

Minutes

Lower Gunnison Basin Selenium Management Program

DATE: Wednesday, October 22, 2014

Time: 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Location: North Spruce Conference Room, Forest Service Office, 2250 Hwy 50, Delta, Colorado

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

Attendees: Beth Karberg (DCD), Brent Uilenberg (Reclamation), Tom Kay (DCD), Terry Stroh (Reclamation), Ken Leib (USGS), Dave Kanzer (Co River District), Ed Suppes (UWVUA), Charles McMurdy (Ag Producer), Jenny Ward (Reclamation), Steve Schrock (No Chico Brush), Paul Kehmeier (Ag Producer), Dave Dearstynne (NRCS), Mike Baker (Self, Ret. Reclamation), Jedd Sondergard (BLM), Sonja Chavez de Baca (STF), Barb Osmundson (FWS), John Sottolare (Reclamation), Steve Miller (CWCB), Theresa McGovern (NRCS) via phone

I. Introductions and discussion of agenda

II. General Updates

a. Salinity Program 2012 Projects (Reclamation – John Sottolare)

The Forked Tongue Ditch Project should start construction in 1-2 weeks; C Ditch is in final stages of clean-up; Crawford Clipper and Bostwick Park should start construction this fall; Roger's Mesa has started construction; Cattlemen's Ditch construction start is probably a year out (haven't started NEPA); Uncompahgre Project (UWVUA) is finishing entire Phase 5 (few more days of work), Phase 7 construction will start this fall, Phase 8 construction will start April 2015.

Status of Basinwide Salinity FOA 2015: USGS model sub-basin salt loading values are expected to be completed in January. Salt loading values on individual ditches for the FOA will be calculated soon after. A Pre-FOA Informational Meeting is anticipated to be held in late February or early March. The SMP WG suggested doing "up valley, down valley" meetings again (i.e. two meeting locations). Farmers present suggested February during the day was fine, but if meetings are held in late March an evening time is better. It was also suggest that Reclamation work with conservation districts to do outreach and that salt numbers/loads be made available upon request from the ditch companies prior to the informational meetings so they know whether they will meet basic salt reduction requirements.

Selenium Loading: There was a short discussion on whether or not to add selenium load reduction values to the action table for CRBSCP projects. Salinity load reduction is already included. One of the goals of the current USGS model efforts would be to generate selenium loading numbers, but they would only work as a qualitative value, not quantitative. Results could be used to identify and target high loading areas. The science to come up with accurate, selenium loading reduction values for each ditch lining or piping project is not currently available.

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

Dave Kanzer (DK) reported that a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant application for \$20M on behalf Lower Gunnison Basin project proponents had been submitted to NRCS (5-year funding cycle). Reclamation was the largest contributor and pledged approximately \$40M from Colorado River Storage Project Memorandum of Agreement funds (MOA CRSP) and ~\$4M under Basinwide Salinity Control Projects). There are four focus areas including the N.Fork, Smith Fork, Uncompahgre, and Bostwick Park. The proposal focuses on 5 potential elements – off-farm, on-farm/near farm, integration planning and implementation, soil health and micro-hydro. RCPP funds will be directed to project proponents in the four focus areas for implementation (conservancy districts, water associations, and farmers). The River District should know by November 14 if the grant application was successful.

c. Salinity Program Field Coordinator Position (Reclamation): Activities to hire a single local Salinity Program Field Coordinator are moving forward (individual will be hired as a state employee with full benefits). A job description is currently being developed for the 2 year position (subject to renewal). A total of \$150K has been made available. Jim Currier is the primary point of contact. A coordinator

committee will be established (small group) to help lead/direct this person. DK says that it would be great to have a grower on committee. Hope to fill by spring 2015, or preferably before.

Action Item: Paul Kehmeier agreed to review the job description. Steve Miller can forward draft application to him.

d. Other related Notes:

1) There is a new acting State Conservationist, Elise Eoeke;

2) No Chico Brush (NCB) will begin a series of education forums for farmers related to water in western Colorado and the lower Gunnison. More information to be provided at a later date.

e. **STF items** (Sonja) – No new STF agenda items were added. Sonja's updates can be found below in the SMP Technical Team Updates.

III. Technical Team Updates (John Sottolare – Technical Team Lead)

John reported on a recent meeting of the SMP Technical Team held to re-examine surge irrigation potential. Three of the five current members of the group attended the meeting; Jim Currier, Charles McMurdy and John. A summary of pro's and con's with surge irrigation in the early 90's was presented. In addition, a report was found which summarized the findings: *Surge Irrigation Research and Demonstration Lower Gunnison Basin (Program Accomplishments Report for Calendar Year 1994* (CSU and USBR report). Based on data gathered by the Technical Team, a recommendation was made to the group to not pursue surge irrigation until such time, if any, that new technology could overcome the limitations of using it in the type of landscapes typically found in the Lower Gunnison Basin. Some members of the workgroup thought that this technology might currently be available and suggested that we do a brief follow-up with Dr. Perry Cabot to see if this is the case.

Paul Kehmeier reported that he is working with surge irrigation in a water short field because it may be the only economical option he has for irrigation efficiency due to the shape of his fields. To Paul's knowledge there are only two manufactures of surge valves. He'll report back to the group on his experiences next year.

Action Item: John will contact Dr. Perry Cabot of CSU & Water Institute to have a brief discussion about any recent changes in surge irrigation technology that could potentially make it more applicable for use in the Lower Gunnison Basin.

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

Sonja reported that she will be having a meeting of the E/O Team in the next few weeks. She has four volunteers: Jim Pokrandt or Martha Moore (CRWCD), Mike Baker (self, retired Reclamation), Justyn Hock (USBR), and Paul Kehmeir (self, Tongue Creek farmer). There are opportunities at County work-sessions to have an educational presentation/discussion with County Commissioners in November, but she felt that they are more realistically looking at December or January.

