

**DOLORES RIVER DIALOGUE
STEERING COMMITTEE
Nov. 1, 2011**

Present: Don Schwindt and Mike Preston, Dolores Water Conservancy District; Amber Kelley, San Juan Citizens Alliance; Peter Mueller, The Nature Conservancy; Vern Harrell, Bureau of Reclamation; Jay Loschert, American Whitewater. Contract staff: Marsha Porter-Norton, facilitator; Gail Binkly, recorder. Guests: Wendy McDermott, SJCA.

Agenda: The agenda was approved with no changes.

Visitor comment: Wendy McDermott said she is the new river program coordinator for SJCA and will be involved with issues related to the Dolores River Basin.

Implementation Team update: Mike reported that the Implementation Team met yesterday. One of the discussion items was work done at an Oct. 18 meeting in Grand Junction among several IT members and water consultants with Bishop Brogden to develop and refine hydrographs for different spill levels designed to achieve different objectives (recognizing that these are ideals and depend on conditions). Mike said the hydrographs will not stand alone but must be considered in a multi-year context. He said the IT is close to having guidelines for the spill and the next step is to move toward implementation. The other major component of the IT's work will be monitoring of factors such as temperature, fish, and cottonwood recruitment/riparian health.

Vern said he believes the IT's work is very valuable and progress is being made. American Whitewater's boater survey helped to clarify what boaters want. Everything being proposed so far to aid native fish can be done within the original EIS and existing environmental constraints. Vern noted that the BOR signed an MOU in support of the Three Species Conservation Agreement and Strategy, a range-wide conservation agreement for the flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker and roundtail chub. Vern said implementing the IT's recommendations is in line with that agreement, which establishes that native fish are a priority for the BOR. He hopes that will demonstrate the BOR's backing of the native fish effort and allow the NCA legislation to move forward.

Jay asked whether the IT will be an ongoing group that will examine the spills in a multi-year context. Mike said that question requires a longer discussion, but the IT will probably be a long-term rather than a short-term team. He said it must be kept in mind that the IT members have responsibilities to the agencies or constituencies they represent.

The role of the Spill Committee was discussed. Amber said it has been suggested that its role become more educational. Peter said this process has been about making an informed change in spill management that is sensitive to both boating needs and ecological needs. He said the Spill Committee traditionally had a pre-disposition toward seeking more water for boating needs.

Don asked for clarification on the role of the IT. Amber noted that there is some overlap in the membership of the IT and the DRD-SC. She said the IT's work needs to complement the

legislation, because the legislation will not establish flows or spell out measures to aid native fish. She said the conversation has really just started.

Don said there is value in focusing on the structure and using the structure to help institutionalize the group.

Marsha said she sees value in having the IT provide regular updates to the DRD-SC in order to provide transparency.

Mike said it will be important to bring this issue to all the affected parties for discussion. The IT itself is small, but it involves numerous other people and constituencies, so being able to keep its work and processes transparent is critical. Don said it would be good to share the minutes from the IT meetings.

Slickrock Gauge funding: Mike said David Graf of Colorado Parks and Wildlife has emailed him that he is trying to get a commitment of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year from CPAW toward operations and maintenance of the gauge. Amber said she will follow up with Scott Clow of Greater Dolores Action about that group's contribution. GDA has been contributing \$500 a year but has been asked if they can increase that amount.

Mike said the BLM has not contributed any funding so far, but that remains a possibility. Vern commented that the BLM is driving much of this effort through its Wild and Scenic Rivers study and the NCA proposal. Mike said Connie Clementson, who recently served as acting manager of the Dolores Public Lands Office, has been chosen to be the BLM manager for the local area and that will provide continuity in leadership.

Funding, Role of the DRD (with the Implementation Team now in place): Marsha explained that the Southwestern Water Conservation District awarded the DRD a \$15,000 grant (\$7,500 for 2011 and \$7,500 for 2012) that is contingent on matching funds. Marsha said if the four entities gave \$3,750 apiece, that would equal \$15,000 and would sustain the DRD through next year. She said it's possible CPAW might contribute as well, but funding the Slickrock gauge might be a higher priority for that agency. She asked that everyone let her know what their organization can provide in terms of matching funds. She said a more specific email will go out.

Amber said for organizations such as SJCA that are grant-funded it might make sense to split their contribution over two years. Marsha said that would be fine.

