

## DRAFT MINUTES

### Joint Lower Gunnison Basin & Grand Valley Selenium Task Force & Selenium Management Program

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DATE: January 23, 2013

Time: 10 am to 3:30 pm

Location: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Conference Rm A), 2764 Compass Drive, Suite 106, Grand Junction, Colorado

Conference Call Line: 970-248-0614

Attendees: Suzanne Paschke (U.S. Geological Survey or USGS), Paul Kehmeir (Ag Producer), Dave Brown (USGS), Allen Distal (Bostwick Park Water Conservancy District), Charles McMurdy (Shavano Conservation District), John Butler (Mesa Conservation District), Dave Noe (CO Geologic Survey), John Sottolare (Reclamation), Terry Stroh (Reclamation), Dave Kanzer (Co River District), Ken Leib (USGS), Barb Osmundson (Fish & Wildlife Service or FWS), Denis Reich (CO State University and CO Water Institute), Mike Baker (Self), Steve McCall (Reclamation), Michelle Tuttle (USGS), Steve Miller (CO Water Conservation Board or CWCB) Ralph D'Allesandro (Delta Conservation District via phone), and Tom Huerkamp (Ag Producer and Delta County Economic Development), Steve Fletcher and Michelle Decker (Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association or UVWUA), Sonja Chavez de Baca (Se Task Force or STF), Theresa McGovern (Natural Resources Conservation Service or NRCS), and Josh Linard (USGS)

#### SELENIUM TASK FORCE (10AM-12PM): Facilitated by Sonja Chavez de Baca, STF Coordinator

##### I. Selenium Task Force Update (10-10:30am)

- A. North Fork Selenium Grant Update: Dave Kanzer reported that [Anna Santo \(former NFRIA WSERC AmeriCorps/VISTA\)](#) he is seeing a difference [in sample results](#) between [water quality samples collected by Anna Santo \(former NFRIA-WSERC AmeriCorps/VISTA\)](#) and the USGS. [for both total selenium and dissolved selenium](#), in the North Fork Area. [A suggestion was made for the two groups to collect a concurrent sample as a quality assurance check.](#) Dave, Ken, and Sonja will be meeting with Anna in person or via phone conference in the very near future to review the data.
- B. Soil Health Conference (January 24-25): The group was reminded about the conference and encouraged to attend.
- C. Lower Gunnison Basin & Grand Valley Selenium Watershed Management Plan (SeWMP): The SeWMP is finished and has been turned into the Non Point Source (NPS) Program as required. Sonja will put the plan on the STF website.
- D. Lower Gunnison Basin Wise Water Use Council (WWUC): Sonja reported that the future and fate of the WWUC is uncertain at this time. There are not many opportunities to obtain grant funding in support of education and outreach. The group has been focused upon agricultural wise water use message delivery, but has made fewer strides, in her opinion, on addressing urban/residential wise water use.
- E. Recent Collaboration with Lower Gunnison Salinity Study Team: Sonja has been collaborating with the Lower Gunnison Comprehensive Salinity Study Team (Dave Merritt of URS Corporation and MaryLou Smith of the CO Water Institute) to plan for a public input forum focused on getting input from

**Commented [BOR-JPS1]:** Sonja, my notes were a little muddy on this, so I checked with Josh (USGS) and together we think that this is correct.

**Commented [Sonja2]:** I had a different understanding. Verify with DK as I could have been distracted.

agricultural producers and water providers about their participation or lack thereof in the different salinity programs (on-farm and off-farm). The public input forum will be on February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn Express in Montrose. The format of the forum will be an open discussion with the agricultural community to give them an opportunity to provide input and feedback and stimulating dialogue and discussion. There will not be a focus on highlighting agency involvement (e.g. Reclamation, NRCS, or Co Dept of Agriculture) through presentations or other but the Study Team would like to have their presence to answer any questions that may come up.

ACTION ITEMS: Ralph D'Allesandro indicated that MaryLou should also contact KVNF in Paonia which has a translator that broadcasts into the Shavano District. Sonja has the contact information and will pass on to MaryLou. It was suggested that the radio interview involve not just Dave or MaryLou participating in the interview, but also folks like Ralph D'Allesandro, Paul Kehmeir, or other local entity or producer.

