**Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership**

**AGENDA**

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:** October 9, 2020 9 – 11 am

**Where**: Zoom Conference Call

**Attendees:** Joe Crabb, Aaron Kimple, Al Pfister, James Dickhoff, Justin Ramsey, Chris Pitcher, Tobi Rohwer, Mandy Eskelson

**Next meetings:** Committee members voted to maintain schedule of second Friday, every other month (or monthly, when needed), from 9-11 am. Let Mandy know if we need to reconsider schedule options in 2021.

* **November 13:** (shorter, one hour) focus on grant applications and Basin Implementation Plan-project submission due 12/1.
* **December 11:** optional, could be longer and discuss more of Lotic and SJCD’s analysis and how best to share this progress in next public meeting.
* Mandy will send out calendar invites for both meetings.

**Updates & Partner Check-In**

* **Town Council – River Corridor Master Plan:**
* **Background Info:** Riverbend Engineering//Chris drafted a River Corridor Master Plan in 2011. Although not yet adopted, this plan has been used as guiding document and Town Council hopes to refine and formalize it. This could cover not only town stretch of San Juan River, but upstream and downstream sites for recreation purposes as well. Example Town projects include fishing habitat improvements, wave features, public parks.
* Funding: CDOT grant for east end of river near the museum and 1st street bridge to look at trail, river access, sidewalks, functionality of front road, how this may play into river corridor plan. No identified funding to formalize the plan, but perhaps could pursue grant funding with WEP’s help in the future (i.e. inclusion in CPW Non-Motorized Trail grant) to hire consultant and finalize plan.
* Other considerations: Draft Master Plan has already been through public feedback process, so refinement may be a faster process. Town has been consulting subgroup of Audubon that wants to start wetland group, factoring in wetlands into master planning process.
* WEP’s potential role: help identify project opportunities/considerations for river stretches outside of Town limits, mainly upstream work already in progress with stakeholders near San Juan River Village and Running Iron Ranch.
* **Opportunity for WEP:** currently, raise awareness of this document and contacted in future for project development.
* Discussion of other areas of interest, including putting additional trailhead and boat put-in north of town between gas station and Bob’s LP to help solve long-term congestion problems. Possibly look into how CDOT funds could be matched.
* **Next Steps**: Maps from the draft plan will be sent to WEP Steering Committee members. James will check in with Ryan about possible planning grants, keep the WEP updated, and ask for guidance when needed.
* **San Juan River Improvement Project:** No new updates. We’re still waiting to see how the landowner lawsuit plays out. Committee is happy to continue having discussions, but currently at stand still on how projects may be able to progress.
* **East & West Fork contacts:**
* Bootjack Ranch: Opportunity for WEP to introduce ourselves to this major watershed stakeholder to provide basics on WEP’s history, goals, and invite for them to learn more about our process and if they would like be involved in some way.
* Mandy will draft letter from WEP for the Steering Committee to review before mailing
* McCarthy Ranch: Property owners have had several restoration projects on river with Rosgen and Riverbend work, and they allowed Lotic Hydrological team access for field surveys of around 4-5 miles of the East Fork of San Juan that runs through their property. Owners showed interest in learning more about WEP and possibly attending a meeting in future. Discussed having property manager, Kurt Laverty, involved as well, even as potential agricultural representative along with Vernon Leslie from Park Ditch Company.
* Al will ask if McCarthy’s and/or Kurt would like to join meeting in future.
* Discussions broached on how to invite/include new Steering Committee members. For now, sticking to smaller group of folks representing particular constituencies and expertise to ensure group does not become to large/unproductive or biased. Hope to formalize this process in the near future and be transparent with public on this process.
* Mandy will review historical documents from WEP’s initial meetings to see if these definitions and roles have already been determined by steering committee in the past

