she would try to get the revision done in the next couple of weeks so that it would be out by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Leigh Ann said that things were moving forward in the planning for the duck race. She said that she had talked to a couple more business owners, including San Juan Sports and the Rio Grande Angler, and they had agreed to donate prizes. Leigh Ann reminded the committee that she already had one prize, which was a large framed and matted print. She said that she would appreciate any assistance or leads for getting the remaining prizes. She said that the Committee would have a booth and a float in the parade. Ken Wyley has agreed that we could use his gooseneck trailer, and Zeke said that we could use his truck.

Leigh Ann said that the tree planting this month had been very successful. Paul Whitmore had brought his 6<sup>th</sup> grade class. Leigh Ann said that the weather was cooler and wetter than last year. Leigh Ann put pictures on the website and in the Mineral County Miner. In addition to the planting in the floodplain, some willows were planted at the Midwest, and some bristlecones were planted at the Phoenix Park Mill site.

Leigh Ann said that she had decided not to have a booth at the Taste of Creede over Memorial Day weekend. She said that this was based on the fact that she did not have materials such as the newsletter to address the flooding. She said that she had also planned to advertise the public meeting by passing out fliers, but she said that she thought that there would be plenty of other opportunities to advertise with signs and through notices in the Miner.

Leigh Ann said that she had received some of the data from the May sampling event from the Sangre de Cristo lab. She said that those data looked fine, and that she looked forward to getting the data from the other labs for comparison.

Leigh Ann said that she had some bad news. The Committee did not receive the Ben & Jerry's Foundation or the EPA Consolidated Funding Process grants that she had applied for to supplement Director salary. She said that her follow up with Ben & Jerry's had indicated that the

WCRC was considered quasi-governmental due to our agency and government partnerships and our reliance on those funding sources. She said that she was disappointed, because this was not evident in their grant material or in their response to her letter of interest. The CFP letter had just come last week, and it said that there were more requests than funds. She had not had an opportunity to do any more follow up.

Leigh Ann said that Committee member Les Dobson was having health problems and that we should keep him and his family in our thoughts and prayers. Leigh Ann said that she would continue with the follow up on some of the reclamation sites with Jim Herron and Jeff Graves. Leigh Ann was not sure if the Forest Service had appointed anyone to take over Les' projects in the meantime, but she said that she did not have anything urgent at this point.

### **Old Business:**

Public meeting: Leigh Ann said that the WCRC would still be hosting a public meeting the evening of June 16<sup>th</sup>. She said that she had talked with several people that thought a potluck dinner would be good, so she was working with Merl Jenkins to set the start time at the Community Center for 6:00pm rather than 7:00. She said that the meeting would focus on the watershed plan development and the fairgrounds clean up, as well as the stream restoration plans that the NRCS was working on. Due to the recent flooding, she said that she would also present a brief discussion on what the Committee was doing to address some of the imminent problems. She said that she would be responsible for all of the presentations, and that she would try to keep things brief. She said that she saw this as a time for the community to ask questions and get involved. Zeke asked if the fairgrounds would be able to discuss their upcoming activities. Leigh Ann said that she had talked it over with Jenny Inge and they had decided that those interested in the fairgrounds could split off from the main group after the presentation for more discussions.

TAC Report: Jim McLaughlin presented his draft feasibility report on Nelson Tunnel Treatment to the TAC. He briefly went over the focus of his report and his conclusions. He had left four paper copies of the report, but he was going to contact Leigh Ann to arrange a way that the report could be accessed by the web. Leigh Ann said that she would keep everyone updated by email as to when the report would be available.

### **New Business:**

Seacrest Group: Shannon Phelps and Bill Gallant were present as representatives of Seacrest Group. Shannon is a reclamationist who looks at biological success to evaluate response to contamination. He often looks at organisms such as the fathead minnow and a Ceriodaphnia species. Seacrest has worked with the Lefthand Watershed group doing this type of work. He said that he and Bill were able to look at the Midwest reclamation work, and they might be able to help us with some of the reclamation involving steep slopes. Zeke asked if they used their data to create narrative water quality standards. Shannon said that they were not creating alternative standards, but they were working toward broadening the scope of what is being evaluated to determine health. Shannon and Bill left a booklet with the committee that describes who they are

and what they offer.