## II. Lower Gunnison Basin Water Quality Monitoring Program (10:30 -10:50am)

An annual summary of water-quality data from the Lower Gunnison monitoring sites is taking place as part of the annual SMP report to the FWS. The USGS looked at all trend and non-trend sites. Ken reported that the draft summary is complete and is undergoing an internal review. After the internal review it will undergo review with Reclamation. Ken is hoping the trend summary report will be ready for distribution in April.

There was some discussion concerning the possibility of a large, unaccounted for groundwater input into the Gunnison River between Escalante and Whitewater (a distance of approximately 20 miles). A suggested option to address this was for a water-quality monitoring field day in which the USGS and FWS would float a boat down the river and collect water-quality and invertebrate samples. Barb indicated that she has historical data that we can compare new data to. Pending further discussion and recommendation from the Science Team, we may need to request funding for analysis.

There is still an un-answered question about the role of dissolved organic carbon (DOC) in selenium transport. The USGS, STF and Reclamation need to determine if it would be worthwhile to gather this additional data as part of our sampling program. Suzanne Paschke of USGS indicated that they do see a water-rock interaction in groundwater samples on the Front Range. She thought that it might be useful to add DOC to the groundwater sampling program in areas like Escalante and Whitewater. Ken indicated that there are 6 wells at Whitewater from the characterization study done in the 90's. NAWQA will also be collecting DOC and TOC at Whitewater. Suzanne felt that we might expect selenium to bind to the DOC and therefore see a correlation. Ken reported that DOC is on the schedule for the wetland sampling and in the 10 well network in the Uncompahgre Valley.

Sonja reported that the STF is partnering with the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership (UWP) to support a VISTA - ¼ time of a position. The UWP was approved for another 3-year cycle so Sonja will be collaborating in the review of applicants for the UWP position. She indicated that the water-quality monitoring sub-group needs

to have a discussion about where the STF might want to beef up the water-quality monitoring program utilizing the VISTA.

She also reported that the UVWUA has applied for a Non Point Source grant that also has a required water-quality monitoring component. Sampling will be done on the Uncompahgre, Loutzenhizer, and a series of shallow groundwater wells near the proposed piping location. The UVWUA and STF will cooperate in the monitoring program utilizing the AmeriCorps/VISTA and SC Environmental to carry out the program.

III. **Review and Approval of STF High Priority Action Items for 2013 (10:50-11am):** Sonja reported that over the past few months she has been focusing on the identified STF high priority action items for 2013, and she requested clarification on how to proceed with providing or facilitating further grant proposal which was to work with the SMP science team and/or to work with the local conservation districts on doing some focused planning and implementation for on-farm and off-farm coordination.

- Lower Gunnison Salinity Study Coordination – in progress. See coordinator updates in Section I.E. above.
- Water Quality Monitoring Coordination – in progress. See Section II above.
- VISTA and UWP Collaboration – in progress. See Section II above.
- Outreach and Education – local governments. No additional progress has been made to date on this priority item.

**Action Item:** Sonja will work to convene a meeting of the education and outreach SMP and STF subcommittee to better define a program for 2013.

- Facilitate further grant proposals.

IV. **USGS Presentation (11am-12pm)**

Michelle Tuttle of the USGS gave a presentation on the USGS Mancos Shale Landscape Study. Sonja will work with Michelle to make the presentation available (possibly on the STF website).

### LUNCH BREAK ON YOUR OWN (12-1)

**SELENIUM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (1pm-3:30pm): Facilitated by Terry Stroh, Reclamation**

- I. SMP Organization and Responsibilities (1-1:45pm)
  - A. Workgroup
  - B. Science Committee
  - C. Technical Committee
  - D. Bylaws or Ground Rule Discussion

Terry Stroh (Reclamation) indicated that he and others have expressed a need for some procedures on how the SMP operates. For example, there was frustration expressed about the fact that there is no opportunity to review proposals for funding for different projects in order to evaluate their effectiveness or benefit to the SMP and selenium reduction goals. Some stakeholders have expressed a desire to develop a process or a priority action item list against which to weigh proposals. In other words, where do we want to put available resources in the action plan? It was the opinion of some that the SMP doesn't control purse strings, but should make recommendations about the benefits of a proposed project to selenium reduction potential to those who do. There were others in the group that felt as if the SMP was

operating fine and that having the flexibility to respond to different funding sources that become available was beneficial to the group. The opposing group also felt that they did not want to have our progress hindered by the development of bylaws or detailed procedural-type hoops, and some agencies indicated that it wouldn't change what they can/can't do. In the end, the group was able to come up with a general consensus to move forward with the development of some basic operational ground rules and to outline some priorities against which to weigh proposals that come to the group.

