

**DOLORES RIVER DIALOGUE
STEERING COMMITTEE
March 12, 2012**

Present: Don Schwindt, Dolores Water Conservancy District; Randy Carver, Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company; Wendy McDermott, San Juan Citizens Alliance; Peter Mueller, The Nature Conservancy; Vern Harrell, Bureau of Reclamation; Jay Loschert, American Whitewater; Matt Clark, Trout Unlimited; Phyllis Snyder, San Juan Basin Farm Bureau; Drew Gordanier, Southwestern Colorado Livestock Association. Guests: Chuck Wanner, Trout Unlimited. Contract staff: Marsha Porter-Norton, facilitator; Gail Binkly, recorder.

Orientation session: Chuck Wanner, a co-founder of the DRD, gave an overview on the formation of the DRD, with help from Don S. Chuck said he came to the area in 2002 to work on water issues for the SJCA, and contacted Don as well as former DWCD manager John Porter. At that time, there had been two iterations of DRIP (the Dolores River Instream Flow Partnership), neither of which had proven fruitful. There had not been much discussion about the health of the environment below the dam. While Dolores Project documents established water for the trout fishery and for rafting, there appeared to be little concern about native fish. Chuck said John Porter expressed the opinion that the Dolores Project would not be truly complete until the issue of the downstream environment was settled. After John retired, Steve Arveschoug became general manager of the DWCD and a process was begun that resulted in the Dolores River Dialogue. Chuck said the organizers of the DRD agreed on several basic tenets:

- There would be no takings;
- The DRD would operate under Colorado law;
- Everything would be based on science;
- The environmental community would have one voice at the table.

The effort started in 2002. Mike Preston was hired to facilitate. People the organizers believed had a particular interest were invited, but anyone could attend the meetings, and there was always time for public comment. The intent was to have a true community process.

Eventually the DRD produced the Correlation Report, which Don said represented a real effort to define the benefits measured against the costs of changing the way the dam is operated. The report included a matrix of do-able alternatives. Marsha commented that the Implementation Team is taking a different approach but is working under the same concept.

Marsha said a key point is that the DRD does not tell anyone what to do. It is recognized that everyone involved has institutional responsibilities. All proposals that come before the DRD for consideration have to be vetted by the larger community and have to achieve consensus.

Marsha, Chuck and Don then described the formation of the Lower Dolores Working Group, whose purposes were to:

1. Give input into the corridor-management plan.
2. Offer one or more alternatives to WSR suitability.

Marsha said the longevity of the DRD is impressive and a testament to the time and thought that were

put into creating it.

After the orientation session, the DRD-SC convened its regular meeting.

319 watershed plan: Marsha said the subcommittee formed to discuss the 319 watershed plan, consisting of Don and Wendy, met yesterday, with Marsha facilitating and Chester Anderson of BUGS Consulting on speaker phone. Marsha explained that 319 is a number representing the funding source from the EPA, but funds actually come from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The DRD approved pursuing the 319 funding in October 2006, and monies were granted in 2008. Marsha reiterated that all recommendations that may be developed in the plan are voluntary.

Marsha said the main reason for the delay in completion of the watershed plan has been the effort surrounding the LDWG, Legislative Committee, and "A Way Forward". Chester believed it would be confusing to develop a 319 plan while stakeholder groups were examining the issues of Wild and Scenic River suitability, a National Conservation Area, and more. Chester also felt he could tap into the resource of the LDWG planning when writing the watershed plan.

The grant to complete the watershed plan was for \$26,000, of which \$13,310 is left. Marsha said Chester has billed for research time and attending LDWG meetings. There was no formal contract with him, but there was a statement of work that defined tasks to be done. Marsha said she sent him a memo stating that the DRD-SC believes he is still operating under the statement of work and asking whether he could complete the plan, and he believes he can.

Marsha said the subcommittee discussed how the DRD-SC wants to proceed with the plan. Key questions are:

1. What is the state of the state of water quality?
2. If there is degradation of water quality, what is causing the degradation/compromise?
3. History/context, including 100 years of diversion, the base pool, and the dam. A problem with developing this part of the plan is that people aren't going to the web site that Chester created for feedback. Therefore, it may be necessary to develop a list of people and stakeholder groups to be interviewed. The subcommittee also might create a common set of questions for the interviewees.
4. What is the watershed plan? What will the DRD-SC do about it? How would you go there (to better water quality)? What is the cost?

