

**RIO GRANDE WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS QUARTERLY MEETING
April 19, 2022 at 10:00 A.M.
Rio Grande Water Conservation District Conference Room
And By Zoom Teleconference**

Present: Greg Higel, President; Armando Valdez, Vice-President; Dwight Martin, Secretary/Treasurer; Peggy Godfrey, Director; Steve Keller, Director; Zeke Ward, Director; Mike Kruse, Director; Cory Off, Director; and Doug Gunnels, Director.

Staff and Consultants: David Robbins, Hill & Robbins, P.C.; Cleave Simpson, General Manager; Amber Pacheco, Acting Deputy General Manager; Chris Ivers, Program Manager; Marisa Fricke, Program Manager; Wylie Keller, Water Resource Specialist; Rose Vanderpool, Program Assistant; Linda Ramirez, Program Assistant; Clinton Phillips, Davis Engineering; Cassandra McCuen, HCP Coordinator/Program Assistant; Michael Carson, Database Administrator; and April Mondragon, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: Sarah Parmar, Antonio Huerta, Pam Rice, Chris Lopez, Susan Storm, John Irizarry Nazario, Jennifer Faylor, Adam Moore, Erin Minks, Mike Dill, Pricilla Waggoner, Anna Greenburg, Chris Shaffer, William Myers, Rio de la Vista, John Gerstle, Heather Dutton, Emma Ressor, Deb Sarason, David Hofmann, Brittany Dixon, Bryn Phinney, Willie Hoffner, Craig Cotten, Ryan Unterreiner, Christi Bodi, and Sally Weir.

CALL TO ORDER

President Greg Higel called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. There was a quorum present for the meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

INTRODUCTION OF STAFF AND GUESTS

President Greg Higel welcomed all those present and asked for introductions.

APPROVE AGENDA

President Higel announced the reappointment of ex-officio officers would be added to the agenda. A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

OATH OF OFFICE-DOUG GUNNELS

President Higel asked for oath of office. Doug Gunnels was sworn in as a Board of Director of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District for Saguache County.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President Higel asked for the election of officers. David Robbins asked for nominations for President of the Board of Directors. The seat was currently held by Greg Higel. A motion was made by Cory Off to nominate Greg Higel as President of the Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Mike Kruse. Armando Valdez made a motion for nominations to cease. The motion was seconded by Zeke Ward and unanimously approved. Greg Higel was elected President.

President Higel asked for nominations for Vice-President. The seat was currently held by Armando Valdez. A motion was made by Cory Off to nominate Armando Valdez as Vice-President. The motion was seconded by Zeke Ward. Cory Off made a motion for nominations to cease. The motion was seconded by Mike Kruse and unanimously approved. Armando Valdez was elected Vice-President.

President Higel asked for nominations for Secretary/Treasurer. The seat was currently held by Dwight Martin. A motion was made by Cory Off to retain Dwight Martin as Secretary/Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Armando Valdez. Armando Valdez made a motion for nominations to cease. The motion was seconded by Mike Kruse and unanimously approved. Dwight Martin was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

CONSIDER EX-OFFICIO APPOINTMENTS TO ALL SUBDISTRICTS

President Higel asked for the consideration of the Ex-Officio appointments to all Subdistricts. Amber Pacheco named the current Ex-Officio members serving Subdistrict No's. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and reported Subdistrict No. 5 had a vacancy.

A motion was made by Dwight Martin to appoint Doug Gunnels as the Ex-Officio member of Subdistrict No. 5. The motion was seconded by Zeke Ward and unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Armando Valdez to retain the current slate of individuals identified as Ex-Officio members serving the Subdistricts. The motion was seconded by Cory Off and unanimously approved.

APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

President Higel asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda items.

- December 23, 2021-Special Meeting Minutes
- January 18, 2022-Quarterly Meeting Minutes
- February 18, 2022-Special Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The motion was seconded by Armando Valdez and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

President Higel asked for public comment. Chris Lopez updated the Board on the SLV Rural Poll project which was nearly complete. He explained how the poll was set up and stated he would set up a meeting to go over the results at a later date.