**Action Items:** Terry will work with a small subcommittee to draft some basic operational ground rules. Once a draft is finalized, the subcommittee will present it to the entire SMP Work Group for review and discussion. It is hoped that all parties/stakeholders can then make a gentlemen's / gentlewomen's agreement to follow said procedures.

Steve Miller of the CO Water Conservation Board is responsible for administering Species Conservation Trust Funds (SCTF) for projects that benefit the SMP. He advised the group that when he makes his annual requests to the Department of Natural Resources each year for the SCTF he is concerned about the fact that he doesn't have a formal agreement among the SMP stakeholders to point to, which states that all stakeholders agree to implement the SMP. Dave K indicated that he thought that the PBO and Record of Decision (ROD) basically binds beneficiaries or water users to the SMP. Steve Miller thought this was not necessarily so.

Steve said he'd like to see a formal adoption or ratification of the SMP plan through an MOU or similar agreement. Many stakeholders expressed their desire not to go this route again. In the past, Reclamation had a very difficult time getting some stakeholders to sign an MOU for the SMP (the process took over a year), and in the end, some stakeholders only agreed to sign an MOU that committed them to participating in the development of the SMP Formulation Document and not for implementation.

Discussions on the matter closed with the Work Group agreeing to assemble a small subcommittee of the six signatories to the original MOU, along with an irrigation entity representative, to propose some options that may satisfy both CWCB and SMP stakeholders.

**Action Item:** Terry will work to convene a meeting of the six signatories of the MOU, along with an irrigation entity representative, to develop a long-term agreement on how each agency participates and allow the program to carry more weight for the agencies providing funding support. Allen Distel indicated that he was willing to serve on the committee as a water provider rep.

**Action Item:** A meeting of the Science Team also needs to be scheduled in the very near future. Sonja will send out a doodle poll invite with potential meeting dates.

Agenda items for Science Team: Formally review the UVWUA SCADA Project, Delta/Shavano EQIP enhancement of on-farm projects, and Targeted Canal Lining Demonstration Project utilizing mag imaging data gathered by USBR (need SOW within 12 months from today, if not sooner). Finalize plans for completing a scope

**Commented [BOR-JPS3]:** Steve Miller talked about a deadline of June 1, but I'm not sure if that only applied to the SCADA proposal.

and budget for the Groundwater Monitoring Network Expansion (wells + data gathering).

Terry discussed with the group the possibility of increasing the number of annual meetings of the SMP Work Group from 4 to 6. This would allow the group to have two additional days entirely devoted to SMP agenda items rather than just half a day four times a year. Meetings are consistently running over the allotted time frames and this may help to address this issue as well.

**Action Item:** Terry (with Sonja's assistance) will propose two additional meeting dates in 2013 via doodle poll in order to select the date that works best for SMP stakeholders.

Other notes: The SMP report is due at the end of January 2013. The report will address what has been accomplished as it relates to the existing action plan.

## II. State of Colorado Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) (1:45-2:30pm)

- A. Finalize SOWs for FY12-13
- B. Remaining FY12-13 SCTF Funds
- C. FY 13-14 Recommendations

Paul Kehmeir is an ag producer in the Tongue Creek Watershed. The group asked Paul if he had any input for our group pertaining to the Salinity Program FOA proposal process as well as the benefits of the design/engineering funds made available through the CWCB via SCTF for projects in high selenium areas. Paul felt that he wished he knew more about the engineering of a canal or lateral project so that he would know if the engineering companies were doing a good job in their proposals. Tom Huerkamp said that he felt that if they had started working with the engineers a year in advance they would have been better off in the FOA process. With the extra lead time they would have been better prepared to address issues like ROW and extra expenses associated with a large number of road crossings, etc. Reclamation hopes to address this concern at future workshops that are currently being developed.

The SMP Work Group and Steve Miller went through the list of projects being funded through the SCTF since FY 2009, amounts obligated to date, and projects proposed for funding in 2013 and 2014.

**ACTION ITEM:** Sonja will work with Delta and Shavano Conservation Districts on an *EQIP Enhancement* Project to see if they can assist her in developing a process to identify ag producers that are interested in the possibility of installing high efficiency irrigation systems in high selenium areas. The SCTF could help to provide the cost share portion. Steve Miller would need a formal proposal and SOW for identifying at least 3 projects by June 2013 if not sooner. It was agreed that SCTF could go through the Co River District.

