

August 8, 2013

The Poudre Runs Through It Study/Action Work Group

SESSION SUMMARY

Welcome to our two new participants, Mark Simpson and Bob Streeter!

Mark is the Poudre River Water Commissioner, replacing George Varra in that position a year ago. When asked if that means he runs the river, Mark replied “sometimes I think the river runs me!” As for Bob Streeter, in addition to his many present and past titles related to his fish and wildlife career, we learned that he raises grapes and manages his subdivision’s lake, which has Water Supply and Storage Company water rights. We also got additional background on a semi-new member, Mark Kolebar from Thornton, who remembers fishing with his grandmother at Chamber’s Lake and visiting farms of relatives in the Severance area growing up.

Personal accounts: what have we accomplished, what are our hopes for this next phase?

Some reflections from group members:

- Even though we have not been able to come up with a perfect definition of “healthy river” I think we are closer to thinking we can have a *healthier* river.
- Appreciated getting to know those I earlier perceived as having views contrary to the workings of an irrigation company
- This enterprise represents the best step forward toward a suite of opportunities on the Poudre. It’s a stark contrast to similar groups around the state I participate in, because of its forthrightness, its transparency, and its goodwill. We can be a model for others.
- Though I can’t answer my coworkers who ask me “when is it going to be done and what’s the outcome” I think we are making progress at figuring out how we can meet the objectives of more than one sector at a time.
- Anything important has to happen in partnership, not in isolation. Our group brings together many actors.
- I look forward to making progress on our current initiatives—maybe new ones too.
- I got to go fly fishing! Thanks, Rocky Mountain Flycasters.
- We have caught on that healthy river issues cannot be tackled outside of the working river context. Working within that framework yields cooperation; without it, resistance.
- We all had to “pee on the rock.” Now we are ready to engage our engines on some action. (we forgave the mixing of metaphors!)
- My earlier perception of muni vs. ag has shifted to “maybe our ditch company can affect the river positively”
- We are showing the wisdom of concentrating on the 95% we agree on instead of the 5% we disagree on. It’s better to be approximately right than precisely wrong!
- There’s a spiritual aspect to the river that feeds the soul. If something’s “wrong” it affects all of us
- Positive impacts on the river elevate us all
- This group has changed my paradigm—I have learned from listening and communicating with people differently while continuing to push the idea of community and the river’s importance to that

Report Out: what's happening out there related to the river?

Part of our agenda in Phase 2 will be an opportunity for participants to report on things that are happening related to the river, to bring others up to speed. This meeting we learned:

- Larimer County's citizen survey Our Land/Our Future, conducted in order to get input on potential projects and interest in extending its expiring open space sales tax, showed that a resounding percentage of respondents are willing to pay for instream flows.
- The South Platte Basin Roundtable (SPBRT) and the Metro Roundtable are working together on a "basin implementation plan" that would feed into the Colorado Water Plan mandated by the governor to be drafted by December 2014. Since the Poudre is one of the most important rivers in the basin, we need to be aware of this work. We determined that we will investigate how we might increase our formal participation in the roundtable; Bob Streeter will work with us on that since he has a leadership role on the SPBRT.
- We learned that CSU has been awarded a grant that will establish one of two national "nutrient centers" at CSU to conduct a comprehensive study on nutrients and water quality. The Poudre will be key in this work.
- City of Fort Collins is cosponsoring with CSU a project analyzing sediment transport on the Poudre in the wake of forest fires, since the aggregation of material can change the morphology of the river and affect flood flows.
- We heard that residents of Poudre communities are having almost more difficulty dealing with the aftermath of the fires than the fires themselves—a tremendous amount of risk from flooding and mudslides for years ahead.

The Poudre Runs Through It Progress Report: 2012-2013 Accomplishments and 2013-2014 Prospectus—now that we have it, what do we want to do with it?

After considerable input, we determined that we will not use this piece in a press release, because we do not have a reason at this point to draw public attention to what we have accomplished or are embarking on. However, we will use the piece in a number of other ways, including:

- Sharing it with our employers and affiliated organizations in our effort to raise "bridge funding" but also to show them what our work this year has resulted in
- Sharing it with those who we are bringing in on our initiatives work—to help them understand the background from which the initiatives arose
- Using it to provide background when we launch our advertising for the Poudre River Forum to take place in February
- Providing it at the South Platte Forum that takes place in October
- Providing it to South Platte Basin Roundtable members as part of a presentation and for inclusion in the SPBRT/Metro Roundtables' joint basin implementation plan
- Providing it to John Stulp, the governor's water advisor, as a model for group process that might inform others as part of the Colorado Water Plan

We agreed that we should NOT use the piece to promote any individual 's interests or projects; we should get approval from the full group first.