FINANCIAL REPORT

President Higel asked for the financial report. Amber Pacheco presented the Profit and Loss Budget vs. Loss statement. She reported the finances were tracking close to last year with not a lot of revenue at this time. Discussion was held on non-payment of taxes and how those situations would be handled if they ever occur. Discussion was held on the amount of acre-feet of new water and transmountain water that had been leased. Ms. Pacheco highlighted the bank balances including CD's and checking accounts. Willie Hoffner asked how Cleave Simpson's position was being handled at the District. Amber Pacheco explained her role as Acting Deputy General Manager with the District. David Robbins reported on the letter agreement with the Board of Directors between Amber Pacheco and Cleave Simpson adjusting their responsibilities and the financial considerations to reflect Mr. Simpson's position as an elected official and Ms. Pacheco's increased responsibilities.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the financial report as presented. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

President Higel asked for the Manager's report. Amber Pacheco reported she was working on reviewing some of the District policies which may require revisions from the Board. Ms. Pacheco reported on the hiring a of the new HCP Coordinator and Hydro Technician. She highlighted some of the duties she has been fulfilling under her new responsibilities as Acting Deputy General Manager.

- ***Update from Bylaws Subcommittee and Management Subcommittee***

Amber Pacheco reported on the Bylaw Subcommittee's first meeting. She identified the Board of Directors that make up the subcommittee and highlighted a few of the ideas being discussed. Ms. Pacheco also reported on the topics being discussed by the Management Subcommittee and identified the Board of Directors that make up this subcommittee. Armando Valdez highlighted the changes to the District since the last time the Employee Handbook was updated.

- ***Sigler Communications Funding***

Michael Carson provided an update on what the current funding levels have allowed Sigler Communications to accomplish and why there is a request being made for additional funding. He reported on the statistics from the website and social media campaigns and tasks the District has taken on in connection with keeping the water export proposal at bay. Mr. Carson highlighted the Protect Our Water campaign/website, the number of followers and how Sigler Communications assists the District. He reported on the proposed new activities and the estimated fees. Bryn Phinney highlighted the increase in communications and the desire to not lose momentum going forward. Discussion was held on possibly soliciting for citizen funds and possibly using District study funds.

A motion was made by Mike Kruse to allocate the money for this request out of the District's Study Fund after legal consideration that the money in this fund is legally available for this type of project. (motion was voted on following Cleave's presentation)

President Higel announced Cleave Simpson was online and would like to speak to the Board before having to return to the floor.

- ***Report from Senator Simpson on Senate Bill 22-028 concerning the creation of the groundwater compact compliance and sustainability fund***

Cleave Simpson updated the Board on Senate Bill 22-028. He reported the Bill was created last summer and had gone through both the Senate Ag Committee and Senate Floor with unanimous support. Mr. Simpson reported on the current status of the Bill and encouraged the Board to begin thinking about an intergovernmental agreement between the Rio Grande Water Conservation District and the Republican River Water Conservation District on how to commit the funds. He highlighted how the Groundwater Compact Compliance and Sustainability Fund would be managed and what the next steps would be. Discussion was held on how the funds could be used.

Mike Kruse clarified his motion on the floor was to approve the additional funding request from Sigler Communications to be paid with Study Funds if legal or from the District General Fund if not. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

U.S.B.R. REPORT-MORGAN GARCIA

President Higel asked for a report from the U.S.B.R. Susan Storm introduced John Irizarry Nazario and Jennifer Faylor. Ms. Storm read her report into the record (copy attached). Ms. Faylor highlighted the purpose and mission of the Bureau. She reported on the Texas vs. New Mexico case and highlighted Reclamation's role. Mr. Nazario provided his background and reported on some of the projects he has worked on. Willie Hoffner questioned the production at Russell Lakes.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:30 p.m. and resumed at 1:35 p.m.

