

WCRC Minutes April 5, 2006

Intro of members: Zeke Ward, WCRC Chairman and Mineral County Commissioner; JB Alexander, Creede; Merl Jennings, Creede; Jim Matush, Creede; Don Dustin, Creede; Bob Kirkham, Geologist and Consultant; Pat Holcomb, Colorado Preservation, Inc.; Jeff Graves, CDMG; Jim Herron, CDMG; Les Dobson, US Forest Service; Marvin Reynolds, CSU Cooperative Extension; Steve Yochum, NRCS; Steve Russell, NRCS emeritus; Cindy Villa, NRCS; Chanda Garcia, NRCS; Mark Walker, CDPHE; Kelley Thompson, WCRC Director

Approval of minutes: No corrections to the March minutes were proposed. Motion to approve the March minutes made by Jim; second made by Merl. Motion carried.

Additions/corrections to the agenda: A topic of the River Network meeting was added to New Business. The re-vegetation topic was also moved to after Steve Yochum's report.

Reports:

Chanda Garcia – NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP):

Chanda passed out information and made a presentation to the committee regarding the NRCS WRP program. She described three enrollment programs with varying lengths of conservation easements and cost share for wetland restoration. If a perpetual conservation easement is placed on the property, the NRCS can make a payment for 100% of the appraised agricultural value (up to \$2250 to \$3000 per acre), all closing costs, and 100% of the cost of wetland restoration. The easement could include a 1 to 1 ratio of upland area to riparian and wetland area. There is a continuous application process, and we may want to try for national level as well as state level funding. The state coordinator is currently Gary Finstad. Chanda mentioned that, although the program is geared to agricultural lands, it would also be applicable to mining impacted lands such as the Willow Creek floodplain. The easement could include a 1 to 1 ratio of upland area to riparian and wetland area.

Steve Yochum – historical aerial photos / water table map:

Steve found a series of historical aerial photos of the floodplain area, georeferenced them in GIS, and printed large prints for the committee to see. The photos showed the progression of impoundments in the floodplain and that vegetation conditions have not changed significantly since 1938. Steve will integrate the historical locations of impoundments and evaporation ponds in the floodplain into his planning document. He also presented a 1938 photo of Creede to Clyde and the committee.

Steve also presented a map of water level contours in the floodplain. Steve used his survey-grade GPS data measurements of surface water levels, measurement of water tables in the pits he dug, and measurements of water tables in the monitoring wells to create the contours. He also presented the committee with a large print of the levels and will send a shapefile of the contours. Some discussion also ensued about the need for a well to the east of the Emperious pile.

Director's Report:

Kelley purchased the stream-gauge using Forest Service Characterization funds and it should be in soon. Kelley will try to get the gauge running, but may call on Creede committee members or Steve to help set up equipment or start verifying the rating curve. At the Nelson, the city dug from the flume back towards the portal, and ended up lowering the water table around the portal

so that the majority of the flow is now going back through the flume. Kelley also purchased a cell phone, and that should help him stay in better contact.

Kelley also finally received much of the data from Riverwatch for the May 2005 sampling event, although data from five samples are still missing. Kelley prepared a summary map showing concentrations and loads for zinc, cadmium, and lead. Load calculations appeared reasonable and showed that the Nelson Tunnel alone and including sources below the tunnel contributed about 80% and 90% of the dissolved zinc load to the Rio Grande, respectively. The load of dissolved zinc dropped some between the flume entrance and the Rio Grande, but the load of total zinc (including particulate) increased three pounds through the floodplain. The load of particulate lead dropped through the floodplain area.

Old Business:

Re-vegetation

Cindy Villa provided an extensive listing of the vegetation species she had documented in the floodplain area that included specific information on each species. The list will be very useful in the re-vegetation of the fairground site and eventual re-vegetation of the Creede Resources site.

Kelley explained his view on 2006 re-vegetation sites. A big re-vegetation effort is needed at the Phoenix Park Mill Site and Midwest Mine reclamation sites and at the Windy Gulch culvert. The cleanup plan to cap the entire fairgrounds floodplain will probably make a precedent to cap the Creede Resources floodplain property. Therefore, it does not seem to make as much sense to try to revegetate floodplain areas if we may have to recap the area.

Marvin Reynolds reserved red oozier dogwood, peachleaf willow, and narrowleaf cottonwood from the Colorado Forest Service. Kelley wondered how well aspen might work at the Phoenix Park Mill and Midwest Mine. Marvin thought there was still aspen available to reserve also. Kelley will coordinate with Marvin to get the trees and shrubs and potentially set up plantings with school or community groups.

Stream Clean-up

Further investigation of potential cleanup between the Amethyst and Commodore was hindered since the last meeting due to snow. Mike McClure may have equipment up West Willow at some point that we could use at the Amethyst grizzly, or we may be able to request the city's backhoe/dump truck. Kelley, JB, Merl, and Jim will still try to come up with a plan to implement cleanup between the Amethyst and Commodore.