Post-flood activities: Leigh Ann said that she had spoken with several agencies since the flooding began. The first Tuesday of the flooding, she sent photos of the damage to several committee partners and asked if they had any suggestions for assistance. The NRCS immediately responded, and Steve Russell and Rod Clark came to the site. Steve did a tremendous job getting the resources in line to do a project under the Emergency Watershed Program as Rod had described earlier in the meeting. Leigh Ann had also toured the site with Jeff Graves (CDMG), and they had gone underground to see if there were any changes. Leigh Ann said that water levels seemed to be a bit higher, but these were likely the result of more water seeping into the mines from the surface, rather than from any effects that the flooding outside of the Nelson portal might have had. Leigh Ann said that she had also talked with Jim Herron and he said that they might have some severance tax funds if we needed to do some work. Leigh Ann and Jeff also met with Bob Kirkham on site and talked about future reclamation possibilities. Leigh Ann met with Sandy Rayl and Susan Shampine from the Army Corps to see what assistance they might offer. Susan worked with the emergency response programs out of the Albuquerque office. She had said that their programs were geared to assist in the flood fight, and it appeared that we had things under control and we had seen the worst. She said that in order to access these programs, the county would have to go through all of their resources and ask the state office of emergency management first. Sandy had talked about some of the programs such as the 205, 206 and 1135, which had been discussed before. These programs had not been funded well in the past couple of years, so we would have to lobby our congressmen to get some funding set aside. Also with these programs, there was a match. Leigh Ann said that these were things we could keep in mind, but that there might be other options. Zeke said that he had talked with the County Commissioners and the Poxson family. Zeke said that the flood has greatly modified the Commodore site, and that now the best approach would be to abandon the pipe idea and focus on an open channel. Additionally, the wooden flume in front of the Commodore 5 portal needs to be removed. He said that we would still need bridge access to the portal and that we would have to engineer some drop structures through the site. Leigh Ann said that she had received a call from John Alves with the Division of Wildlife asking about the flooding and potential effects on the Rio Grande. Leigh Ann had told him that they had been collecting samples during the peak of the flooding and erosion, but they had not been analyzed yet. He had also asked if there was a likelihood of a fish kill or if anyone had checked. Leigh Ann had told him that she had not received any reports of dead fish, and she had talked with they guys at Rio Grande Angler, and they likewise had not heard any reports. She said that it was possible that the high flows in the Rio Grande had diluted any increases in metal concentrations that might have occurred. Zeke said that we now need to focus on the projects we have planned for this year and any additional projects to address the flood that we can identify. Zeke said that the Poxsons were willing to participate in restoration activities. Jim Mietz asked if the Colorado Historical Society would be interested in contributing some funds to preserve some of the buildings. Leigh Ann said that she had spoken with someone from the State Historic Fund and that they had emergency funds, but not the type we were looking for. Generally they had a small amount of money that could be used for a quick fix, such as to patch a hole in a roof. Leigh Ann had been told that she could apply for funding in their general grant process, but that would not be until October. Zeke said that this summer we should look into working with the landowners and the opportunities for funding from CDMG and DOLA. We would focus on stabilizing the damaged areas and cleaning up the debris. He said that it might be possible to divert some of the 319 funding that we were going to receive, but that he would prefer not to do that. JB said that the Amethyst dump might be in trouble if debris backed up on the grizzly and it flooded. Zeke said that would be something for the TAC to talk about. Motion to authorize the TAC to evaluate reappropriating the 319 funds made by JB; second made by Erik Sandvik. Motion carried. Leigh Ann asked about potentially changing the direction of the Windy Gulch project so that the funds might be used to address the settling ponds. She said that she had discussed this with Brian Hyde and Kelley, because there was the concern that the

community might see the committee's work at Windy Gulch as useless, and not the top priority. Kelley said that Windy Gulch was a problem on its own, separate from the flooding issues in Willow Creek. The weir at the top of the settling pond area needed to be addressed if there were to be any guarantees that floodwaters would not get out. Zeke said that it would be his preference to stick with the current plan. We would need to disseminate information about the need for the Windy Gulch project, and how we already had the funds in place when the flooding occurred. Kelley said that if it were at all possible, we needed to work on the pond area. Leigh Ann said that the committee needed to decide how they wanted to analyze the samples collected during the flooding. She said that JB had collected the samples from Dry Gulch, and those were going to be analyzed at the EPA lab. She said that she could talk to Mike Wireman to see if they could analyze the flood samples also. She said that Zeke had mentioned that they might also check with Joe Fox about analyses. Zeke said that our first effort should be to see if the EPA would analyze the samples.

Director funding: Leigh Ann said that since we had been notified that we didn't receive the EPA or the Ben & Jerry's grants, we would be running out of Director salary funding soon. She said that instead of focusing on foundations to supplement operational expenses, we should look to the private sector, such as businesses and individuals. Zeke asked if we still had money in the watershed plan funding. Leigh Ann said that we did because she had not had much time over the last few months to work on the plan. JB said that we should look to some of the big companies that are benefiting from our work, such as Chevron and the Emperious Mining Company. Jim Mietz said that the finance subcommittee had been focusing on the long term. Zeke said that we had to make sure to put more funding in the grants for project managers. Jim asked about the \$40,000 from the state for the Brownfields project. Leigh Ann said that money could not be used until the VCUP was done, but the fairgrounds project had consumed a lot of her time over the last six months. Zeke said that the finance subcommittee would work on the short term funding crisis.

**Other:**

Leigh Ann said that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and associated duck race would occur before the next meeting. She said that she would appreciate any help in getting the remaining prize donations and in staffing the booth.

The next meeting will be July 6, 2005.

Meeting Adjourned 4:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Leigh Ann Vradenbur