President Higel announced the two senator's offices had asked to report next.

SENATOR BENNET'S OFFICE AND SENATOR HICKENLOOPERS OFFICE

President Higel asked for reports from Senator Bennet and Senator Hickenlooper's staff. Erin Minks reported for Senator Bennet's office. She updated the Board on the Wirth Amendment and farm bill programs. Ms. Minks stated she would be interested in knowing if any changes or revisions need to be done to the RCPP and CREP programs. Antonio Hureta reported for Senator Hickenlooper's office. He reported their DC teams are working through congressional spending. Discussion was held on how alfalfa fits into the CREP program for eligibility and what Subdistricts would be participating in the program. Dwight Martin voiced his concerns and disappointment with the CREP program.

- ***Funding Request for Extended Mapping for Habitat Conservation Plan***

Casandra McCuen requested funding on behalf of the HCP to do a valley-wide mapping project. She highlighted the recommendation from the steering committee and what would be included and how long the project would take.

A motion was made by Mike Kruse to provide the requested \$2,000 funding for extended mapping for the Habitat Conservation Plan. Armando Valdez asked legal counsel if he would need to abstain based on his current position with the Colorado Department of Agriculture. David Robbins informed him that it would not be necessary. The motion was seconded by Cory Off and unanimously approved.

- ***Authorize a letter to the Trinchera Subdistrict regarding the consideration of applications for funding under S22-028 RGWCD***

A motion was made by Armando Valdez to authorize a letter to the Trinchera Subdistrict regarding the consideration of applications for funding under S22-028. The motion was seconded by Cory Off and unanimously approved.

PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORTS

President Higel asked for the Program Manager's reports.

- ***Subdistrict No. 1-Marisa Fricke***

Marisa Fricke highlighted the reports she has been working on and the number of contract wells coming in to the Subdistrict. Craig Cotten reported many of the contract wells were commercial wells. Mike Kruse commented on adding more pumping while the Subdistrict is retiring wells. Ms. Fricke highlighted the fourth amended Plan of Water Management was near completion and the next steps that would be required before it was final. She also reported on the Medano property subdivision and the work being done to get the house listed with a realtor. Discussion was held on the 11 acres of Farmers Union on the Medano property. Ms. Fricke gave an update on the other Subdistrict No. 1 owned properties as well.

A motion was made by Peggy Godfrey to permit Subdistrict No. 1 to move forward with the attempt sell the house and 11 acres on the Medano property. The motion was seconded by Zeke Ward and unanimously approved.

Willie Hoffner stated he did not have the same advantage as the Subdistrict to use his Santa Maria shares. Mr. Hoffner also reported on his concerns with the number of Board of Managers that abstained from voting on the recent contract wells.

- ***Subdistrict's No. 2, 3, and 6-Amber Pacheco:***

Amber Pacheco provided an update on the status of the Subdistrict reports, the WaterSmart grant, CWCB grant, and the Monte Vista Canal project Subdistrict No. 6 is working on. She also highlighted the work being done under the SWSP filed by the Rio Grande No. 1 ditch. Ms. Pacheco reported on a potential purchase Subdistrict No. 3 is working with the Trinchera Subdistrict on near the Town of Antonio. She reported all Subdistricts continue to work on finding permanent replacement sources.

- ***Subdistrict's No. 4 and 5-Chris Ivers:***

Chris Ivers reported the preliminary water reports Annual Replacement Plans (ARPs) were all finalized. He provided the date the judicial review will expire for Subdistrict No. 5 and reported on a purchase being worked on that may allow for Subdistrict No. 5 to get their ARP approved. He also provided an update on how long Subdistrict No. 5 may be shut down for during the 2022 Irrigation Season.

