



# Colorado River District


*Protecting Western Colorado Water Since 1937*

## MEMORANDUM

April 4, 2017

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**TO:** BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CRWCD

**FROM:** ERIC KUHN 

**SUBJECT:** *ROUNDTABLES/TBCC UPDATE*

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*Action Requested: Amend the River District's contribution to the West Slope Roundtables Risk Study from \$25,000 to \$30,000.*

### 1. West Slope Roundtables Risk Study

As I have informed the Board, the CWCB unanimously approved phase II of the West Slope Roundtables Risk Study. While the board's public discussion went smoothly, as you can imagine, behind the scenes the CWCB obviously had an interesting discussion.

As you will recall, after the completion of phase I last fall, the Front Range roundtables objected to moving forward with phase II. To resolve the differences, CWCB Executive Director James Eklund held a series of meetings among the roundtables to try and reach a consensus. After the first webinar, we reached a set of principles to move forward. The next phase of the study would not do anything to undermine Colorado on interstate issues. The CWCB staff would take a more active role in the development and direction of the study, and finally, we would maintain the same transparency and multiple levels of communication as we did in phase I.

The CWCB staff then made some revisions to the scope of work. After feedback from the roundtables, John McClow and me, the scope of work includes an outreach committee and modeling advisory committee. The technical outreach committee would operate in a manner similar to phase I. It would be open to anyone. However, we're going to encourage the roundtables to use the same technical representatives they did for phase I. The modeling advisory committee is new. One of the study's objectives is to couple two different models, Reclamation's CRSS that gives us good information on the system's major reservoirs, especially Lake Mead and Lake Powell, but has very little resolution within the individual states or basins, and the CWCB's State Mod which operates most projects and diversions in Colorado, but ends at the state line. With the modeling committee we'll be getting into the weeds on the operation of and possible improvements to the state's CDSS (or State Mod). Ultimately, the Front Range roundtables chose not to participate. One of their requests was a management committee that would direct the study. Both the CWCB director and the West Slope opposed this provision noting that the scope of work has been carefully put together reviewed and revised by the CWCB staff, the idea that a "management" committee is needed doesn't make sense.

Further, implying that we were willing to accept a committee process that might have the ability to rewrite the scope of work on the fly has the potential to undermine the West Slope's basic goal for sponsoring the study.

At a meeting sponsored by the CWCB to try and resolve the differences, it became clear that the West Slope and East Slope had different expectations on the purpose of the study. From the West Slope view, John McClow and I pointed out that primary purposes were education and to inform the West Slope roundtables so they can have a productive discussion on how much new West Slope consumptive use is "reasonable" to cover under the collaborative program to avoid an involuntary compact curtailment. The collaborative program is described in point #4 of the conceptual framework which is included in Colorado's Water Plan.

Based on the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, I got impression that the Front Range was more interested in the big picture questions like how the collaborative program would work. They viewed the study as more of a statewide water availability study and have publicly made that statement.

The CWCB approved the study and included a disclaimer that the study proponents will not represent that study results are a state policy. Patti Wells made a more straightforward comment. She cautioned against "weaponizing" the study.

After the CWCB meeting, we had a West Slope caucus call to discuss the next steps of the study. I made the point that our end goals are the discussions among the West Slope basin under point #4. The risk study is just one of the inputs. The roundtables have their basin plans. Additionally, the CWCB, River District, and Southwestern will be a resource for additional information such as existing and past consumptive uses.

## 2. SWSI-2017

Plans are moving forward on the 2017 update of the Statewide Water Supply Initiative or SWSI-2017. This is important work, the broad goal is to update the supporting technical information concerning water demands that are underpinning of Colorado's Water Plan. As an example, a fundamental driver of the water plan is the "gap" between the demand and supply for the Colorado Front Range.

SWSI-2017 will look at the entire state, but the big numbers are on the Front Range. There is a lot of concern that the previous SWSI-2010 is out of date. Further, the River District staff (and many others) were concerned that municipal demands developed by SWSI-2010 were too high (and not well justified).

A major question for the CWCB is how are they going to keep the roundtables and others informed and, like the risk study, how transparent will the effort be? John Currier will be participating on the advisory committee.

### **3. IBCC Schedule**

The IBCC will be holding its first 2017 meeting on Thursday April 20<sup>th</sup> in Summit County. As of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, I have not seen a draft agenda. My understanding is that the IBCC will discuss its priorities for 2017 and continue its previous discussions on implementation of alternatives to agricultural dry-ups (ATMs) and potential statewide funding mechanisms. Personally, I'm not sure the IBCC is a good forum for broad discussion of funding options - although it may be a good forum to keep the roundtables involved.

REK/ldp