

Willow Creek Reclamation Committee Minutes
November 1, 2006
1:00 PM, Creede Town Hall

Present: Zeke Ward, WCRC Chairman and Mineral County Commissioner; Jeff Graves, CDRMS (Colorado Dept. of Reclamation Mining and Safety); Mark Walker, CDPHE (Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment); JB Alexander, Creede; Jim Matush, Creede; Merl Jennings, Creede; Chuck Barnes, Creede; Mike Wireman, USEPA (US Environmental Protection Agency); Les Dobson, USFS (US Forest Service); Steve Yochum, NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service); Jim Mietz, SLVRCD (San Luis Valley Resource Conservation & Development); Kathleen Reilly, CDPHE/WQCD (Water Quality Control Division); Kelley Thompson, Monte Vista; and Ali Morse, WCRC Coordinator.

Approval of minutes: The only correction to the October minutes was the figure quoted for the Nelson Tunnel pilot dewatering project. It was corrected to read "approx. \$40,000." Motion to approve the November minutes was made by Merl and seconded by JB. Motion carried.

Reports:

Chairman's Report

Zeke reminded the Committee that he would be attending the National Brownfields Conference in Boston, November 13-15. He also submitted an EDD (environmental due diligence) grant to the Colorado Brownfields Foundation for the Commodore Mine Dump Rehabilitation.

Director's Report

Ali reported that she has spent the first few weeks organizing the office and storage area, familiarizing herself with materials and reports on hand. She thanked Committee members for taking the time to meet with her individually in order to orient her to the job and community. Ali attended the CDRMS workshop in Denver on mining remediation, as well as the Colorado Brownfields conference in Arvada. Both were excellent educational and networking opportunities. She has also made initial inquiries regarding educational outreach in the local schools and has already received numerous materials from EPA Region 8 and other organizations. She will coordinate with Judy Lopez from SLVRCD who teaches environmental education in San Luis Valley schools.

Old Business:

Dewatering Project

Jeff is working with Carol Gurule at SLVRCD to get a signed contract from Ken Wyley and it should be ready within the next month. Ken will be responsible for all preparations leading up to the dewatering, the pumping itself, and demobilization. The Committee will take care of mine phones, pump rental, etc. Before the pumps are installed, CDRMS will do a final safety walk-through. EPA will complete a round of isotope testing. About 5-6 volunteers will be needed this winter during the actual dewatering and each will need an air monitoring system and self rescuers; WCRC has three air meters. The water will not be discharged, only stored underground. Jeff estimated that approx. 500,000 gallons of water will be pumped in about 13 hours and sampling will take place at the bulkhead, for which there is grant money.

TMDLs

Mike reminded the Committee that the WQCD will start hearings for segment 4 of the Rio Grande in 2007. Segment 4 begins at Willow Creek and ends at the Alamosa county line. If the TMDL is met, the segment will be removed from the 303(d) list. Ali and Kelley will attend the Issues Formulation Hearing (IFH) in Alamosa November 13. Zeke stated that analyses vary considerably and suggested that Segment 4 might possibly be considered for re-segmentation. Zeke thought we are above Table Value

Standards only 2-3 months/year but still have to come into compliance with Willow Creek. Our temporary standards expire in 2007 and the WQCC is reluctant to leave them in place. According to Mike, we must complete a Use Attainability Analysis to eliminate the aquatic life standard. Kathleen reminded the Committee that the TMDLs should be completed soon by the WQCD. Segmentation is governed by uses of the river, in addition to changes in physical characteristics and water quality characteristics. To prepare for the IFH, we will gather data from the USGS report on the Rio Grande (2002), the CDPHE's monthly analyses, and the DOW's report when they shocked fish and analyzed fish tissue (2003?).

Stream Restoration

Steve reported that he was pulled off the project because it was "deprioritized." He is returning to school (CSU) in two months to pursue his PhD and will continue to work for NRCS 10 hours/week. NRCS is program oriented and streams are not emphasized, with the exception of the Wetlands Restoration Program (WRP). If the WRP is not appropriate for the stream restoration, it may be difficult to prioritize project with NRCS. Steve's lengthy report on the Willow Creek floodplain needs two months before completion, and then will get peer review.

Mike met with Paul Glader from Hecla who said they are moving forward with the transfer of all three of their properties. VCUP and characterization has been done on the mill site; only VCUP has been done on the tailings. There is no data on the third property west of the tailings on the floodplain. Hecla will share the cost associated with cleanup of the mill site and tailings. There was some discussion about monitoring and trends for the tailings (cadmium, zinc and pH).

MCFA (Mineral County Fairgrounds Association)

According to Mark Arnold, we are waiting for a wetlands permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to submit the VCUP application. The MCFA committee will be in Denver November 2-4 to meet with architects for the project. There was discussion about green building practices, the use of solar, etc.

New Business:

Finances

The motion to approve Ali's contract with SLVRCD was made by Chuck and seconded by Mark. Merl motioned to approve Ali's travel and conference expenses; Chuck seconded it. The motion to have both Ali's and Zeke's names on the checking account was made by Merl; JB seconded it. All motions passed unanimously. Ken Wyley and Hank Nichols repaired the gate at Commodore 5 for a total of \$670 (plus \$23.95 for supplies). Mark motioned to pay the bill and submit it to Ben Poxson for reimbursement to WCRC; JB seconded it. The motion carried. Jenny Inge has donated office space to WCRC in the old Pappy's Place, which has DSL access. Merl motioned to move the WCRC offices to Pappy's Place and retain the Town Hall for meetings; Chuck seconded and the motion passed. Les suggested that next month's agenda should include discussion on the new state money—where and how much it is, how and where to spend it.

The next meeting will be December 6, 2006, beginning with a TAC meeting at 9:00 AM. The regular meeting will begin at 1:00 PM. This meeting adjourned at 4 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Ali Morse