



Agenda | Jan 21, 2021 4:00 PM

Special Meeting

ZOOM MEETING

Please email healthyivers@pitkincounty.com for Zoom Access

Time	Item
4:00 PM	• Board Comment • Public Comment • Additions /Deletions to Agenda
4:10 PM	• Approval of Minutes Dec 10 and 17, 2020
4:15 PM	• Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair 2021
4:20 PM	• CSU Hay Production Irrigation Study - Richard Van Gytenbeek – Trout Unlimited - Co. River Basin Outreach Coordinator
5:00 PM	• Request to extend Mariaine Gonzalez Martinez scholarship
5:15 PM	• CRCD Advisory Committee – Lisa Tasker <i>No packet material</i>
5:45 PM	• Open Discussion
6:00 PM	• Yule Creek Mine Clean Water Act Permit Application - <i>No packet material</i>
6:15 PM	• Executive Session CRS 24-6-402(4)(b) Yule Creek Mine Clean Water Act Permit Application Crystal River Augmentation Upper Midnight Mine Litigation
7:00 PM	• Adjourn

Upcoming 2021 Regular Meetings

Feb 18, March 18, April 15, May 20, June 17, July 15, Aug 19, Sept 16, Oct 21, Nov 18, Dec 16

Agenda items are subject to change – Times are approximate and are also subject to change

HEALTHY RIVERS AND STREAMS CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD
Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom Virtual Meeting
Dec 10, 2020 – 4:45 p.m.

River Board members present: Bill Jochems, Chris Lemons, Chris Wheatley, Andre Wille, Chuck Ogilby, Wendy Huber, Lisa Tasker

River Board members absent:

Others present: Lisa MacDonald, Laura Makar, Matt Annabel, Katie Todt, Lindsey Utter, Liza Mitchell, Dale Will, Kate Hudson, Heather Sackett, Kelly McNicolas-Kurry

Yule Creek Mine Clean Water Act Permit

The River Board discussed providing public comment to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the public notice permit application of Colorado Stone Quarries, Inc. (SPK 2009 00889). The Board heard from Pitkin County's Open Space staff regarding potential restoration projects along the Crystal as well as from Dale Will, representing the Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association noting their concerns.

Ms. Huber moved to authorize the county attorney to draft a letter to the USACE consistent with recommendations presented by assistant county attorney Laura Makar. Chairman Wille seconded the motion. The motion passed 7/0.

Mr. Ogilby lost connection at approximately 5:15 pm

Chairman Wille moved to enter into executive session for the purpose of the Yule Creek Mine Clean Water Act Permit discussion. Ms. Tasker seconded the motion. The motion passed 6/0.

Mr. Ogilby's connection was restored at approximately 6:02 pm.

Chairman Wille moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Tasker seconded the motion. The motion passed 7/0.

Adjourn: The Board adjourned at approximately 6:29 pm.

Approved:

Attest:

Andre Wille, Chair

Lisa MacDonald

Laura Makar, Assistant County Attorney

The above signed attorney, representing the Board of County Commissioners and being present at the Executive Session, attests that the subject of the unrecorded portions of the session constituted confidential attorney-client communication.

DRAFT

HEALTHY RIVERS AND STREAMS CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD
Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom Virtual Meeting
Dec 17, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.

River Board members present: Bill Jochems, Chris Lemons, Chris Wheatley, Andre Wille, Chuck Ogilby, Lisa Tasker

River Board members absent: Wendy Huber

Others present: Lisa MacDonald, Matt Annabel, Tim Braun, Diane Schwener, Natalie Collar

Board Comment - Ms. Tasker attended the virtual Youth Water Leadership Summit and provided the Board with an update. Overall a success with the new virtual format.

Public Comment – None

Additions/Deletions to Agenda - None

Approval of the minutes from October 15 and November 19, 2020.

Mr. Wheatley moved to approve the minutes from October 15 and November 19, 2020. Ms. Tasker seconded the motion. The motion passed 6/0

Grant Update – Post Fire Best Management Practice Literature Review and Initial Phase of Performance Database Development- Natalie Collar, Water Resources Scientist Wright Water Engineers, Inc.

Ms. Collar provided an update her work to date on the Post Fire Best Management Literature Review and Initial Phase of Performance Database Development as a requirement of the Grant from 2019.

2021 Communications Plan – Matt Annabel, Diane Schwener and Time Braun

The team discussed the 2021 Communications Plan and the funding that has been appropriated into the 2021 budget and received input from the Board on how to move the plan forward.

Open Discussion -

Mr. Ogilby discussed Wild and Scenic with the Board and suggested attending an upcoming meeting of the Colorado River District Board to discuss Wild and Scenic on the Crystal River.