U.S.P.S. REPORT-PAM RICE AND U.S.F. & W.S. REPORT-CHRIS SCHAFFER

President Higel asked for the U.S.P.S. report. Pam Rice reported on the success of splitting up the Medano Ranch. She highlighted the park is currently in Subdistrict No. 1 but are working on an augmentation plan. Ms. Rice reported on the elk movement on the park, the peak snowpack date, total inches of precipitation, number of visitors and highlighted a survey that would be sent out. Chris Shaffer reported on a letter of support for a funding request which had been made to update the model at the park.

DISTRICT ENGINEER'S REPORT-CLINTON PHILLIPS

President Higel asked for the District Engineer's report. Clinton Phillips presented the change in the unconfined aquifer storage study update. He reported on the change for March 2022, the change between March 2021 and March 2022, the current aquifer level, current 5-year average level and the acre-feet needed to get to the -400,000 level. Mr. Phillips also gave an update on the confined aquifer.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S REPORT-DAVID ROBBINS

President Higel asked for the District Attorney's report. David Robbins reported was working with Cleave Simpson on Senate Bill 22-028. He explained how the bill is designed and asked for authorization from the Board to work with Cleave Simpson and individuals at the Republican River Water Conservation District to develop an intergovernmental agreement that would allow both Districts to understand what their share of the appropriations from the new fund will be. He also explained the general rules for expending the appropriations and what would happen if one District has not expended all of the monies it is to receive and the other District has the opportunity to do so. Mr. Robbins highlighted the total dollar amount of the funds and reported it would be split 50/50 among the two (2) Districts. He provided an update on the Texas vs. New Mexico case, the Hill vs. Saywa case, the Wirth Bill, and the SWAG augmentation plan. Mr. Robbins reported on the continued monitoring of RWR and he thanked the Board for approving additional funding for Sigler Communications. Mr. Robbins also explained the groundwater conservation easement program resolution which was up for consideration by the Board later in the meeting.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION CREATING THE RGWCD GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM

President Higel asked for review and consideration of a Resolution creating the Rio Grande Water Conservation District Groundwater Conservation Easement Program.

A motion was made by Cory Off to approve the Resolution creating the Rio Grande Water Conservation District Groundwater Conservation Easement Program. The motion was seconded by Armando Valdez.

Discussion was held on the difference between what happens to a water right when it becomes abandoned and someone else can appropriate the water and water restricted in a conservation easement. Sarah Parmar explained the difference between a traditional conservation easement and the groundwater conservation easements.

The motion on the floor was voted on and passed unanimously.

DIVISION NO. 3 ENGINEER'S REPORT-CRAIG COTTEN

President Higel asked for the Division No. 3 Engineer's report. Craig Cotten presented the NRCS forecasted runoff, SNOTEL's current snow water equivalent for the basin and the temperature outlook. He went over the ten-day report on the Rio Grande and the Conejos as well as the curtailment levels. Mr. Cotten provided the dates for the Costilla and the Rio Grande compact meetings and provided an update on the Rio Grande Compact mediation. He also reported on the groundwater rules have been in affect for over a year, all seven (7) Subdistricts having submitted ARPs, the final list of abandoned wells which was submitted to the water court and he explained the objection process for the abandonment list. Mr. Cotten explained the benefits of abandoning a well.

SALAZAR RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE CENTER-RIO DE LA VISTA

President Higel asked for the Salazar Rio Grande Del Norte Center report. Rio de la Vista thanked the Board for supporting the Rio Grande State of the Basin Symposium and provided an update on what was covered. Ms. de la Vista highlighted the Rio Grande Natural Area and announced her plan to retire from Adams State University. She thanked the Board for all of their support throughout the years.

RIO GRANDE INITIATIVE/RIGT-SALLY WEIRS

President Higel asked for Rio Grande Initiative/R.I.G.H.T. report. Amber Pacheco read Sally Weir's comments into record.

OTHER REPORTS OR COMMENTS

President Higel asked for other reports or comments.

