**Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership**

**Meeting Notes**

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING: January 17, 2019 1 - 3 pm

Where: Town Hall Courtroom, Pagosa Springs, CO

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

* + **Friday Feb 14th 9 – 11am** Steering Committee Meeting
  + Next Meeting-possibly March 13th, option to invite Lotic and SJ Headwaters Forest Health Partnership rep to begin April public meeting planning

**Attendees:** Christ Pitcher, Al Pfister, Tobi Rohwer, Tim Haarmann, Mely Whiting, Ryan Unterreiner, Joe Crabb, Robin Young, Aaron Kimple, Mandy Eskelson, Kelly Palmer (USFS), Jerry Archuleta (NRCS).

**Updates**

* SJCD/Lotic Meeting highlights:
* Shared processes, outcomes, schedule, contacts, data needs for project identification, and types of questions to ask during agricultural inventory with ditch riders and landowners
* Already strategizing on dealing with challenges (i.e. maintaining privacy utmost importance but need to communicate which sites may be open to improvement projects that can be coupled with enviro and rec benefits as well)
* SJCD communicating with potential hire who would conduct field surveys
* Potentially regroup in March or April, depending on funding
* Southwest Basin Roundtable debrief:
* Initial pushback for requesting higher than $25k cap, but eventually received approval for Water Supply Reserve Fund (WSRF) grant $42,957 (25% project costs)
* Emphasized Roundtable Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) recognizes gap in understanding of environmental & recreation water values and allows outside groups to address this gap under Roundtable guidance, which WEP seeks to accomplish along with other goals.
* Other Phase II funding:
* Tourism Board of Pagosa Springs approved $2,500 cash match
* CWCB Watershed Restoration Program grant approved for $85,914 (50% project costs)
* Awaiting CWCB approval of Roundtable WSRF grant in March 2020
* Awaiting Town of Pagosa Springs grant application/approval and TNC cash match approval
* TBD-potential funding through Great Outdoors Colorado fund thanks to input/submittal from Ryan, Joe, Chris, Tobi, etc. (see more below)

**Concept Design Plan**

* Background: compliments Phase II tasks and gives WEP head start for future funding on multi-purpose projects. Engineers identified full suite of options, with “low hanging fruit” choices to start, if needed. Similar to processes occurring with Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (<http://www.riograndeheadwaters.org/>).
* Project focus areas (note: not listed in any type of priority):
* Agricultural diversion improvements and upstream stabilization
* Environmental improvements/flood abatement
* Public recreation access
* Agricultural diversion area involves 2 components:

1. Upstream landslide

* Issue: pushes flow away from headgate during low flows in summer, sediment blocking infrastructure.
* Option to stabilize existing hillside toe to prevent active erosion or to reshape a low flow channel away from bank with reinforced hard points (i.e. large rocks) to armor outside edge. Allows low flow and bankfull flows.

1. Diversion/coffer dam

* Issue: maintenance sometimes involves heavy equipment in river channel disturbing habitat. Structure could be improved for passage of sediment, fish, and recreators.
* Option to replace with new materials (rock, concrete, wood, etc.) in arch shape with low flow channel for passage. Designed to maintain levels required for diversion.
* Considerations: risk, funding, maintenance, property access on opposite side of river (public land). If limited funding, diversion structure improvement may be higher priority than upstream stabilization/channel restructure. Perhaps use different building materials to lower costs and more “natural” appearance; however, options like wood have shorter life span and could rot. May be more appropriate for other project sites downstream.
* Environmental improvements/flood abatement area components:

1) Flood abatement

* Issue: Many properties within 100-year floodplain and floodway. Sediment deposition for habitat and flood protection.
* Multiple site options to restructure river channel for sediment deposition, overflows, and low flow channels prevent property damage/flooding.

