

**April 11, 2014**

**The Poudre Runs Through It Study/Action Work Group**

**SESSION SUMMARY**

**Welcome to Richard Raines.** Having input from the Tri-Districts will be quite useful as we continue our multi-sector dialogue.

**Goodbye John Sanderson and Brian Bledsoe.** Both of these fellows have had to resign because of work schedule overload. We appreciate their contributions, especially in the beginning of our effort when we spent time learning about the health aspect of the river.

**What's New on the Poudre?**

We learned that the Town of Timnath and Colorado Parks and Wildlife are taking a proposal to CWCB on April 25 to open to the public the Gateway Pond just off I-25 near Timnath. They hope eventually to build a trail around the reservoir and put in fishing ramps and a parking lot.

We learned how the CB-T quota set by Northern Water each year (this year at 60%) affects the amount of water that can be rented back to farmers by the City of Fort Collins, City of Greeley, and Tri-Districts.

The September flood event is still “draining out” such that the river is currently running 130-140% of average flow for this time of year. Everyone is hopeful that our terrific snow pack doesn't melt too fast!

**Future of the Work Group**

The Steering Committee presented the proposal they came up with, based on our February discussion. The Work Group decided:

- We will initiate a “phase 3” following our June 5 meeting.
- Sessions will be every other month for a half day at TAMASAG, same as now, starting September, 2014
- Though we are not going to become a more formal entity now, we will evaluate the pros and cons of various ways to formalize in the next several months. Formalizing may be necessary as we go after dollars to catapult our initiatives
- We will seek Phase 3 “bridge funding” (\$25-30K) from our members, same as we did for Phase 2; we will fund the Poudre River Forum through registrations and sponsorships and we will again seek grant funding from the Pharos Fund of Bohemian Foundation.
- Now that our FLOWS and FORUM initiatives are underway, we will focus on the FUNDING initiative, with the full Work Group working together instead of a separate group, at least to begin. (Not to be confused with “bridge funding” for our group to continue)

- We will invite Robert Ward from Poudre Heritage Alliance and Jen Kovacs from Coalition for the Poudre to join the Work Group. We are still keeping our eyes open for a prospect from Weld County.

Several points were made about the group's future, including:

- We need to remember to give ourselves credit for how far we have come. We are in the position of “managing our success” instead of “trying to avoid failure.”
- We want the steering committee to proceed to line out some alternative scenarios for how a more formal entity might work
- Our group can serve as a catalyst for many good things to happen on the Poudre. We might become an umbrella group that comes up with initiatives but then goes after other groups to actually make them happen.
- One model we might want to look into is that followed by a group of entities coming together to protect wetlands for birds. They formed a group, came up with a plan, and then formed “joint ventures” for particular projects done by others within that plan. The money to carry out each joint venture was handled by the group doing the joint venture rather than by the group.
- We are entering a period on the Poudre that may be more difficult than in the past, given the upcoming release of the EIS on NISP, Thornton's engineering study on their pipeline options, more acquisition of ag water, the fact that CB-T water is now selling for \$30-40k per acre foot. Now, more than ever, it is important that Poudre Runs Through It stays together to prevent fragmentation.

### **FUNDING for the Poudre—Learning about What Others are Doing**

We heard from Heidi Huber-Stearns from the Colorado Conservation Exchange about their effort to match those who could benefit economically from river improvements with those who are in a position to implement best practices that result in such improvements. The idea is to generate value for natural services that we take for granted and that have not be paid for in the past. For instance a brewery might want to pay for improving an agricultural diversion off the river. The group is working with the City of Greeley to see if there is potential for some “nutrient trading” between those contributing nutrients to the river and the city, which is due for some major infrastructure improvements to deal with nutrients. This regulatory approach is quite complex and measurement is difficult, but nevertheless, our Greeley representative concurred that it's something they are looking at with Colorado Conservation Exchange.

We heard from Lucas Mouttet from City of Fort Collins that there has been discussion about both a Conserve to Enhance approach to tie rate payer conservation to river improvements and also a utility “check off box” on rate payers' bills to fund river improvements. There are significant complexities with the Conserve to Enhance approach, including how to track savings from conservation and set aside the commensurate amount of money, where to put “conserved water” if we don't have storage capacity, and how to be simple on the front side the consumer sees, when the “back side” is so complicated. The idea of a check off box to fund increased river flow might actually work quite well, however, if our FLOWS group gets to the point of knowing how much money would be needed to purchase water rights.

At our June session, we will hear from the City of Greeley—about their “green corridor initiative.” We think there may be some excellent opportunities to work together to develop a “big picture” FUNDING initiative for the entire Poudre by bringing together Greeley, Fort Collins, and the other communities and groups.

### **Initiative Reports**

Brief reports from all of our initiative groups included the following:

- GAGE the RIVER group submitted their grant proposal to the Poudre Heritage Foundation and expects an answer in June. They will have a year to spend the funds.
- RIVER DIVERSION IMPROVEMENTS group is getting help from the City of Greeley’s water attorney because combining the two diversions—that of the BH Eaton Ditch and the Whitney Ditch—requires some legal work. CPW is involved as well, and is concerned there may be some issues with SHPO—State Historical Preservation Organization—because these diversion structures date back into the 1800’s. One of our members who has worked in historic preservation referred to provisions that allow such engineering improvements to go forward while respecting historical structures—something the group agreed they will look into.
- POUDRE RIVER FORUM group met in late March and made some decisions for the 2015 forum, including another February/late January date at The Ranch, with more in depth content focus and some small group breakouts. April Getchius and Eric Recentine have joined the committee and others are welcome to join as well. Next meeting is May 2, 10am to 12 noon at the Natural Resources conference room at 215 Mason Street.
- FLOWS group continues to look into their concept of an augmentation plan approach. Several of the members are meeting with Linda Bassi, CWCB staff, and Zach Smith, Colorado Water Trust staff on April 25 to discuss potential.

### **Miscellaneous Business**

We will watch for the South Platte Basin Implementation Plan draft report coming out at the end of July and determine if we want to submit anything as a group. Discussion about the process included the belief that the plan should take a systems approach. In answer to a question about how the plan will be used, we were told that the governor hopes that those adhering to recommendations in the plan would receive benefits that would motivate them for such adherence.

We encouraged everyone to attend a Poudre RiverFest being sponsored by a number of groups on May 10 at Legacy Park in Fort Collins. Our group will not have a booth there but we will have some cards printed that we can have at the booths being provided by both City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Mountain Whitewater Descents.

**Next session is set for June 5. .**