Ms. Tasker also wants to meet and suggest to the Colorado River District Board a creation of an ecology and sustainability advisory board of scientific voices, wetland and riparian ecologists, geomorphologists, riparian restoration ecologists, watershed scientists and related disciplines to act purely in an advisory capacity to endure sustainable ecological systems in the Upper Co Watershed and to have a voice at the table in decisions going forward on projects with the passage of their ballot question.

Chairman Wille moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Jochems seconded the motion. The motion passed 6/0.

Adjourn: The Board adjourned at approximately 6:01 pm.

Approved:

Attest:

Andre Wille, Chair

Lisa MacDonald



Lake Powell in September 2018. Photo special to The Colorado Sun by Jed Selby.

ENVIRONMENT

These hay fields may know something we don't: How to save the Colorado River

Ranchers in northwest Colorado are experimenting with hay species that may allow them to irrigate less and leave more water in the Upper Colorado River.

OCT 11, 2020 4:20AM MDT



Jerd Smith





The Colorado Sun



Mandatory Mask Rule in Youth Soccer, Segregation

00:00 / 07:13

Grand County rancher Paul Bruchez stands in a hay field near Kremmling, holding a small tuft of hay between his fingertips, twirling it back and forth, seeing how quickly it disintegrates after a summer without water.

The plant, known as timothy, is native to Colorado and feeds thousands of cattle here in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

This hay species and others are being closely watched this year as part of a far-reaching \$1 million science experiment, one designed to see if ranchers can take water off of hay fields and successfully measure how much was removed, how much evaporated, and how much was used by plants. They also need to know how reducing their irrigation in this fashion affects the nutritional value of the hay.





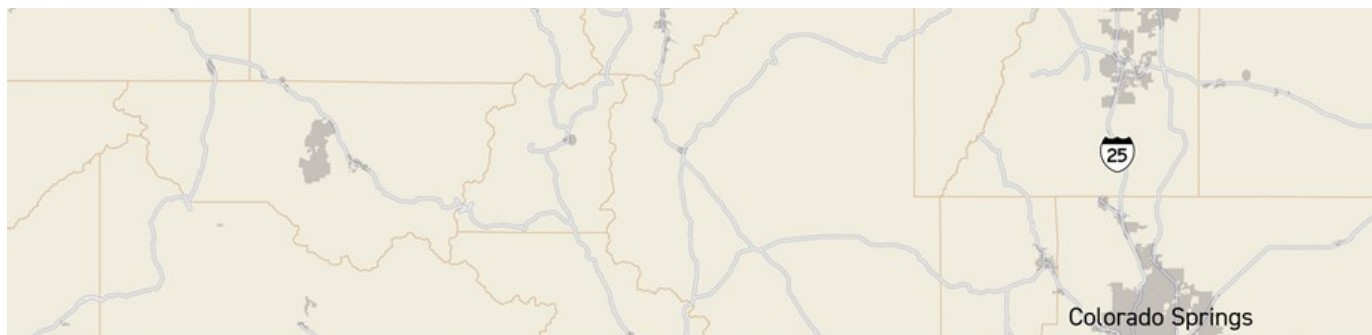
Research technician and Grand County rancher Wendy Thompson collects hay samples on Aug. 12, 2020, as part of a far-reaching experiment to see if ranchers can fallow hay meadows and conserve more water for the Colorado River. (Dave Timko, This American Land)

If certain hay species retain more nutrients than others when they're on low-water diets, then ranchers know their cattle will continue to eat well as they evaluate whether they can operate their ranches on less H₂O — not all the time, but perhaps every other year or every two to three years.

“We’ve spent centuries learning how to irrigate these lands,” Bruchez said. “Now we’re learning what it’s like not to irrigate them.”

Any water saved could be left in the Colorado River, allowing it to become more sustainable, even as the West’s population grows and drought cycles become more intense.





(Chas Chamberlin, Fresh Water News)

Scaling up

While similar small-scale experiments on five or 10 acres have been done before, this one by comparison is vast in scale, involving 1,200 acres of high-altitude hay meadows, nine ranch families, a team of researchers spread across Colorado, Utah and Nevada, and the backing of powerful water groups, farm interests, and environmentalists.

“We’ve never had a project this large in the state of Colorado,” said Perry Cabot, a Colorado State University researcher who is the lead scientist on the project.



The undertaking is sponsored by the Colorado River Basin Roundtable, whose members include Bruchez.

“We set out on a mission to ensure we have as much science and data as possible,” Bruchez said.

The data being collected serves several needs. It should help ranch

families [see if they can afford](#) to participate in these modern-era conservation efforts.

