

May 5, 1999 Minutes

WCRC Meeting

Meeting held in the Creede Town Hall
Called to order by Chairman Zeke Ward at 1:07 PM

Those attending:

Larry Bussey	SLV TroutUnlimited	none
Perry Alspaugh	Div. Water Resources	perry.alspaugh@state.co.us
Bonnie Wardell	City of Creede Trustee	
Ken Wangerud	EPA Region 8	wangerud.ken@epa.gov
Jim Mietz	SLV RC&D	jmietz@co.nrcs.usda.gov
Chuck Barnes	Mayor of Creede	
Les Dobson	Forest Service	
Rod Wintz	Mineral County Commissioner	
Ken Askew	SouthFork-Creede Railway Corridor Group	
Tim Ouellette	NRCS	
Raida Knapp	NRCS	
Steve Russell	NRCS	
Dave Suhr	Creede Resources	
John Howard	Creede Historical Society	JHoward375@aol.com
Glen Miller	Project Coordinator	miller@amigo.net
Bence Close	McCulley, Frick & Gilman	bclose@mfgenv.com
Stephen Wardell	Mineral County	wardell@amigo.net
Zeke Ward	Committee Chairman	redmtn@fone.net

Chairman's Report

Chairman Ward brought us up to date as to various information he received.

- 1) EPA Region 8 Web-site.
- 2) Northern N. Mexico vegetation touring sites.
- 3) Don Shank's group is negotiating with Union Pacific Railroad.
- 4) Hinsdale County Newsletter.
- 5) TMDL work training for State practitioners. (June 2nd)
- 6) Training Strategies in Western Water Law. (June 9-11)

Report by Bence Close (MFG) about the sec. 319 Grant Application and Preliminary Characterization study.

Application was submitted yesterday (May 4, 1999) and will be evaluated in May.

Outline of the Grant includes...

- 1) Funding for the Watershed Coordinator & misc. expenses.
- 2) Site Characterization. (collecting the additional needed data)
 - a) Field reconnaissance to identify sampling stations.
 - b) Develop a Sampling Analysis Plan (SAP) and Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) for both high and low flow water sampling.
 - c) Propose limited groundwater quality work in the first year.
 - d) Baseline Biological Assessment.
 - 1) Pilot regeneration plots to find what species would be best for stabilization, etc. for future planting projects.
 - e) Cultural Resource Inventory.
 - f) Solomon mine wetland analysis.

From the development of this baseline data, a report could be generated regarding plans for cleanup. From the sec. 319 Clean Water Fund we are asking for \$251,432 with an *in kind* match of \$216,900. We are required to come up with a 40% match for the total project cost (non Federal sources). We have about \$45,000 as an *in kind* match from Federal Agencies (i.e., EPA, NRCS, Forest Service, Fish & Wildlife, USGS). The entire project amounts to \$513,400 and covers a period of over a year, into the year 2000.

Discussion ensued about the payment of the Coordinator before the granting of sec. 319 funding. The Committee acknowledges and is grateful for the generosity of the donation of *in kind* matches that have been pledged.

Bence Close asks for comments about the Preliminary Characterization Study that was submitted to the Committee on April 5th. The purpose of this report was to gather existing data, summarize it, and provide a recommended general course of action based on this data.

Comments were...

- 1) How will the addition of information, not available in the original, be added to the existing draft?
- 2) Concerns were noted about the lack of copies available. (Nearly everyone wants one and there are only five)
- 3) Concerns were noted about the importance of the "Forest Service Mining Operations History" data being added to the report.
- 4) Concerns were noted about there not being enough explanation of scientific terms for the non-technical reader.

Commodore Progress Report

As a result of some questions by the EPA and others, it is clear that the plan for structural stabilization of the Commodore site, "the patch", will not be hammered out by high water.

The purpose of this patch was to buy us time for a detailed study to be carried out.

We have a letter of permission from the owners of the Commodore mine to proceed. The owners have also said that they will have a consultant of their own come up to make recommendations.

Hopefully we can meet with the owners sometime this month to correlate activities.

Original rough ball-park dollar figure for the temporary fix was \$15 - \$20,000. But this was before any hydrology report, characterization of the waste piles, and historical structures reports were available.

We had an offer by Bruce Stober of the Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology to help us out with a more permanent solution.

A formal letter was submitted that they get involved with this project. The reply from Bruce was that the project would receive favorable attention and that they have \$50,000 earmarked this year for the Creede Mining District Closure work. The time-line on the first request was that we go through the process of identifying the project, perform engineering design, and apply for funding. If all went well, money would become available in January of 2000 and the work done thereafter.