Sonja also reported that a large component of the RCPP grant application included significant collaboration between off-farm and on-farm education and outreach with project proponents and local conservation districts. As an example, she pointed to the fact that most entities seemed to be on board with developing their own web-pages to help with dissemination of information and for allowing water users to view information available from SCADA systems. Tom Kay emphasized how the availability of this information is widely used in the other irrigation districts like Elephant Butte Irrigation District in New Mexico. Finally, Terry Stroh envisions eventual GIS based readings for Reclamation at major delivery points.

Action Item: Sonja will continue to discuss the development of tools for farmers in order to encourage interest and behavior change with regard to water use via either the SCADA reading or other.

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

DK reported that a brief meeting of the Science/Research Team was held this morning (Oct. 22) prior to the Work Group. The meeting was focused on how to build upon our existing monitoring framework and how to be ready for

monitoring and research needs under the RCPP grant application. He also mentioned that Dr. Perry Cabot had attended the meeting and how well his on-farm research and monitoring programs fit with interests of our group. He also emphasized how important it is for Reclamation to provide continued support for our existing monitoring programs.

Secondly, DK indicated that our greatest current knowledge gap is in the areas of soils and geology and that the Science/Research Team would be having a November meeting focused exclusively on soils.

Action Item: Sonja will send Beth Karberg a copy of Alisa's soil core and column study publication.

Action Item: Theresa will relay to Mike Collins our on-going concern about not having a soil scientist.

Other Notes: 1) Ken reported that a Selenium Ecosystem Modeling Proposal is moving through USGS, but he hasn't received a recent report on status, and 2) a new suitable Loutzenhizer gage location has been found right off the highway at an existing structure/spillway where they believe there will not be a lot of negative, downstream effects, such as backwater and diversion gate operations. (new site is upstream of the current location).

VI. ***Upcoming Changes in Reclamation and Chairperson for SMP Workgroup*** (Terry Stroh & Brent Uilenberg, Reclamation)

With Terry Stroh's departure from Reclamation's Grand Junction Office, the SMP Work Group would be left without a chairperson/lead. The SMP WG discussed alternatives including a volunteer rotating non-federal chairperson and paid rotating chair-person.

Pro's to a rotating non-federal chair – ability to lobby where Reclamation cannot get involved in lobbying activities. The WG noted that existing non-federal members already lobby and this has not been an issue.

Con's – Reclamation is noted in the PBO and EIS as being the primary entity responsible for implementation of the SMP and should therefore remain the chair/lead. Reclamation does not have the ability to pay for a chairperson under their existing fiscal rules without going through a competitive bid process.

Decision: Members present felt that Reclamation should continue to serve as lead and that an interim chair could be appointed until Terry's replacement is found and up to speed on the SMP.

Dave Kanzer nominated Sonja for interim chair/lead. Dave noted her broad knowledge of selenium related issues, her years of experience leading the Selenium Task Force, and her involvement in all of the SMP Technical Subcommittees. There was consensus and support among the SMP WG.

Decisions: 1) Sonja will assume the position of chairperson of the SMP Work Group until Reclamation fills Terry's position and until that person is brought up to speed on the SMP, 2) the River District supports Sonja's interim role and her on-going involvement in the SMP and will continue to pay for her support and involvement, and 3) Reclamation will continue to be responsible for all reporting duties and requirements related to the SMP.

VII. ***2014 Selenium Trend Analysis Update***

The trend report is a required component of the reporting requirements in the PBO. The analysis looks at surface water-quality data to see if the trend is continuing to decrease, specifically, 85th percentile selenium concentration and load analysis. In order for USGS to continue to participate in the trend monitoring, a published five year trend analysis (2011-2016) must be done. Ken is currently working on the 2013 trend analysis.

Action Item: Ken will give a brief presentation to the SMP Science/Research subcommittee on the flow adjusted trend for 2013 at a future meeting (e.g. December).

VIII. ***2014 SMP Annual Report and Action Plan Update***

Action Item: The SMP Annual Report is due on January 31, 2015.

Action Item: All SMP WG member need to go through the Annual Report and Action Plan and provide Reclamation with suggested changes, updates, new activities, etc. Changes or addition proposed to the Action Plan should reference the activity number or if it doesn't exist, we'll assign a new number.

Action Item: Reclamation will go through the document, update as needed, and send out to the rest of the workgroup prior to the December meeting.

Action Item: Reclamation will work to develop a "current or annual" Action Plan while still keeping our comprehensive Action Plan list as a way to memorialize what we've done to date.

Action Item: Add M&D and Ironstone to the list of funded project under Reclamation (demonstration of SCADA technology that will be applied to the East Side Uncompahgre Project).

Action Item: Steve Miller needs a wish list of funding for projects to be funder under the Species Conservation Trust Fund (SCTF) and accomplishment reports for projects currently underway or completed. The Science Team will take the lead on developing a wish list. Note: Steve says he has all multi-year study funding secured for current projects so we don't need to include in our request.

Action Item: Include completion of the Science Plan as an SMP Action Plan accomplishment.

Action Item: EQIP update will come from Theresa when funding is obligated.

Action Item: Sonja will assist in getting pond GIS layers from NRCS and to USBR, USGS and CRWCD.

IX. Schedule for Future SMP Meetings

A. December 8th (10am – 3pm)

Proposed Agenda Items (including but not limited to):

- I. Continue to Work on Action Plan
- II. SCTF wish list and accomplishment reports

B. January 22nd (9am-12pm) – Montrose. Tentative - meet at UVWUA