2) Improve habitat and low flow channel

* Issue: braided channels and need for flow control systems
* Options to create complexity into systems with low flow channels, drop pools/vanes, and foster floodplain vegetation growth. Pools create depth to maintain lower temperatures and dissolved oxygen needed for fish during summer low flows, while vegetation for shade supports lower temperatures. Designs also provide efficient sediment transport to maintain or increase flood capacity.
* Considerations: need to maintain important existing attributes (side channels landowners use for recreation/fishing, allows overflow areas), riverbank ownership and liability concerns, and incorporates previous design plans from NRCS.
* Questions: Is it possible to model channel manipulations would improve flood capacity? Yes, this could be representing with models and in presentation to property. Contract liability? US Army Corps of Engineers may require HOA to contract rather than WEP or other partners.
* Public river/recreation access components:

1) Access road

* Issue: Existing road would need slope changed to 8% and into 2 lane road (24 ft wide) to meet Archuleta County specifications. Currently only one road to lower bench area with limited access or ways out if problem.
* Considerations: Respect existing structures and keep public traffic away from subdivision. Most expensive component to build because of steep hillside.

2) Parking lot and boat ramp

* Issues: parking lot and boat ramp would need to be somewhat small due to available space.
* Option creates opportunity for river recreation access (boating and fishing access) and keeps public traffic outside of subdivision.
* Considerations: new development on property and near effluent infrastructure and diversion pipes.
* Next steps
* Fine tune before presenting to involved stakeholder boards, balancing 3 project options in cost and benefit to both private landowners and public, if possible.
* Reduce some project components to lower cost. Full suite presented to group to understand full possibilities, but aware some options may be adjusted or pared down from final selection. Diversion components most expensive, access road as second.
* Option to prioritize improvements on 1) agricultural diversion area 2) public river access and 3) low flow channel.
* Low flow channel shaping and bank stabilization could benefit both flood abatement and fishing habitat. Since site interacts with private property subdivision, need to balance private and public benefit if using WEP/state funding.

**San Juan Conservation District/NRCS**

* Phase II agricultural structure inventory steps:

1) Start with large ditch infrastructure evaluations

2) Evaluate individual diversions

* Funding and time dependent on how many individual properties covered
* Focus on structures on San Juan River, move into Navajo and Blanco to update existing projects/inventory or add new sites.
* Outcome: Inventory that shows current conditions of diversions, locations of issues, provides cost estimates, and prioritization of project options for watershed assessment.
* Schedule: spring/early summer background review🡪field surveys wrapped up hopefully by late fall.
* Updates: no news on NRCS request for funds. NRCS reevaluating fund distribution this year.

**Other Updates:**

* State requesting Roundtables update their Basin Implementation Plans in 2020/21.
* Once Southwest Basin Roundtable determines update lead, good idea to connect this contact with NRCS and other partners to inform this update process with list of projects.
* Participation may help WEP, NRCS, and others increase chances of getting projects funded.
* Potential funding support from Great Outdoors Colorado/GOCO (<https://goco.org/>).
* GOCO fund has 3 priorities (enhance-infrastructure, inspire-outreach, protect-monitor/evaluate) and solicited state agencies, including Colorado Parks & Wildlife, for project ideas in Nov. 2019. First time this organization has reached out to CPW for project ideas.
* CPW representatives submitted ideas on Upper San Juan for $350k grant and selected as finalist (1 of 3 finalists). Told CPW recreation access project options specifically stood out.
* Could be potential project match in future and will keep WEP updated on progress/if approved.

**Conclusion/Next Meeting**

* Next Steering Committee meeting: Feb. 14th 9 – 11 am
* April 2020–April 2021: Steering Committee meeting every other month
* April: Request to schedule Lotic Hydrological present to Southwest Basin Roundtable Environmental & Recreation sub-committee as well when in town, possibly in Durango.
* Possible field trip in May or June
* Public meeting—April 2020
* Group will know by late March/April if funding has been approved and contracts signed.
* Action: Confirm date with Resilient Archuleta and San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership.
* Possible topics: partner updates, brief overview of Phase II steps and Phase I accomplishments, possibly discuss Concept Design Plan, etc.