The Division of Minerals & Geology will have a meeting on May 11 to know if 1999 mine closure work and money could go into this project.

Zeke Ward voiced that work performed by CDMG as part of their Closure effort may not be considered a patch, but the final fix, depending upon engineering analysis; and this could possibly be done within a couple of months. If work on the permanent fix is still a year or more away then we need a temporary patch now.

Zeke proposes that we take the field survey notes of the Commodore site and give them to the MFG engineers for their comments and recommendations, then give all that to Ken Wangerud, Mike Wireman, and Hays Griswold, for their comments and recommendations; and then give that whole pile of stuff to Bruce Stober along with Les Dobson's hydrology report, Vince Spiro's archaeology report, and the design from MFG. With this comprehensive data, a permanent fix by CDMG might be possible in the near term. Ken Wangerud voiced that the "patch" was only temporary, to allow time for the proper historic, engineering, etc. studies to be done.

Jim Meitz wished to know what, in realistic terms, is the difference between the patch and the final product. The answer is that this is not at present accurately known because of the lack of data and studies, but the purpose of the patch was to minimize potential failure of the structure should an episodic event occur while the study process is taking place.

Ken Wangerud voiced his opinion in connection with discussions with Mike Wireman, Bruce Stober, and MFG that the Commodore area appears to be a major loading source; and given the complexity and importance of the site, it is going to be a major piece of work in determining exactly what the metals loading is, and then design a permanent fix.

He feels this is a significant undertaking and could easily take 2 to 3 years of site evaluation before a proper permanent fix could be planned. Ken feels that one would be real lucky to know by a year from now what a permanent fix would entail, because it is a "big time" engineering project, and that a temporary patch to

alleviate concerns of a 10 to 20 year flood event occurring and doing damage would be in order. Ken feels that the biggest tragedy could be to leap on a structural engineering project that makes the site structurally safe and stable but does not adequately address the metals loading problem.

Zeke Ward voiced that our goals involve dealing with all aspects of the problem and that a permanent fix must and would deal with all dimensions of the situation.

Jim Meitz asked whether the Commodore is the most severe situation that we face. The answer is that we do not as yet know because we do not have the necessary data, although, the Commodore and Amethyst probably will turn out to be our biggest concerns.

We will know more about our next course of action after the May 11, CDMG meeting.

Hecla Donation

At the last meeting, Hecla, the City of Creede, and the EPA have been trying to work out the conditions of this land donation. Chairman Ward has written a letter in support of that donation.

There is a meeting set up for tomorrow morning. The letter generally states that the City of Creede is behind the donation and is committed to reclaiming that parcel of land, and the EPA is urged to give this favorable consideration. Zeke pointed out that Hecla has never mined a ton of ore but has, since becoming property owner, worked only to clean the area up.

NRCS Re-vegetation survey

NRCS is to go out next week with a survey crew to produce a contour map for the establishment of vegetation test plots. Hopefully this map will be available by the June 2nd meeting.

Steve Russell said that NRCS, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife, and CSU are going to do some more ground work. Forest Service has already taken some topsoil and landfill samples and has checked around for limestone to counteract the acidity.

Re-Veg studies of other areas are being studied to determine what may apply here. More soil studies and plant species determination for test plots is being carried out and field trials will begin in mid July.

It should be known by this Friday who the owner of the Creede Mines property is.

Historic Preservation Issues

Thirty five percent of gambling tax goes to the State Historical Society out of which they administer a grant program. They currently have 13 million dollars to give away. We could use some of that money for cultural restoration etc. The deadline for grant proposals is October and money could become available around January. It is expected that we will work in conjunction with the Creede Historical society on this issue and develop an action plan.

If our sec. 319 funding comes through, we would have (for this year) \$23,430 to conduct historic site investigations as well as some archaeology work on areas such as the Amethyst, Weaver Town-site, etc. There is a gentleman out of Boulder named Eric Twitty that could be hired to do this cultural survey. He could do on site inspections and study the historical relevance from our local history library and then do the necessary paper work to nominate various areas to be put on State and National historic registries. The implication is that once a site has been so registered, it is available for grant funding. This State Historical funding can be used for preservation, restoration, and in some cases purchase of the historical site. If the Creede or Colorado Historical Society owns the property then they are in a better position to control the destiny of that site. Work needs to go into the idea of establishing a State Historic District.

The question was raised as to whether Eric is SHPO qualified. Apparently he is. The State and Federal Government have official procedures for evaluating sites for historic status that must be adhered to.