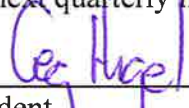
A motion was made by Cory Off to allow David Robbins to work on the intergovernmental agreement for Senate Bill 22-028. The motion was seconded by Zeke Ward and unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Mike Kruse to approve a letter of support for the Fish and Wildlife Service for their telescopic model update. The motion was seconded by Peggy Godfrey and unanimously approved.

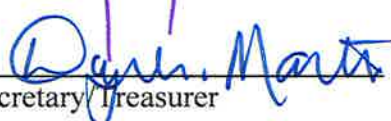
ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

The next quarterly meeting was scheduled for July 19, 2022.



President



Secretary/Treasurer

**RESOLUTION
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
RIO GRANDE WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**CREATING THE RGWCD GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION EASEMENT
PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, The Colorado General Assembly established the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (“District”) for, among other things, the conservation, use, and development of the water resources of the Rio Grande and its tributaries; and,

WHEREAS, Colorado law, as shown in sections 37-92-103(2) and 37-92-305(3)(c), C.R.S., provides that the District may approve water conservation programs that, in certain circumstances, protect participating water rights, while enrolled in the conservation programs, from abandonment or a reduction in the historical consumptive use that otherwise might occur due to non-use or reduced use; and,

WHEREAS, The District has previously established a water conservation program that allows the enrollment by water users within the District who reduce irrigated acres to conserve groundwater; and,

WHEREAS, The District desires to establish an additional conservation program to allow the enrollment of irrigated acres previously irrigated with groundwater that have a recorded conservation easement on those previously irrigated acres that requires the reduction or complete cessation of groundwater withdrawals for irrigation purposes on said acres; and,

WHEREAS, The District finds that the establishment of this additional water conservation program is an important tool in protecting and conserving the aquifer system within the District and will assist its special improvement districts in achieving and maintaining sustainable aquifers,

as required by the Rules Governing the Withdrawal of Groundwater in Water Division No. 3 (the Rio Grande Basin) and Establishing Criteria for the Beginning and End of the Irrigation Season in Water Division No. 3 for all Irrigation Water Rights; and,

WHEREAS, both water conservation programs established by the District have, as a principal purpose, the protection of all water rights, participating in the District's conservation programs, against claims of non-use or abandonment and to further serve as a defense against any claims that the water conservation programs create water that is available for appropriation by other citizens; and,

WHEREAS, the District hereby finds that all water supplies tied to either of the District's conservation programs continues to be used in a beneficial manner, including the creation of sustainable aquifers and the elimination of injurious depletions to active water rights and cannot serve as the basis for a future water rights claim nor may these water supplies be considered as being unappropriated when considering augmentation or replacement requirements for new or changed water rights. Any depletion to the water supplies conserved under the District's conservation programs must be protected from injury just the same as any other water right.

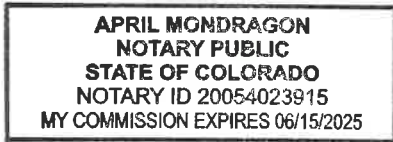
RESOLUTION

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved and adopted by the Board of the District that:

1. The Board of Directors hereby establishes a second water conservation program, known as the Rio Grande Water Conservation District Groundwater Conservation Easement Water Conservation Program ("Program").

Witness my hand and seal.

My commission expires: 6.15.2025



April Mondragon
Notary Public



**Rio Grande Water Conservation District -- Water Export Issue
Communication Activities April-Dec 2022**

Submitter: 4/3/22

Recommended Activities:

1.0 Facebook/Instagram

We would continue to provide fresh content for both channels and continue to grow followers and engagements with a recommended three posts per week. “Boosted” posts (allocating “ad” money to give popular Facebook posts more exposure) or social media ads could also be used to share key messages and attract more statewide followers. We monitor the page and respond to comments and questions.

Estimated Fees: \$2,000 per month x 8 months = \$16,000

Graphic Design support: \$4,000

2.0 Counsel, meetings, presentation

Participate in ongoing counsel, planning calls, meetings, presentations, etc. Interface with multiple stakeholders including coalition leaders, environmental and conservation groups, metro area water providers, etc.