## III. Salinity Control Program FOA Update (2:30-2:45pm)

John Sottolare, Reclamation Salinity Coordinator, was asked to give an update on the 2012 FOA process. John was able to report in generalities but was not free to talk

about specific projects or awards until final agreements are signed. Any private entity wishing to make public their award successful application was able to do so.

**Commented [ts4]:** It's not awarded until the contracts area signed.

In general, up to \$6 million in applications were recommended for funding under the Basin States Program and approximately \$30 - 35 million in applications were recommended for funding under the Basinwide Program. Almost 40 applications, totaling over \$100 million in requests, were submitted.

Paul Kehmeir reported that the Forked Tongue Ditch was selected under the Basin States Program but that they hadn't signed a contract yet. Allen Distel reported that Bostwick Park Water Conservancy was selected. Steve Fletcher reported that the UVWUA was selected. Tom Huerkamp reported that Rogers Mesa had two projects selected. Tom said that had it not been for the engineering assistance provided through the SCTF these project proposals would not have been made to the Salinity Program.

Other discussions surrounded what to do with the remaining funds set aside for engineering assistance. Steve Miller said that leftover SCTF could possibly be used for some of the engineering costs associated with the furthering of an optimization study in select areas (for entities not funded under the FOA). He'll know more about the funding balance once SCTF dollars are distributed to the entities that submitted a responsive application.

#### IV. Lower Gunnison Basin Optimization Study Discussion (2:45-3pm)

Tom Huerkamp said the Grand Mesa Conservancy District was going to be holding a meeting to talk about what they visualize regarding long-term system optimization. Tom Huerkamp will be present. Tom let us know about the meeting because he felt that it may be a potential optimization planning area.

The SMP Work Group informed Steve Miller and Tom that this area was not in a high priority selenium area and that any planning in this area should be done as salinity planning.

In order to help with identifying where optimization studies should/could take place with SMP assistance, the group felt that they needed to identify high priority areas and then do outreach within these areas. One way to start would be to overlay the selenium mobilization map on conservancy district boundaries. In addition the USGS model may be able to help look at loading contributions.

**Action Item:** Sonja will ask Ken and/or Josh Linard of USGS about what needs to be done with the model so that it can be used in this capacity. Place as a discussion item on Science Team agenda.

**Commented [ts5]:** Actually, Reclamation (John) will lead this effort with USGS assistance (hopefully) and prepare some recommendations to be discussed at the Science Committee Level

**Action Item:** Send the Lower Gunnison System Optimization Proposal Plan that was received from Steve Miller, to the Science Team for input.

#### V. Uncompahgre Optimization Study (3-3:15pm)

Ramdhan Khalsa of Reclamation presented the basic components of the Uncompahgre Optimization Study in addition to explaining the goal of the project which was to increase irrigation efficiency and water management. This would be accomplished through the piping and lining of canals and laterals along with the

development of pressure within the system for on-farm irrigation efficiency. Dr. Charles Burt of the Irrigation Training and Research Center at Cal Poly was hired to plan a system that would more efficiently address all future needs.

The planning effort is progressing as schedule and some initial concepts will be reviewed and discussed with UVWUA at a February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting with UVWUA, Reclamation and Cal Poly.

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**VI. Other Items (3:15-3:30pm)**

**A. Lower Gunnison Comprehensive Salinity Study**

The group expressed some frustration at the level of communication going on with the study. Several members pointed out that during an earlier meeting (Sept. 13, 2012) it was their understanding that the Salinity Study Team would take input at that meeting, develop a scope of work and then distribute it to others so that folks could keep up with progress. In addition, the group thought that there would be meeting minutes distributed and additional future meetings scheduled, but no one in the SMP Work Group has received anything to date.

The group discussed some of the challenges of doing salinity control in the North Fork, Surface Creek, and Rogers Mesa areas. There aren't many large entities providing water in those areas combined with a high number of individual land owners in a very fractured system. For example, in the Surface Creek area there are 27 ditch companies delivering water to the farms.

It is hoped that potential solutions will be proposed in the study.

**The next joint STF and SMP Work Group meeting is currently schedule for April 24<sup>th</sup> (Location TBD).** Stakeholders should watch their email for two additional meeting dates being proposed for 2013.

**Meeting adjourned: 4:30pm.**