DRD's Current Roles:

The group then had a long discussion about the role of the IT in relation to the DRD. No decisions were made other than the group felt a retreat would be helpful at some point. It was noted that with the formation of the IT, the DRD and DRD-SC's roles probably need to be refined and/or possibly re-evaluated.

The highlights of the conversation include:

- Marsha said no one wants to have unnecessary meetings, but she believes the DRD still has a number of important functions:
 - The DRD has always provided a dialogue and a forum, especially for people who aren't part of an organization. Marsha said she believes the twice-yearly DRD meetings are valuable and hears this from various community people.
 - The DRD-SC reviews proposals as per the Framework Proposal process in place.
 - The work of the LDWG and Legislative Committee needs to be finished.
 - The 319 watershed plan study needs to be completed.
 - Other issues may come up in the future.
 - Marsha said that she believes by no means should the DRD disband at this time, but it needs to stay relevant.

- Mike agreed that the DRD has an important ongoing role. If the DRD had not been having broad discussions over the past several years, the specific discussions taking place now would not have been possible.

- **Future role of the Science and Hydrology committees:** Marsha said she, Ken Curtis, Ann Oliver and Mike talked about this issue several weeks ago in light of the new IT forming, and came up with a list of recommendations:
 - These committees should continue but meet as needed
 - These committees, when it makes sense, can be a forum to discuss items that the Implementation Team may be considering (and would give input to that team)
 - When the committee does meet, it is more efficient for them to meet together when reviewing products or documents
 - Upcoming projects will include, but not be limited to, the 319 Watershed Plan and study
 - The coordinators of these committees, the DRD-SC or the larger DRD, may have ideas that these committees wish to pursue or take on
 - These committees could do, as necessary and relevant, joint education projects and initiatives
 - Review Framework Proposals if they come in

Support for these recommendations was given.

- Vern said he would like to ensure that the monitoring aspect of the IT's efforts is strong and does not fall away. He said someone needs to ensure that all this work means something. He posed a question as to if the DRD-SC had a role in overseeing the IT's efforts. He said that a lot of time and effort has been invested in this so it is crucial to ensure it's successful. Vern said a contractor may be needed to do monitoring if CPAW doesn't have resources in a given year. This could be a good role for the DRD, he said. He also said the DRD can play a role of ensuring the IT's work brings results.

- Don said structure is important and the right structure helps generate products that have value. He said it may be desirable to have the Science Committee more closely direct the monitoring.

- Marsha said the groups need to keep in close contact with one another and that now that the IT is in place, the DRD-SC can assess how often it wishes to meet. Marsha suggested that it might be time for a ½ retreat such as the one that was held in 11/09.
- Amber suggested waiting to have the “visioning” retreat until later in 2012 rather than earlier because until then it won’t be clear what the IT will be doing. The IT is slated to finish its plan next June, so it might make sense to wait until close to that time.
- Vern said part of the DRD-SC’s function is to make sure the committees are doing what they should be doing, so the DRD-SC has an oversight role. He said the IT has made great progress but it’s important to “seal the deal” and make sure the changes are implemented and their effects are monitored. It needs to be known whether the changes benefit native fish and therefore making any adjustments to water allocations (such as if boaters would need to give up some water for native fish management). He said it’s important to the BOR that results of any management changes are known and can be justified. Vern stressed that the DRD has political will and capital and needs to ensure that all this work over the years means something will change, that something will get done. There was a lot of agreement on this point.
- Don said he shares Vern’s concerns. Considerable effort has been put into the DRD and the SC, and the discussion needs to take place sooner rather than later.
- The group asked who has oversight of the IT. Amber said it could be argued that the Legislative Committee has oversight of the IT because they created AWF and raised money to fund it. AWF was not funded by the DRD. She suggested looking at the relationship between the two groups as collaborative and stressed the importance of communication. She went on to say that there is a great deal of overlap between the DRD-SC and the IT. Many of the same people serve on both committees. She said maybe the way to look at it is that “we” need to make sure monitoring happens. She asked what difference it makes whether the message comes from the same people sitting as the DRD-SC or as the IT. Amber went on to say that the DRD’s role should not be oversight in a high authoritative way but rather, this is a partnership and communication between the two groups is key.
- Peter said it is clear to him that the DRD must continue because there will continue to be questions regarding the ecology of the Dolores River. He doesn’t see the DRD as having regulatory authority so much as providing a forum. Peter suggested asking the IT for an interim report on its monitoring plan.
- Amber said the new hydrographs would provide one benefit to boaters – more predictability.
- Jay said the length of the season and variation in the spill are important but predictability is foremost in boaters’ minds. They would like to know 2-6 weeks ahead of time what the spill will be. Jay said the hydrographs are an important step, but monitoring needs to happen. He would like the IT to come up with a timeline for the monitoring plan.