Estimated Fees: \$5,000 (appx 2.5 hours per month)

3.0 Updating/maintaining website

Update and refresh content on the website as needed, adding updates on Douglas County, news releases and other newsworthy information. Assist with design and programming.

Estimated Fees: \$5,000 (appx. 4 hours per month)

4.0 eNewsletter and Eblasts

Develop content and design a monthly eNewsletter.

Estimated Fees: \$2,500 per eNewsletter x 8 months = \$20,000

5.0 Media Relations

Assist with developing news releases or conducting media outreach as needed as well as responding or correcting misinformation disseminated by RWR. We would draft letters to editor and opinion editorials as needed as well as handle reporter inquiries and assist in arranging interviews. We would also continue to monitor all news media and share information relevant to water issues in the Rio Grande Valley with multiple stakeholders.

Estimated Fees: \$6,000 (appx. 4 hours per month)

Estimated Total: \$56,000 - \$2,500 (remaining from initial budget) = \$53,500

**Bureau of Reclamation Report to the RGWCD
April 19, 2022**

OPERATIONS

Water salvage operations continued as recommended by the Project Operating Committee to meet Rio Grande Compact and mitigation obligations.

For the YTD (1/1/2022 to 3/31/2022)

A total of 508 AF was delivered to the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge through CHO1 & 2.

A total of 177 AF was delivered to the Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area through CHO3 & 4.

Delivery to the Rio Grande has been 2,281 AF.

San Luis Lake is nearly dry at an Elevation of 7509.1 ft.

San Luis Lake (3/31/22)

San Luis Lake	San Luis Lake Elevation	7509.1 ft. MSL
	Storage	9 acre-feet
	TDS	5651 ppm TDS

Project Deliveries: (1/1/2022 to 3/31/22)

Deliveries to:	Rio Grande—total	2,281 acre feet
	Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge—total	508 acre feet
	Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area—total	177* acre feet
	San Luis Lake—total	0.0 acre feet
	Head Lake (West)	0.0 acre feet
	Total Deliveries as of March 31, 2022	<u>2,966 acre-feet</u>

**Includes 119 AF exchange of Treasure Pass Water delivered to BLM.*

MAINTENANCE BRANCH

Well rehabilitation operations have been completed for 4 wells in 2022. Preventative maintenance on well vaults is wrapping up and summer operations are beginning with weed control and mucking at check structures. Blade work continued on lateral roads and canal berms. Preventative maintenance was completed on heavy equipment in preparation for planned work. Staff have also been assisting with planned assessments on Project features.

Rio Grande Water Conservation District

District staff continues to assist with salvage well preventative maintenance, blading, mowing, removal of aquatic weeds and sediment from the canal and associated structures, and repair of erosion along the canal berms.

WATER LABORATORY

A total of 307 samples were collected from the Closed Basin Project during the period of January 1, 2022 through March 31, 2022.

Total Dissolved Solids at the Outlet was an average of 287 mg/L for the period.

The Lab participated in the USGS Evaluation Program for Standard Reference Water Samples. The Laboratory continues to perform commendably on these audits.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Science Applications Program

Attention: Mr. Chris Shaffer, Hydrologist

San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex

9383 El Rancho Lane

Alamosa, Colorado, 81101

Re: Letter of Support

Dear Mr. Shaffer;

The Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) is the agency created by state statute to manage and protect the water resources of the Rio Grande Basin in Colorado, also called the San Luis Valley (Valley). Since its formation in 1967 the RGWCD has diligently pursued that responsibility. In that connection the RGWCD has been a prime mover in the development of a series of analytical tools which allow changes and impacts to the hydrologic system in the Valley to be evaluated. Among these tools are computer models that are used to analyze a variety of impacts. These models have been developed in conjunction with the State of Colorado, the USGS and the National Park Service, among other agencies. A principal model that has been developed is the Rio Grande Decision Support System (RGDSS) that has taken years to develop and currently represents the state-of-the-art groundwater analytical tool available to analyze impacts from current and proposed water use practices in the Valley.

