

**DOLORES RIVER DIALOGUE**  
**STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**June 5, 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; Jay Loschert, American Whitewater. Guests: Don Magnuson and Katherine Wilkins-Wells, MVIC; Doug Robotham (TNC). Contract staff: Marsha Porter-Norton, facilitator; Gail Binkly, recorder.

The low attendance at today's meeting was discussed. The committee decided to proceed with the meeting nevertheless.

**DRD meeting debrief:** Marsha said turnout at the April 26 meeting of the full DRD was about 25 to 30 people, fewer than usual, and not many members of the Lower Dolores Working Group were present.

Possible reasons for the low attendance at the DRD meeting and/or today's meeting were discussed:

- The DRD meeting location was changed to the Lewis-Arriola gym to try to get out into the community. However, people are used to coming to the DWCD offices.
- There was no boating spill this spring for the first time in several years.
- BOR's Operations Meeting had taken place shortly before the DRD meeting.
- The DRD-SC and LDWG haven't been meeting regularly and aren't in the forefront of people's thoughts.
- Spring is a busy time for many people, especially farmers and ranchers.
- There was no major new development to present at the DRD meeting as there was last time, when the "A Way Forward" report had just been published.
- People may be satisfied with the work being done by the IT and Legislative Committee and may not have felt there was a need to come to a meeting.

Peter commented that there was a stark contrast in tone between CPW biologist Dan Kowalski's presentation at a DRD meeting two years ago, and Jim White's presentation at the most recent DRD meeting, both regarding native fish. Dan's data about the fish in the wake of the 2002 drought was largely negative. Now, after a series of good water years, Jim's data was promising. Peter said he felt good about this meeting.

Mike agreed the tone was positive. He said there was an atmosphere of candor and openness, and even the base-pool discussion was positive. He said there was a good article about the meeting in the *Cortez Journal*.

Mike said one of the problems in the past was the disconnect between the BLM's former San Juan and Uncompahgre field offices. He said Matt Azhocar, BLM Southwest associate district manager, attended the DRD meeting and now there is a continuity of coverage for the whole stretch of river that is the focus of the LDWG and IT's efforts. He said one of Matt's goals is to offer more internships.

Wendy said some interest in the 319 Watershed Plan was expressed at the April 26 meeting. She is trying to work with Scott Clow regarding an ongoing process to produce a source-water protection plan for the Upper Dolores Watershed. She wants to make sure each of them is aware of what the other is doing.

Don suggested having a presentation about that effort at a DRD-SC meeting, and Marsha agreed that would be good.

Don said it might be helpful to have an annual summary sheet or newsletter about the work of the DRD and associated groups. He said there will always be new faces at the table, and institutionalizing the educational process for new people is important.

**Update on Implementation Team:** Mike said the draft Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation Plan is due June 30, and it will take a month or so after that date for it to be finalized and published in hard copy and on the Web. Its release will trigger at least a year of discussions in the water community, particularly regarding some of its more challenging elements. Mike said a full document will be published, along with a smaller (about eight pages), glossy brochure for a general audience.

Mike said the IT has already taken steps to implement some measures to support monitoring:

- Installation of a thermal gauge at James Ranch that can be read online.
- A boater monitoring survey. American Whitewater built some registration boxes and the survey has been designed.
- An effort to pull together available geomorphic and riparian information regarding effects of different flows at Big Gypsum
- A PIT-tagging array. CWCB is expected to provide a \$60,000 grant toward PIT tagging and it appears the Upper Colorado Recovery Program will help pay for hardware. The tagging will allow movements of native fish to be monitored at different sites.
- SNODAS (snow data assimilation system) modeling to improve spill forecasting. The IT will consider funding this at its meeting June 7.

Wendy asked how the boater survey relates to the IM&E Plan. Mike said the survey's purpose is to ask how the boater experience is affected when flows are adjusted for ecological reasons.

Peter said the IT has spent considerable time on base flows. The plan will include a nonpartisan table, developed jointly by DWCD and MVIC, listing water availability and water rights. The table is intended for informational purposes only. It evaluates different water sources and what constraints are associated with each water source.

Randy expressed concern that the executive summary should be shorter than eight pages. He said that is more than many people will read, and he wants something that is accessible for his shareholders. He also urged the IT to talk about opportunities in addition to talking about sideboards and constraints. Randy said he looks forward to the plan and wants it to reach the broader community. He said if more water is going to go downstream, it will have to come from somebody. Randy emphasized the importance of bringing MVIC shareholders into the discussion.

Mike said much communication about the IM&E Plan to constituents will be oral. He said what Randy is describing is a risk-benefit discussion, and the board-to-board meetings between MVIC and DWCD are a good place for that discussion. The IM&E Plan's focus is how to help native fish. Base-flow enhancement is one of the opportunities that has been identified. Mike said the opportunities need to be defined by water managers and water-rights holders.