Marsha said Don, Wendy and Chester want to vet issues before they come to the DRD-SC. The plan has been given a one-year extension and doesn't have to be turned in until Feb. 13, 2013. But before it is turned in, the subcommittee wants to make sure the DRD-SC is comfortable with it. Marsha said the subcommittee wants a more extensive outline from Chester. He believes he can provide that by March 30.

If the money remaining is not sufficient to finish the plan, other funds can be sought, but the subcommittee doesn't want to cross that bridge yet.

Wendy said the original report contains a good list of goals and deliverables. She wants a clear picture of how much money it will cost to finish the plan. In the original budget there was an allocation for outreach. She said \$13,000 of the \$15,000 allocated to write the plan has been spent, yet there is no

plan yet. The remaining funds were for developing outreach, a web site and best management practices. Wendy expressed concern about whether a quality plan can be completed with the money remaining and whether the grant requirements will be fulfilled.

Marsha said the deliverable product may look different than it did in 2006, but she believes the funders will find that acceptable.

Don said it's early in the process. The subcommittee will meet again April 3.

Peter asked if there is a backup plan if Chester cannot finish the watershed plan. Don said the subcommittee needs to see Chester's substantive outline before knowing whether outside help is needed.

Marsha said Chester is willing to complete the plan, but if it comes to a point where it appears he cannot, the subcommittee may have to find somebody else. The group can tell more from his outline, which is to include budgetary guidance.

Peter said the AWF effort will be a major resource for this plan.

Chuck said the 319 plan is important to getting other monies. He added that the EPA has become particular about what they want from these plans and they will examine this one closely.

Budget: Marsha said the DRD received \$15,000 (\$7,500 per year for two years) last year from the CWCB, contingent on a match. Not all the matching funds have been raised. So far, \$3,000 has been received from DWCD for two years and \$2,000 from SJCA for 2011. Additionally, \$5,415 was left from last year, and that becomes revenue for this year. Marsha said in her budget she increased the number of DRD-SC meetings to 11 and included six meetings of the LDWG and Legislative Committee to finish the outline for the NCA and integrate the AWF effort. She budgeted \$1,500 for her time for the 319 plan, but that is very flexible. The money budgeted for the 319 plan is not just for Chester, but for other costs too.

She said not much DRD science work is taking place at present. Ann Oliver thinks the Science Committee may meet twice this year.

There is a fairly large sum allocated for contingencies such as tours and field trips, extra food, etc.

Randy asked what would be cut if no more matching funds come in. Marsha said the contingency fund would probably be cut, and there might be fewer DRD-SC meetings.

There was discussion of having recording services for the subcommittee meetings. Wendy said she was not sure that is needed. She said it is crucial to get the plan done. It was agreed that if recording is needed for the next meeting, the money could come from the DRD contingency budget.

Next steps:

- Marsha will produce a spreadsheet compiling everyone's contributions to the DRD match.
- Randy will bring up the question of funding to his board.

There was consensus to approve the budget as presented by Marsha.

DRD-hosted tours: Peter said tours hosted by the DRD are a good idea. He would especially like to see tours regarding agriculture, how it has changed over time, and the economy of the Montezuma Valley. Phyllis said it would be a complicated task to show a true picture of the diverse types of agriculture in the area, from the Ute Mountain Ute Farm and Ranch to full-service farmers and MVIC.

It was agreed that both an agricultural tour, probably taking place over several days, and a rafting trip would be beneficial. Marsha said the raft trip will be this spring and the farm tour will be in the summer. Marsha said might be good to limit the raft trip to DRD participants.

Next steps:

→ Peter will make a list of what he would like to see on the ag tour and Phyllis will make a list of what she believes ought to be on such a tour and they will share them with the group.

→ Jay will put out an email request for volunteer guides for the raft trip.

Minutes: The minutes from February were approved as written.

Next meeting: The next meeting was set for April 3. (Note: This meeting was later canceled.) Marsha said she would like the DRD-SC to be flexible about meeting dates in the near future to coordinate with the Implementation Team's meetings.