Poudre River Forum—a report from the initiative group

John Stokes and members of the group planning the Poudre River Forum presented some of the ideas they generated at their first planning meeting and received feedback and additional ideas from the Work Group.

- Desired outcome is to bring together those whose lives are connected to the Poudre River to build a more educated and engaged community
- Rather than a forum for professionals or a forum for the public, we will stage a hybrid forum appealing to both—an opportunity for the community to connect with professionals with expertise in a range of arenas, but also an opportunity for professionals and the community to explore values in regard to the Poudre.
- Activities will be planned that provide opportunity for networking, and active participation by those who attend rather than a series of canned presentations by “talking heads.”
- Working river/healthy river will be an underlying theme; in order to introduce a wide range of topics related to each of these aspects, we anticipate featuring a series of several “Ted Talks”—very brief, focused talks no longer than 10 minutes each. Each of these could be linked to further information online.
- The Forum may also be a way to begin to build interest in and support for long range public funding of Poudre Working River/Healthy River.
- The Forum should help us build “better connective tissue” between organizations working on behalf of the Poudre
- We expect 300-500 people, and we anticipate keeping the admission fee low by seeking sponsors. Scholarships for those otherwise unable to attend will be considered, especially as a means of drawing CSU students.
- One venue being considered is The Ranch, because it is not Fort Collins centric.
- The Forum Initiative group will meet next on September 20 from 8-10am at the Natural Resources conference room on the first floor, 215 Mason Street.

Gage the River—a report from the initiative group

Jeffrey Boring presented slides to illustrate the progress made by this group, including locations that have been selected for placement of two gages and anticipated budget and funding. (See details by viewing his slides on the Poudre Runs Through it website.) of approximately \$10K, we will need to raise about \$3,200 to match a grant we hope to get from Poudre Heritage Alliance in March, 2014. The gages are being mounted in order to draw attention to the relationship between quantity of water in the river at different times, and uses of the river. Educational signage to accompany the gages will be developed; Jeffrey presented two sets of potential verbiage, one basic and one more advanced.

FLOWS—a report from the initiative group

Those who earlier volunteered for either “Dan’s group” related to instream flows or “the Thornton group” have combined to form the FLOWS group because the intent of the two groups overlap considerably. Dan Brown pointed out that the work of the group might be seen as including both formal and informal, as well as short-term and long-term, actions. Specifically,

they will work with the City of Fort Collins toward a formal instream flow right, but they will also pursue a number of informal cooperative actions to increase flows in the river. Some of the work will require long-term efforts, but some actions may result in improvements in a shorter time frame. An experiment that falls under the latter category was reported on by initiative group members Susan Smolnik, Dale Trowbridge and Brad Wind. Specifically, the City of Fort Collins is working with New Cache Irrigation Company to deliver CB-T water normally released to arrive at Timnath Reservoir in just two days, to release it more slowly, 20 CFS over 20 days, in order to provide a desirable water level and temperature for fish. Can Northern work with the City to provide the Horsetooth water in the increments desired? Will the river commissioner be able to administer this in ways that meet the state's requirements? How much "shrink" will be lost in transit by the slower release as opposed to the typical fast flow? How will New Cache be compensated for that loss if it is significant? Does this change fit with the annual maintenance plans New Cache performs at Timnath Reservoir?

Northern Water has agreed to track this experiment and analyze how it compares to what we know from looking at historical data; however, the point was made that for us to do more of this kind of thing in the future, real-time telemetry will be beneficial.

Homework:

In addition to getting further updates on our identified initiatives at the October session, we will set aside time to hear proposals for any additional initiatives. These can be brand new ideas or any of the ideas presented earlier for our consideration. The key to presenting an idea, however, is to be willing to champion it!

Your homework is two part:

- 1) Take a moment to revisit the ideas present earlier, here: <http://www.cwi.colostate.edu/thepoudrerunsthroughit/files/PRTI%20Action%20Ideas%20@%205-2-13%20@%202pm.pdf> Beth and I abbreviated and conglomerated the ideas to come up with a package that would be easier for us all to absorb. But please check to be sure your idea was not bludgeoned in the process! If we failed to get across your idea accurately, please point it out to us and we will fix it.
- 2) Consider whether there are any of these ideas (or others you have since conceptualized) that you would like to bring forward for the group's consideration. Be ready to present any that you are willing to champion.

Phase 2 Schedule of Sessions:

Our next session is scheduled for Tuesday, October 15. Each of our sessions will start at 7:30 sharp with breakfast and end at noon. Please come for breakfast: that's our time to converse informally! Other session dates are:

- December 13 (Friday)
- February 14 (Friday)
- April 11 (Friday)
- June 5 (Thursday)