**Upper San Juan Watershed Enhancement Partnership**

**Meeting Notes**

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING: August 23, 2019 10 am – 12 pm

Where: Town Hall Courtroom, Pagosa Springs, CO

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

* + **Wednesday, September 4th 6 pm** **Public Meeting** w/Resilient Archuleta and Growing Water Smart, CSU Extension Building (344 Highway 84) now with beer donations from Pagosa Brewery and snacks provided!
	+ **Friday, September 6th 10 am -12 pm Steering Committee Meeting,** Town Hall Courtroom, Pagosa Springs

**Attendees:** Aaron Kimple, Al Pfister, Tobi Rowher, James Dickhoff, Tim Haarmann, Pat Bennett, John Taylor, Chris Pitcher, Mandy Eskelson.

**Action Items:**

* Share October Watershed Conference abstract with Steering Committee for input **(Al)**
* Acquire formal approval from board at Concept Design Plan site for Riverbend access **(Al)**
* Send interested site contacts to Chris **(Tobi)**
* Present brief intro of WEP at public meeting **(MSI),** Steering Committee members attend to answer public’s questions and share updates **(ALL)**
* Coordinate with Seth Mason/Lotic Hydrological to attend Sept. meeting, discuss Phase II watershed assessment options **(MSI)**
* Finalize contract with Riverbend for Concept Design Plan work & update when funding available to begin fall work **(MSI, Riverbend)**
* Inquire about education materials for water users and irrigators on water law, conservation practices (i.e. irrigating practices, domestic usage, leasing, mini hydro-converters, etc.) **(MSI, Celene?, Mely?)**

**Partner Updates**

* Concept Design Site on San Juan: majority of stakeholders/property owners showed interest at board meeting/dinner in working with WEP and contractors in developing plan. Board president attended, took a vote of support, and estimated 90% willing to participate in design plan process.
* Stakeholder concerns: year-round residents worried about more regulation, entities there “to help”, mainly concerned about public access near properties.
* Needs: no official word from PO received yet, but Al volunteered to follow up with board after their meeting this month.
* Riverbend needs formal approval from board (Al) and list of contacts to connect with (Tobi) Al to request from POA, include: access approval, communication beforehand to property owners of surveyors entering area. Option to skip properties that do not support concept design, though not ideal for comprehensive planning.
* Request for Riverbend to create designs that are minimally invasive, focusing on functionality, to decrease opposition and offer realistic options.
* Include site update in plans: landslide observed in spring diminished, river channel has moved back due to runoff flows eroding upheaved sediment, clearing out cottonwoods, and depositing sediment downstream by bridge creating two channels. Not currently hindering upstream ditch company intake, with no abnormal/additional sediment loads affecting function. Future landslide potential could be mitigated with bank stabilization.
* NRCS/SJCD Application: Entities applied last year to assess and make infrastructure improvements for Echo Ditch, Park Ditch, Dutton Ditch, and Snowball Ditch. Some field assessments done, but potential to collaborate with WEP projects to leverage funds and technical resources.
* Concerns:
* Application still not approved, supposed to hear in April and no firm deadline for final approval. Part of Equip or Targeted Conservation Area funds. Federal funding has shifted to 60-40 split, with more responsibility on participants, but possible to use in-kind and match funding from WEP.
* NRCS & SJCD funding and staff capacity limited to evaluate individual ditch options.
* Different than current, ongoing projects being completed for infrastructure improvements (i.e. Snowball Ditch headgate installation mentioned)
* Opportunities:
* WEP may assist NRCS/SJCD with assessments, share WEP resources (community feedback, field visit info, contacts, match and in-kind funds).
* WEP to potentially receive agricultural water needs/infrastructure evaluations (depending on property owner agreement) for Phase II consultant to integrate into watershed assessment.
* Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference (Avon, CO, 10/8-10/10) Al and others will present on Oct. 9th, focusing on theme of “Human Element” to discuss collaborative effort between WEP, Resilient Archuleta, and Growing Water Smart Workgroup.
* Al will share Conference abstract and presentation with Steering Committee to review. Presentation will emphasize successes and challenges of groups, won’t address specific site locations or project details.