As you know the hydrologic system in the Valley has been determined to be over appropriated by Colorado Courts. This condition has existed for over forty years and has caused the local water users, along with State and Federal agencies to begin serious efforts to reduce withdrawals and consumption of water from the ground water aquifers underlying the Valley. These efforts have been supported by the State of Colorado, through Rules and Regulations which limit and control ground water use. The RGWCD has worked hand in hand with both our State and our federal partners in seeking to return the Valley's hydrologic systems to sustainability.

Beginning in about 2000, at the direction of Congress, the federal government has moved to upgrade the Great Sand Dunes National Monument to a National Park and, as part of that process, acquire a very large private ranch (the Baca Ranch) to augment the National Park and create an adjoining National Wildlife Refuge. All of these federal land acquisitions and withdrawals require stable and secure water resources to insure the accomplishment of the Congressional mandates. In particular Congress, with strong encouragement from the RGWCD and the Valley water users, mandated that there would be both appropriative and reserved water rights obtained as required to insure the success of the federal assets created by Congress. Both the Baca National Wildlife Area and the Great Sand Dunes National Park now hold decreed water rights required by these federal withdrawals.

Despite the best efforts of the RGWCD and its State and Federal partners there continue to be speculative proposals to increase the withdrawals from the groundwater system in the Valley with an expressed purpose of exporting it to Colorado's Front Range. There is, today, another one of those proposals that must be resisted. Insuring that any potential impact to the San Luis Valley's National Wildlife Refuge Complex is identified and prevented is an essential responsibility of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). We are heartened that you are proceeding to do the analytical work necessary to that

task. In our view it is entirely in keeping with the directive contained in the Wirth Amendment (PL 102-575 – Oct. 30, 1995; Title XV, Sec. 1501) to prevent speculative efforts to export water from the Valley that have any demonstrable impact on these federal treasures.

We understand that your agency proposes to update and recalibrate a site-specific groundwater model developed for the National Park Service, that is used to assess potential impacts to the Park from new or changed groundwater use proposals. This model is used in sync with the larger State operated RGDSS to identify localized impacts to the groundwater system that could impact the Park but also the contiguous Baca Refuge. This proposal is exactly what should be done by the FWS to insure the protection of this irreplaceable resource and the RGWCD fully supports your efforts and pledges to cooperate with your agency to the greatest extent possible. Only with properly developed, calibrated and reliable models can we collectively make management decisions to protect our collective water resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of your effort. Please involve our modelling specialist, Willem Schroeder, in your efforts so that we remain fully coordinated. I am more than happy to meet whenever is convenient to further discuss cooperation on this important project.

Sincerely,

Amber Pacheco, General Manager

Rio Grande Water Conservation District

CC: Greg Higel, President

Board of Directors

Willem Schroeder

David W. Robbins, Counsel



April 15, 2022

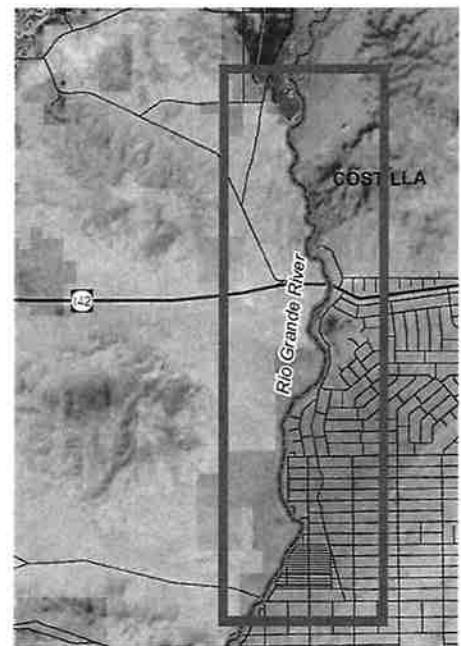
To: Cassandra McCuen, Rio Grande Water Conservation District
From: Bill Mangle, ERO Resources Corp.
Re: SLV HCP 10-Year Habitat Mapping Expansion