- Marsha summed up the discussion. She suggested to those present on the IT (Mike, Vern, Peter and Amber) that they take back the following points to the full IT:
 1. The DRD wishes to be very engaged, and regular communication and reporting between the two groups is crucial.
 2. The DRD will be having a discussion on its roles and tasks soon.
 3. When a monitoring plan is ready, informing the DRD-SC about it would be helpful, and Peter's suggestion about putting the monitoring plan in writing was helpful and tangible.

Marsha again said this discussion about the two groups and their roles will continue. It is clear that since the creation of the LDWG, AWF and IT, a lot more has happened. As Vern said, this all means that something concrete needs to happen and come out of all this, not just more talk and studies.

Structure of the DRD-SC: Don said since the recent addition of American Whitewater and Trout Unlimited to the group, the DRD-SC now has eight members. It was originally set up with an eye to ensuring balance between environmentalists and water-users. Originally, there were six members: MVIC, BOR and DWCD on the water side and TNC, SJCA and DOW on the environmental side. Don noted that all those entities wear broad hats. He said TU and American Whitewater do have a real stake in the discussion, but the DWCD board believes balance is critical, so he would like to see two more people representing the water community added to the SC.

Marsha said one idea would be to add one representative each from the Montezuma and Dolores County Commissions. Peter said it has been a pleasure having Ernie Williams and Gerald Koppenhafer on the Legislative Committee, so he would not have concerns about adding the counties to the board. Amber said representation from the counties would make sense.

Don said counties have very broad roles and having representation from the county commissions would not address some of his concerns. The shareholders' vote to reject MVIC's proposed lease of 6,000 acre-feet to the state instream-flow program showed that their voice wasn't being heard. Don said he wants to ensure that the concerns of people whose livelihood depends on the water supply are represented. He said the full-service farmers have a committee that could provide representatives, or MVIC could be asked to select two farmers.

Marsha agreed that balance is important but said she would like to have Randy Carver, Don Magnuson and David Graf present for the discussion. Don said there was not a full group present in September when TU and AW were added to the SC and that decision might have been premature. Jay said the proposal was originally put forward in August and postponed until September so more people could be present.

Amber said SJCA was originally supposed to represent the boaters and TU, but she didn't feel she could adequately represent their concerns. Now it seems the SC has representation for water-users, conservationists and recreationists. She said it doesn't seem that there are only two sides at the table, but three.

Jay said "balance" is a subjective word and it might be better to say the composition of the DRD-SC should reflect the constituents named in the formal Project documents. Marsha then noted

that while this word “balance” may be difficult to fully define, it is very important and the DRD has always operated with “balance” in mind.

It was agreed to continue the discussion about the representation of the DRD-SC at the next meeting when everyone can be there.

Comment on the Sept. 28 combined DRD-LDWG meeting: All agreed it was a very positive meeting.

Tours: Marsha asked the group if it might be beneficial for the DRD to sponsor tours for DRD members showing different aspects of the river such as hay-growing, the dam, and rafting. The group agreed this would be a good project. Vern noted that a full-service farm is different from an MVIC farm and suggested having a tour of each. Jay said local boaters could organize a raft trip. This will be discussed further at a later meeting.

319 watershed study: Marsha suggested everyone ask friends and acquaintances to give input into the study via Chester Anderson’s web site. Twenty-one people have signed up so far.

Don said the DRD-SC should try to ensure some balance in the comments and that it could offer assistance to anyone who needs help using the web site.

Marsha will provide more information via e-mail and will offer technical assistance for those who need it.

Minutes: The Sept. 6 minutes were approved with one addition regarding the gauge.

DRD web site: Marsha said she thought it might be beneficial to have someone streamline the site, mainly the home page, to make it clearer and more user-friendly. Amber suggested she ask Matt Clark for some input and advice, as he has experience designing web pages.

Visitor comment: Wendy said she was impressed with the group and the robust discussion.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be Tuesday, Dec. 6, at 9 a.m. Previously, the group had decided to meet bi-monthly but given some of the issues raised at this meeting, it was decided to meet the next month.