Peter said it will be up to DWCD and MVIC to evaluate the bigger picture of how to help native fish, address WSR suitability and answer endangered-species concerns. He hopes the executive summary can pose good questions, but they will not be answered by the IT and the conservation community.

Randy said he would rather see more focus on opportunities than on sideboards.

Don suggested being careful in terms of what the facts are. He said there are several views among the water community of what the facts are, and some are significantly different. He said not to generate a product that will be discarded because of that.

Mike said the water-supply discussion is as complex as the fish science. The IT did its best in terms of fish biology. Any other dimension of this problem will need the same kind of focus. He emphasized that the plan will be "Version 1" because there is not time to have every constituency vet it by June 30. This is only to lay out a foundation for discussion.

**319 Watershed Plan:** Marsha presented a draft outline for the 319 plan. Wendy asked how to get useful input from the remaining members of the DRD-SC. Don suggested hearing feedback from those who were present before addressing that question.

Marsha briefly explained what a 319 watershed plan is and said it is funded through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. A grant was awarded to the DRD to do 319 planning, and Chester Anderson of BUGS Consulting was hired to write the plan, but the process was postponed to await the results of the LDWG's and IT's efforts. Recently, Wendy and Don established a 319 subcommittee, with Marsha facilitating, and they have met three times. Their goal is to produce the plan by March 2013.

Don explained that money is the context for the plan. Having a 319 plan in place opens a door for new federal money that can't be generated other ways.

Marsha said a concern was raised by Don and others about Chester's original plan to seek input on the history of the watershed primarily via a web site. The idea emerged of having meetings with key constituencies to do outreach and seek input. Those meetings will take place this summer.

Marsha said 319 plans are supposed to have a specific goal, and Chester decided native fish was an appropriate one for this plan. Another goal could emerge during the process, but the thrust is water quality related to native fish. He will be looking to the IT and the IM&E Plan for specifics about the fish.

Marsha handed out a draft timeline for the plan. The goal is to have it written by September so it can be vetted this fall by the DRD-SC, the Hydrology and Science committees, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and other groups, including the general public if desired. Then it will be sent to the CDPHE by March 2013.

Wendy said the EPA must sign off on the plan and obtaining the agency's OK can be difficult. She recommended working with Dolores District Manager Derek Padilla because he has experience and success with watershed plans.

Marsha reviewed the budget for the plan. She said of the original \$26,750 grant, there will be \$4,349 remaining after allowing for Chester's time to finish the plan, Gail's time to complete interviews, and Marsha's time as facilitator. However, there will be other costs, including printing the plan.

Wendy said the DRD might be able to supplement the funding beyond the original 319 grant.

The DRD-SC members gave their approval of the outline and budget.

**Next steps:**

→ Marsha will email other DRD-SC members for their input on the 319 outline. They will need to give feedback by June 13.

→ After all input has been received, the subcommittee will move forward with interviews and outreach for the historical context for the plan.

**Hosting tours:** Marsha said she had received an email from Phyllis with suggestions for the proposed DRD-hosted agricultural tour. Phyllis said this is not a good time to do such a tour because there was no spill and it is ag season. Phyllis had identified the following to be included on the tour: Ute Mountain Ute Farm and Ranch, Cortez south lower valley (MVIC system), area north of Cortez (MVIC), and full-service farmers (Yellow Jacket and Dove Creek).

Peter said the DRD-SC needs to think what would be helpful to see on the ag tour and what the critical questions are. He would like to meet with Phyllis and revisit the idea of the tours.

Marsha suggested combining the tour with a discussion. Wendy asked who the target audience is, and Don said he thought it was DRD members. Peter said the conservation community would attend, but other groups should be represented. He suggested combining the ag tour with the DRD's fall meeting.

Marsha said part of the DRD's function is relationship-building. She suggested including DRD members but also five or 10 people in the ranching and farming community, as well as conservation groups, so it is a true dialogue. She suggested a smaller group could meet over the summer to plan this.

Peter said he wants to continue working on the tour concept and would like someone on the IT to help with the connection between this and the IM&E Plan.

Don said the timing of the IT's report could dovetail with the tours.

**Next steps:**

- Peter and Phyllis will touch base on further planning.
- Anyone interested can help.
- They will try to plan for a fall tour and a panel discussion to dovetail with the IT's discussions around the IM&E Plan.
- There may be a rafting tour next year.

**DRD Goals and Activities for 2012:** Marsha presented an updated version of the goals document that was approved last year. She revised it to include the IT and other recent happenings. She said pages 1 and 2 are the new portion; the rest remains the same.

**Next steps:**

- People will read the document and discuss it later.
- Marsha will add the planned tours to the activities.

**March meeting summary:** This was approved with no changes.

**Budget:** Marsha presented a spreadsheet showing what matches have been received to fund core DRD services. She said the DRD is about \$4,000 shy of its goal for this year, but the DRD-SC did not meet in April or May, so that will save money.

**Next meeting:** It will be Wednesday, July 25, at 9 a.m. It is hoped that by then there will be more planning done for the tours and the IM&E Plan will be out.