**Concept Design Plan Updates**

* Funding and schedule:
* First steps (late Fall 2019):
1. Inquire about POA progress with old river channel title (mentioned at May field trip). Clarify ownership and permission requirements (Al to check with POA president).
2. Acquire board and property owner approval agreement
3. Access NRCS info and plans (initial stopped at bridge, Concept Design Plan would extend above and below this scope.
4. Conduct field survey for plan and profile of area. Need access in order to complete surveys for river (bank-to-bank) and floodplains, majority of work within river channel and on roadways, not backyards, etc.
* Schedule:
1. Board approval
2. Finalize funding and contracting
3. Survey field work
4. Present concept drawings, map, estimated project costs to Steering Committee (Winter 2019/2020)
5. Present design report/options to property and ditch stakeholders, see if interested/agreement (Winter 2019/Spring 2020)
6. Explore/pursue funding (future/2020)
* Stakeholder outreach plan: property owners want meeting with Riverbend, but this could bog down progress at concept level.
* Riverbend willing to talk to the board about steps, but suggest delaying formal stakeholder meeting/Q&A until design plan is complete, to discuss projects option and make adjustments.
* Considerations:
* POA talked about lagoons polluting few days a year, currently not a pressing issue, but could be in the future. Mechanical treatment plant is considered an option with smaller footprint and within the POA’s long-term plans. Have construction plans already, may inform design plans.
* Ditch company is not allowed to grant public access to site property due to land ownership boundaries. Company has easement through private property and own infrastructure. Headgate located on USFS land, but one must cross private land for access. Private pumping from ditch an issue.
* Piping solves one problem but difficult with sediment, requiring methods like Fresno flushing. Can use emergency flush stations, but requires property access.
* Landslides near ditch intake: Concept Design Plan could look into bank stabilization (fixed now, but could return) and diversion structure, but won’t assess whole ditch for piping at this project level. Only working on areas as it interfaces with the river. Committee member confirmed no need to get formal approval from ditch company for this level of design.

**Public Meeting/Outreach**

* Structure and agenda:
* 1st Presenter: CWCB speaker on present state water concerns (i.e. CO Water Plan, Upper Basin Drought Contingency Plan, Demand Management), water education, and then highlight local efforts working to be proactive and address these issues.
* Opportunity for CWCB and state officials to hear Southwestern Colorado concerns about water issues, especially local and agricultural needs.
* Address water law questions on “use it or lose it” provisions of prior appropriation doctrine, decreed allocations, water lease options
* Look into resources (online, print, presentations) to share with community water users on water law, conservation, predictions, etc (Mandy to ask Celene, Mely, others about appropriate resources for area).
* Following Presenters: Brief (5 min) intros from WEP, Resilient Archuleta, and Growing Water Smart Workgroup and mention of attending committee members.
* Emphasize efforts driven by community needs and values. Relevance of these groups to keep water here and sustainable.
* Outreach roles/options
* MSI will present intro on WEP, mainly focusing on bullets/info from FAQ’s document. Will emphasize this group and other efforts are striving to keep the process community-driven, avoid regulation, and keep water local.

**Conclusion/Next meeting**

* **September 4th—Public Meeting, Sept. 6th—Steering Committee Meeting**
* October—Riverbend hopefully starts assessment/field work
* Fall field trip options: possibly tour Pagosa town sites, look at municipal diversions.
* Spring trip options: Banded Peak Ranch, look at demonstration projects like micro-conversion hydro unit.
* Recently installed unit on 6-inch pipe, with at least 3-foot drop, that spins generator, run ac or dc power, cost around $1500 and half day to install, run to green house.
* Opportunity to start sharing easy projects for landowners to use water in different ways for Phase III project implementation, after needs and priorities assessed.