**9:50 – 10:35 Phase III**

* [**Basin Implementation Plan (BIP)**](https://cwcb.colorado.gov/colorado-water-plan/basin-implementation-plans) **Update:** In 2015,Colorado Water Plan compiled state data and projects, while 9 basin roundtables compiled their own regional project lists into a document called the Basin Implementation Plan (BIP). As part of the revision of state water plan, all BIPs being updated as well, including the [Southwest Basin BIP](https://waterinfo.org/resources/southwest-basin-roundtable/) and our region’s [Identified Projects and Processes (IPPs).](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/Appendix%20A_1.pdf)
* Harris Water Engineering was hired as the Local Expert coordinating the BIP update for the Southwest. Becoming part of the IPP list gives the CWCB an idea of what groups and projects are being developed, with approximate costs, designs and timelines. However, these can be quite broad/vague project proposals to make the state and region aware of.
* **Opportunity:** WEP has already been invited to be added to list, so our group can decide how detailed or vague we would like to submit for an IPP listing. This is available to other entities/groups as well, so Town of Pagosa Springs is welcome to submit the River Corridor Plan, etc. Adding even a few potential projects and WEP to the list increases the likelihood of receiving future funding. Note: this is optional and not required.
* **Context:** SW Basin Roundtable will not be receiving any additional funds for next 3 years because of reduced revenue in the state. This may be our best opportunity to demonstrate services WEP provides and need for funding support.
* **Next Steps:** Mandy will send out draft form with information that’s already been listed by Harris Water, then WEP Steering Committee can help refine before final submission by 12/1.
* Committee suggested including any projects we’ve already identified with Park Ditch headgate, piping, river access options.
* Draft of BIP Update should be available June 2021.
* **CWCB Grants-**[**Watershed Restoration Program (WRP)**](https://cwcb.colorado.gov/colorado-watershed-restoration-grants) **&** [**Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF)**](https://cwcb.colorado.gov/loans-grants/water-supply-reserve-fund-grants)**:** after discussing which grants may be easiest to pursue and likelihood of being awarded in 2021, the project management team determined CWCB to still be best mechanism. Steering Committee members reviewed draft budget and tasks to provide feedback on strategy and timeline.
* Main proposal details:
* Context: WEP hopes to finish their tasks and budget for current WRP grant by May 2021.
* Application for 3rd and final phase of the planning process in November/December. Tasks would focus on writing/finalizing Integrated Water Management Plan (likely written by Lotic) and stakeholder engagement/education tools/long term group planning (MSI). The group may look at extending the agricultural inventory and analysis down into the Navajo and Blanco watersheds, if SJCD determines they have time and capacity.
* WEP intends to submit a smaller grant request due to [CWCB budget changes](https://cwcb.colorado.gov/loans-grants/program-budget-impacts) from reduced state revenue and COVID restrictions.
* Also applying for Water Supply Reserve Fund as well, covering up to 75% of costs with CWCB grants. These funds may be very limited and not a future option.
* After Phase III/wrapping up planning process, this group will move away from relying on state funds and is already looking at grants through NRCS, CPW, and BOR for project implementation. Hope is to have solid plan for reference when applying for larger sums for project designs and construction in future.
* Next Steps: MSI, Al, and Mely will meet with Lotic and San Juan Conservation District Oct. 20th to discuss budgets and project tasks. Applications drafts will be shared with the Steering Committee to ensure goals and expectations align.
* MSI is also in the process of writing a 6-month progress report for this group’s current CWCB grant. This will be shared with the committee in the next few weeks. Deadline is Nov. 2nd.

**10:35 – 10:50 Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP)**

* This region received approval of a CFLRP proposal that stretches across San Juan National Forest, designed to address forest health, fire mitigation, also can talk about watershed health, values, and restoration.
* **Opportunity for cross collaboration** and funding between forest & watershed groups**.** This program requires US Forest Service to collaborate when developing projects and priorities. San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership could serve as the forest workgroup and WEP to serve as watershed group, if committee would like to be involved.
* **Request of WEP:** More demanding schedule in first 180 days of being awarded, with possibly monthly meetings for the first 3-4 months, then taper off to bi-annual meetings. Big thanks to Al and Tobi. Who volunteered to participate as WEP representatives as well as the many other perspectives they provide on fish and wildlife, recreation, water conservancy district.