It will allow researchers to better understand what works on the ground and what to do, for instance, when rambunctious bulls destroy research equipment enclosures 25 miles from the nearest town.

And it will give policy makers insight into the political problems that will have to be solved, as well as how much money could need to be raised, to make large-scale conservation on the Colorado River feasible.

The \$1 million, three-year project is being funded by the state and several environmental groups, with the money being used to pay researchers, buy equipment, and compensate ranch families who temporarily fallow their fields.

Water for Lake Powell?

Agriculture uses some 80 percent of the water in the seven-state Colorado River Basin, and hay meadows that grow feed for cattle are among the basin's largest water users.

Last year, under an historic drought agreement on the Colorado River, a new specially protected drought pool in Lake Powell was authorized.

Now Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico, the four states that comprise the Colorado River's Upper Basin, above Lake Powell, are studying whether they can or should help save enough water to fill that drought pool. The pool, authorized at 500,000 acre-feet, is intended as further insurance that the Upper Basin won't be forced to involuntarily reduce water use from the river under the terms of the Colorado River Compact.

Colorado expects it would need to provide roughly half the water for the drought pool, and, led by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, is [working out difficult questions](#) about how that water would be saved and ushered downstream to Lake Powell under a possible voluntary program known as demand management. The research being done near Kremmling will help answer several critical questions.

Wendy Thompson is a rancher who also serves as the research technician for the pilot program, cutting hay samples and gathering soil moisture and precipitation data, among dozens of other tasks. She has driven hundreds of miles across Grand County this summer, checking each of the program's 24 research sites every week or so, lugging an aging laptop from one meadow to the next.

She knows better than most that ranch families will need real information, such as how fallowing affects crop yields and soil health and production costs, in order to make decisions about whether to join in a voluntary multi-state conservation effort or to back away.

Intuition vs. facts

“The experiment is important to us,” Thompson said. “We want to make decisions based on the science and the data, not a gut feeling.”

Much of the work is grueling, like cutting hay samples week after week, and low tech, like measuring water levels in rain gauges.

But dramatic advances in satellite imagery and global evapotranspiration databases are helping people like Perry Cabot create science-based templates that eventually will be useful not just in Colorado, but Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico and perhaps even farther downstream, on cotton fields in Arizona and avocado groves in California's Central Valley.

“We now have the ability to measure the whole field,” Cabot said. “It’s becoming more accurate and it’s tremendously convenient if you’re trying to get a good understanding of patterns. We don’t have to rely on one data point anymore.” [Editor’s note: Cabot sits on the board of Water Education Colorado, which is a sponsor of Fresh Water News.]



The Colorado River flows through the Grand Valley near Kremmling on Aug. 13, 2020. (Dave Timko, This American Land)

That this particular team has agronomists, economists and environmentalists pitching in with their expertise is also helping move the science forward.

Brass tacks

“What makes this different is the scale and the depth of the questions we’re asking,” said Aaron Derwingson, an agricultural water specialist with The Nature Conservancy’s Colorado River Program, which is helping to fund the project.

“When we’re done it will be relevant to more people than just the

ranchers. We will be able to extrapolate these field conditions and what it means for water savings and the recovery of different species,” he said.

“It’s tough to figure all that out on paper. Here we’re getting down to brass tacks,” Derwingson said.



With irrigation season over, Cabot and his team have serious number crunching to do before they begin monitoring next year, measuring how the hay fields survived their fallowed season, how quickly they return to health, and precisely how much water was conserved.

Early estimates indicate that the ranchers may have saved 1,500 acre-feet to as many as 2,500 acre-feet of water this year. If this process can be replicated, scientists and ranchers could begin to see how long it might take to fill the 500,000 acre-foot drought pool at Lake Powell.

No collateral damage

But even more important to Bruchez and state policy makers is the impact the pilot is having on a highly skeptical ranching community, some of whom are deeply worried that they will lose control of their water.

“We wanted a project that would be as smooth as possible,” Bruchez said. “We wanted to simplify it and ensure there weren’t unintended damages to neighbors who weren’t participating.

“Some people were comfortable about what we were doing and others had

great fears,” he said. “We just had to keep telling them, ‘We are not delivering water to Lake Powell. We are trying to fill data gaps.’”

Jerd Smith is editor of Fresh Water News. This story first appeared on Oct. 7, 2020 at wateredco.org.

Fresh Water News is an independent, nonpartisan news initiative of Water Education Colorado. WEco is funded by multiple donors. Our editorial policy and donor list can be viewed at wateredco.org



Our articles are free to read, but not free to report

Support local journalism around the state.
Become a member of The Colorado Sun today!

\$5/month

\$20/month

\$100/month

**One-time
Contribution**

The latest from The Sun