New Business:

Colorado Field Institute Field Trip

Bob Kirkham explained that the newly formed Colorado Field Institute is looking for potential field trips. He suggested that we could host a field trip to present the Willow Creek project. The trip could also increase the exposure and visibility of the committee's work to technically minded people in the valley. Bob could organize the trip if several committee members could talk about committee activities in Creede. Merl motioned and Mark seconded that the committee host a field trip for the Colorado Field Institute, and the motion passed. Bob would be meeting with the institute later in the day about the possibility.

Commodore Stabilization / Amethyst projects – 319 and other options

Les explained that \$19,000 is available from the Forest Service for the Amethyst project, but the money requested for the Last Chance has not been approved at least through 2008. There is the possibility that a project with Diann Gese could have up to \$50,000 extra that could possibly be used at the Last Chance. Jim Herron explained that the CDMG match earmarked for the Amethyst was available, but additional match would not be available until 2008. Jim H. and Jeff explained that conditions had worsened at the Commodore wooden flume even since last fall. Some discussion ensued and Zeke summarized that it was the committee's feeling that stabilization of the Commodore dump was urgent and a higher priority than the Amethyst project.

Jim H. talked with Laurie Fisher, and Laurie thought that it was do-able to change the Amethyst project to apply the funds to the Commodore. The PIP for the current contract would have to be changed and approved, and there is uncertainty how that could happen. Kelley talked with Kathleen and Laurie and they thought it was possible to request the extra available 319 funding, but that funds would probably not be available until 2007 and, again, CDMG can not provide match until 2008. Laurie Fisher also had concerns about the Commodore project from the new perspective that they may not fund projects that could have the potential to cause issuance of a discharge permit, and that if there was any remaining seepage from the dump then the potential for the permit would exist.

There was some discussion about an Emergency Response action. If an emergency response was initiated, the non-profit could not accept a land transfer, and it may be some time before the land transfer could take place. Pat added an Emergency Response grant for up to \$10,000 could possibly be obtained from the State Historical Fund. After some discussion, Merl motioned and Jeff seconded to pursue redirecting 319 funds for the Amethyst project to the Commodore stabilization. The motion passed. If at least \$20,000 could be saved to match the Forest Service money, then it could be used for a limited project at the Amethyst. Kelley would pursue the change in 319 and design of the project with help from Jeff and Jim H.

Commodore Endangered Listing – Pat Holcomb

Pat presented brochures and additional information about Colorado Preservation, Inc. and the Endangered Places list. She also presented the committee with several sets of notecards with the Commodore, and mentioned that we could get additional notecards at cost if we wanted to sell them locally to raise funds.

Commodore Historical Designation

Although the committee had ended to submit an application for a State Historical Fund general grant to stabilize the commodore, the site must be listed on the State or National historical registers to apply for this grant. Pat recommended trying to get on both the state and national registers to open up additional funding possibilities. It would be best to get the designation before the next SHF grant application on October 1. The designation may open up other grants such as the Preserve America and National Trust grants. It would probably be best to designate the district rather than individual structures. JB asked if the designation may end up limiting some activities at the site such as putting in a hydroelectric or treatment plant. The designation may cause some limitation for federally funded projects, but the designation could potentially be crafted to avoid some limitations. Zeke also mentioned that the owners of the Commodore must support the listing, and, again, the transfer to the nonprofit may take some time.

Eric Twitty has mentioned that he is willing to develop the application. Jim H. would be happy to work with Eric on the application. Jim M. motioned and Jim H. seconded to pursue designation on the national and state historic registers. The motion passed.

WCRC / Watershed Plan Direction

Zeke explained that we do still have a big task ahead to develop our watershed plan with our 319 grant. Additional public meetings and comments will be needed as well as additional consideration from the committee on our future plan. Kelley brought up that the item had also been prompted by the potential reconsideration of the committee's goals and mission. Early community surveys and meetings had produced the six goals that have directed the committee's actions. Kelley read the goals. Merl mentioned that these goals are not a mission statement, and we really should have a brief mission statement of 2 or 3 sentences. Kelley wrote a shorter statement for recent applications, and Kelley will email out that statement and the goals to the committee to further consider an appropriate mission statement.

Water Quality Sampling

Kelley questioned about plans for water quality sampling. Steve, JB, and Jim H. noted that low flow conditions are best for sampling for acid drainage sources. If we are concerned about dump erosion, then high flow may be best. It was generally felt that we should concentrate our more comprehensive studies during low flow. Steve brought up the need to establish a long term monitoring plan and sites. The Forest Service characterization money needs to be used before September and could help with water quality sampling expenses. Therefore, it was decided that we should take a limited number of samples during high flow, at long-term sites or to isolate the Commodore dump impacts, but concentrate on additional sites at low flow.

River Network

The EPA asked Zeke to present at the River Network conference in New Hampshire in May. The EPA will pay for many expenses when there, but Zeke will have some expenses that will not be paid for. Zeke requested \$300 from the committee for additional expenses. Some discussion followed that Zeke would probably have more the \$300 in additional expenses and should request more, but Zeke thought \$300 was good enough. Mark motioned and Merl seconded to provide \$300 to Zeke for extra expenses for the River Network conference.

Zeke will be gone to the River Network the first week of May. Therefore, the committee decided to move the next WCRC to the second week of May. The next meeting will be May 10, 2006. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelley Thompson