

Minutes

Lower Gunnison Basin Selenium Management Program

DATE: Thursday, January 22, 2015

Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Location: Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association Headquarters, 601 N. Park Ave, Montrose, Colorado

Conference Call Line: 1-866-541-2318 Passcode: 6191202

Attendees: Brent Uilenberg (Reclamation), Ken Leib (USGS) via phone, Dave Kanzer (Co River District), Charles McMurdy (Ag Producer), Jenny Ward (Reclamation), Paul Kehmeier (Ag Producer), Dave Dearstyne (NRCS), Mike Baker (Self, Ret. Reclamation), John Sottolare (Reclamation), Steve Miller (CWCB) via phone, Allen Distel (BPWCD), Ralph D'Alessandro (DCD), David Brown (USGS), Trisha Solberg (USGS)

I. Introductions and discussion of agenda

II. General Updates

a. CWCB Grant for Engineering Support in the 2015 FOA (CWCB – Steve Miller)

Mike Baker may help with process. Deadline to apply is Feb. 17th, but may be able to apply later if funds are still available. Applicants can check after Feb 23rd to see if any funds remain. Application forms will be available to the DCD on Tuesday, but applicants can send a narrative instead. 8-9 irrigation companies have already applied. An FOA application is needed for reimbursement, and it is best to seek no more than \$5,000. It involves less paperwork, and any request for a higher amount needs justification. The grant is only available to irrigation companies in the Lower Gunnison Basin above the Whitewater Gage.

Status of Basinwide Salinity FOA 2015: (Reclamation – John Sottolare) The Colorado / New Mexico informational meeting is on Tuesday, January 27th starting at 1:00 in the Spruce Conference Room at the USFS office in Delta. Reclamation sent notices out via email and through the US Post Office. DCD also advertised on the radio and in the newspaper. Reclamation will send out future notices only through email. The River District plans to supply snacks. Steve Miller requested time to discuss the application for the assistance grant.

b. Critical Conservation Area Designation & RCPP Application – Colorado River (CRWCD – Dave Kanzer)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant application for \$20M on behalf Lower Gunnison Basin project proponents has been awarded \$8M (5-year funding cycle). Reclamation was the largest contributor of additional matching funds and pledged approximately \$40M from Colorado River Storage Project Memorandum of Agreement funds (MOA CRSP) and ~\$4M under Basinwide Salinity Control Projects). Matching contributions also came from the SCTF and other sources. The grant will be used for water efficiency projects that will also reduce salt and selenium loading in 4 focus area locations. Because the full \$20M applied for wasn't awarded, Dave would like the group to help determine the scope of the reduced projects. There will be an informal gathering to go over the program on Feb 3. Formal submittal is by early March. There is also a rolling application cycle, so we don't have to wait 5 years to reapply. We can apply annually. It was suggested to hire an RCPP coordinator to help coordinate the program.

c. Other related Notes:

1) Lesley McWhirter has been selected as Reclamation's GJ Environmental and Planning Group Chief to fill the position vacated by Terry Stroh. She will transfer from the GJ Army Corps of Engineers on January 26th.

III. **STF items** – NRCS is discussing the soils request letter sent to them from the SMP.

IV. **Technical Team Updates** (John Sottolare – Technical Team Lead)

Dr. Perry Cabot has sent the technical team some literature to look over concerning surge irrigation. Beth Karberg also has some BMP ideas that she would like to present to the technical subcommittee.

V. ***Education and Outreach Updates*** (Sonja Chavez de Baca, Lead)

Dave is encouraging the team to collaborate with other entities, such as Hannah Holmes (writes articles) and to do more outreach with the conservation districts. There are also local conferences coming up including conservation district meetings and the soil health conference, where Dr. Cabot will talk about some on-farm research studies that he is conducting. He is looking for some larger plots of alfalfa (20-40 acres) to help quantify the costs and benefits of flood irrigation vs other types of high efficiency irrigation. It was suggested that Justyn could help spread the word.

VI. ***Science/Research Team Updates*** (Dave Kanzer, Lead)

DK reported that a tracer study was coming together in Red Rock Canyon, just outside of Bostwick Park.

VII. ***Recommended Projects for SCTF support*** (CWCB – Steve Miller)

Projects supported by CWCB are sent to the state for approval. Our projects are competing among themselves, since all expected tax money may not materialize. Projects are listed in no priority order, and Steve is open to exploring some new BMP projects with local farmers.

VIII. ***2015 Action Plan***

Steve suggested that we add a column showing selenium reduction values for individual projects. Dave B. thought that we could do that on a large scale by basin (perhaps using the model), but the current science is not yet able to accurately determine that on a project scale.

IX. ***Other Items***

Proposed Joint Science / Tech subcommittee meeting on Friday 2/27 at 10:00 – 1:00, Reclamation conf room A.

Next SMP workgroup meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 16th from 10:00 – 3:00 in the Center Spruce Conference Room of the US Forest Service Office in Delta.