Zeke Ward stated that we may want to go beyond those minimum requirements since historic preservation is a personal primary and valuable concern of his, as it is to this committee and the town of Creede. Also, many people outside the community have expressed great interest in the mining history of this area.

Zeke pointed out that from various conversations, he learned there are only 5 other areas in Colorado that have as naturally well preserved historic sites along with a town in keeping with its historical character, as does Creede.

Ken Wangerud pointed out that nothing can and ought to be done until a thorough historical evaluation has been completed.

The Willow Creek Committee is grateful to the Creede Historical Society for the letter of Recommendation that was used in our sec. 319 Grant Proposal.

A gentleman by the name of Ed Raines from Colorado Preservation Inc. (non profit group that specializes in historic mining activity) is going to make a presentation at our June 2nd meeting.

Word needs to go to the Creede Historical Society membership so anyone interested would know to attend.

Glen is advised to attend the Saturday part of the Historical Conference in Ouray.

The South Fork - Creede Railway Corridor group have volunteered to underwrite the accommodation expense for the visits of Mr. Twitty and Mr. Raines when they visit.

Human Health Indicators - CDPHE

Studies were conducted showing that the Mineral County mining activity of years passed has not produced a left over effect, hazardous to human health.

According to CDPHE vital statistics. (back as far as 1987)

We are average or below the state medium on death and sickness due to various causes i.e.,

- 1) Low Birth weight.
- 2) Unusual cancer occurrences.
- 3) Heart, lungs, etc.

Mineral county had no red flags however, there is no mechanism in State statistical analysis to account for less than 3 incidences of any condition. Because of the small population of this area, health anomalies wherein 3 cases would indicate a greater than average incidence, would be hidden because of the parameters of data collection.

Railroad Issues

A mailing from the surface transportation board states that Don Shanks group (San Luis Valley Historic Preservation Org.) has been identified by Union Pacific as the group they will negotiate with concerning the purchase of the railroad right-a-way from South Fork to Creede. They have 90 days from the Surface Transportation Board to complete an acceptable proposal.

After a letter of request from Zeke Ward, the Surface Transportation Board has decreed that the current owner and the future owner of the railroad right-a-way be required to, not only work with the Stakeholder group (the Willow Creek Committee), but be in direct communication with the CDPHE and the EPA.

Committee Reorganization

Chairman Ward pointed out that it has been nearly a year and a half since the Committee was organized. Since then, the number of partners and stakeholders has doubled. It might be time to re-elect officers and review the original by-laws.

Jim Metz concludes that the following be done...

- 1) Define the offices needed and describe the responsibilities of each.
- 2) Stipulate an appropriate term of office.

It is agreed that this reorganization and election of officers be put on the June 2nd agenda.

TAC (Technical Advisory Committee)

Currently the TAC Committee consists of Mike Wireman (EPA), Jim Lewis (CDPHE hazardous materials division), Luan Higgins (Fish & Wildlife), Bruce Stover (CDMG), Les Dobson (Forest Service), Steve Russell (NRCS), Barbara Horn & John Alves (CDOW).

It is recommended that we nominate Tina Laidlaw (EPA- biology expert) to the TAC Committee.

All were in favor.

Others are needed i.e., JB Alexander, Mack Rover.

Jim Metz advises that more local people ought to be in this group.

Zeke pointed out that Dr. Howard (of Creede) has volunteered to be on the TAC Committee and that Glen Miller (project coordinator) ought to as well, as a representative of the Willow Creek Committee and possibly the chairman. Mike Wireman has also volunteered to be the chairman of this committee.

Jim Metz pointed out (correctly so) that a paid employee might not be the best person to chair this committee and nominated Dr. Howard to be the Chairman and for Glen to be an advisor to the Committee and correlate the technicalities of all meetings and information dispersal.

The motion carried as stated - 1 opposition .

Dr. Howard pointed out that the purpose of the TAC Committee is to provide technical advise etc. to the Willow Creek Committee at their request; so the agenda will be driven by those requests. Zeke advised that electronic communication be used as much as possible in order to keep travel costs down.

Other

Les Dobson stated that they are in the process of identifying any adit openings that need to be closed and giving that list to the CDOW. They are going to have people this summer, looking at all those openings and doing a bat assessment.

Chairman Ward discussed the Water Coordinator Contract and ask for a show of approval.

All voted in favor that the Contract with the Water Coordinator stand as written.

Opinions were voiced as to the mechanics of paying the water coordinator before the 319 funding is approved.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45.

Next meeting is scheduled for June 2nd at 1:00 PM.

Minutes submitted by:

Glen Miller

Project Watershed Coordinator

Approved and accepted:

Zeke Ward

Chairman