Per your request, this memo summarizes ERO’s additional efforts to update and expand the 10-Year habitat mapping update for the San Luis Valley Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

Mapping Expansions

Based on input from the HCP Steering Committee, ERO will investigate and map woody riparian habitat along the Rio Grande south of La Sauses to approximately the Labatos Bridge. This area was previously omitted from the habitat mapping, but has been subject to habitat restoration over the past 10 years. The general area of interest is shown in the image to the right.

In addition, and per request of the Steering Committee, ERO will further investigate and map woody riparian habitat along upper La Jara creek. This area was previously omitted since it is primarily federal land and is partially outside of the HCP boundary. However, it may provide context around general habitat presence and condition in that area.



Map and Report Update

Based on the findings of the expanded mapping, ERO will update the 10-Year Habitat Mapping Update report provided in 2021. Specifically, this will include updating GIS data for the affected areas and counties, formatted maps, and corresponding data, tables, and calculations in the report. ERO will also take the opportunity to incorporate minor edits and corrections to the report that were provided by a member of the Steering Committee.

Cost and Timeframe

ERO estimates that the above tasks can be completed for \$2,000.00, on a time-and-materials basis. With authorization from the District, this work can be completed by the end of June 2022, at which time ERO will submit an invoice for payment.

Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Denver
1842 Clarkson St.
Denver, CO 80218
303.830.1188

Durango
1015 ½ Main Avenue
Durango, CO 81301
970.422.2136

Hotchkiss
P.O. Box 932
161 South 2nd St.
Hotchkiss, CO 81419
970.872.3020

Idaho
4001 East Main Street
Emmett, ID 83617
208.365.7684

www.eroresources.com

Consultants in
Natural Resources
and the Environment

Rio Grande National Forest
Rio Grande Water Conservation District Report
4/19/2022
Forest Hydrologist, Daryl Kohut

- Spring road closures are beginning as snow melt gets underway (March 1 through May). Moisture from snow melt causes the roads to soften. Ruts damage roads and concentrate runoff. To avoid unnecessary damage, roads are closed seasonally. For road closure info visit our website. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/riogrande/alerts-notice>
- Construction of the new Supervisor's Office in Del Norte is progressing. The move is expected to happen in July with the Supervisor's Office being operational in August.
- Prescribed burns:
 - English Valley – 1200 Acres on Divide five miles north of Del Norte (improve pronghorn habitat).
 - Mix Lake Campground, near Platoro – Slash pile burning – 4/8/2022
 - Trujillo Meadows Reservoir near Forest Service Road 118 – Slash pile burning - 3/28/2022.
 - For info contact Kent Smith 719-850-1064.

RGWCEI

Spring 2022 Update

**Rio Grande Watershed Conservation Education Initiative
Prepared for RGWCD; April 19th 2022 Quarterly Meeting**



We have been busy planning our spring and summer programs for individual classes and larger youth events. Our river trailer is back up and touring after a covid-hiatus and over the course of 2022, we are developing a groundwater lesson series. In a March strategic planning meeting RGWCEI partners and board identified program priorities including emphasizing our agricultural identity and strengthening and expanding summer programs and natural resource workshops. For questions contact Hannah Thill, acting director at hannah@rgweci.org

Major Events

Youth Water Fest- May 20th

**Youth Conservation Camp
June 7,8,9**

Spring School Visits & Trips

Moffat 6th grade- Groundwater activities

Highschool Ag class- Spring Soil Workshop

Centauri Middle School- Conejos Irrigation Tour

River Trailer Events

Feb 7 & 9th- 4-H Ag Fest

April 28th- Ag Safety Days

May 17&18th- Ortega Middle School

