MEETING MINUTES
Joint Gunnison Basin/Grand Valley Selenium Task Force Meeting
Thursday September 20, 2007 10am – 3 pm
USDA Service Center, 690 Industrial Blvd, Delta, CO

1. Task Force Updates

   a. Phase 3 UVWUA lateral piping project: $800K in 319 funds will be transferred from the Selig Canal lining project to the Phase 3 UVWUA lateral piping project since more cost-effective piping will be used on the Selig Canal. Design will take place winter 2007-2008, project starts winter 2008. Project implementation plan for 319 funds will focus on EF lateral system, however there is concern that the EF portion will overrun the $1.2 total project funds and needs $400K match in non-federal funds. UVWUA will submit a $400K request to CWCB in response. Reclamation to perform NEPA assessment, the EIS for this project indicates mitigation will be necessary and performed in the Escalante Canyon area. WQCD will perform project monitoring to confirm selenium /salt load reduction. This is outside the scope of the 319 grant so WQCD will seek EPA approval for the monitoring and add the monitoring to PIP. STF requests flow monitoring also be added to PIP to determine load reduction, should begin the monitoring in the winter of 2007-2008 in order to gather a baseline dataset.

   b. Pond Lining Program: The Shavano Conservation District program has $2.1 million in Reclamation salinity program funding to line about 30 wetted acres of existing ponds on the east side of the Uncompahgre Valley at no cost to property owner. More sites are needed for this program to make it more cost effective.

   c. Use of Selenium Priority Areas for EQIP projects: Need to continue to educate conservation districts in order to prioritize funding requests for selenium priority areas.

   d. Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) Progress Report: The GIS map has been completed that identifies seleniferous soils used to determine selenium priority areas in the Uncompahgre Valley. The CIG map serves as a predictive tool for selenium loading and will help to identify wise water irrigation practices to minimize selenium loading for the priority areas. The east side of the Uncompahgre Valley is high priority with 195 miles of canals and laterals needing lining or piping. This project will eventually include the Mesa, Delta and Montrose conservation districts.

   e. Bioreactor Pilot Project proposal: Reclamation submitted a $92K proposal under its Science and Technology grant program, will administer the proposal with Mesa State College and Golder if approved.

   f. Wise Water Use Council activities / Water Use Efficiency Improvement Project; The Wise Water Use Council is focusing outdoor water use efficiency improvements in the Grand Valley and Gunnison Basin with local water providers. The council is developing irrigation system standards for new developments and has submitted a $50K proposal to the Colorado Water Conservation Board for a Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) effort with the Colorado River Conservation District (CRWCD) as grant sponsor. The CWCB grant would support community surveys and implementation of CBSM pilot program, goal of grant is to improve outdoor irrigation practices.

   g. Targeted Watershed Grant Proposal; The proposal was not received well by the Upper Colorado River Basin group or Salinity Control Forum so the proposal will be scaled back to Colorado only. It was decided to wait until 2008 to submit the proposal with CRWCD as the potential sponsor.

h. 2007 revised action plan updates and new assignments; 2007 action plan was revised, need to develop 2008 action plan. Reclamation Technical Assistance To States program needs long-term action plan to secure future funding. Reclamation needs salinity request items for 2008 projects.

i. Mesa County Whitewater Implementation Plan: A letter from the task force was sent to Mesa County Planning to provide input on future development in Whitewater. The letter requested wise water use practices be implemented to conserve water and prevent future additional selenium and salt loading to the Gunnison River. The STF Wise Water Use Best Management Practices guides for outdoor residential irrigation use, golf course water use and pond lining were also sent; Mesa County planners said they would post the guides on their web site.

j. Salinity Forum interest in leaky ponds; The Salinity Control Forum will send a letter to local government planning agencies encouraging lining of ponds to prevent contributing salt and selenium. Pond lining allocations (FY08?) are $210M for the Grand Valley and $80M for the Gunnison/Uncompahgre Valleys.

k. ACOE Tamarisk removal grant; The Army Corps of Engineers, Tamarisk Coalition, City of Grand Junction and multiple local, state and federal governments are working together to begin administering a program to remove tamarisk and invasive plants from the Colorado River from the Utah border to Palisade. The goal of the program is to help restore the riparian and aquatic ecosystem of the Colorado River. Water quality improvements, including selenium and salt, were identified as a program benefit.

l. Task Force coordinator funding; A request submitted to the Recovery Program for Task Force funding was declined. Task force members will watch the Water 2025 Challenge Grant opportunities for RFPs to support coordinator funding. Letters to solicit dues from participating STF members have not been sent out. Reclamation may be able to provide $5,000 for the Task Force Coordinator in FY08.

m. Changes in the 319 program and current and upcoming projects; EPA is now focusing 319 funding on results-oriented (ie on the ground) remediation projects. WQCD will fund future priority projects based on a proposed 5-year river basin review schedule. The 319 funding schedule for the Colorado River follows the 2008 water quality standards hearing with NPS project implementation incremental grants available in 2009; NPS base grants available in 2011; ambient monitoring then performed in 2012. TMDL incremental grant funds will be available for 2-3 large projects up to $500K ea with (40 %) local match. Base grants can now be used for watershed plans, is important to include outreach, education & monitoring component for watershed plans. Grant applications are due mid-Dec each year.
(Note to Sonja – add reference to tribs studies, TMDLs, WWUC for GV/GB watershed plan)

2. Gunnison River TMDL Development Update: The WQCD load reduction target of 8600 lbs selenium is approximately two times higher than the prior NIWQP / task force target of 5000 lbs due to the unusually dry period of record used by WQCD (1999 – 2003) to calculate necessary load reductions under the TMDL. STF is concerned the Division's load reduction could not be met with reasonable costs and recommends a broader period of record be used for the calculation. WQCD said it would consider using a longer period of record to reflect average or reasonable hydrologic conditions, the gauging station has been in place on Gunnison River at Whitewater for 15 years.

   Action Item: Need to prepare a Task Force position and statement on TMDL load reductions on upcoming WQCD Gunnison River TMDL, should include the BOR report that shows 5000 lb reduction target with flow duration curves. Also need to comment on the Gunnison River TMDL when sent to public notice in late 2007 or early 2008.

3. WWUC letter regarding salt & selenium reduction; development of distribution/marketing plan for BMP and other STF educational materials: The task force should become involved in local land use planning as development planning has the potential to influence both current and future selenium and salt loading. The letter that was sent to Mesa County for the Whitewater Implementation Plan should be modified and widely distributed annually to local policy makers and developers to carry this message. This letter would be a vehicle to distribute BMPs and other educational materials. New coordination should be initiated with BLM where previously unirrigated lands are under development pressure.

   Action Item: Redraft and distribute WWUC letter to local land use planners and developers.

4. Grand Valley tributaries draft report summary: The U.S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with Mesa County, the City of Grand Junction, and the Grand Valley Selenium Task Force, studied selenium concentrations and loads in Adobe, Persigo and Lewis washes to determine relationships to different land uses. Tracer studies were performed from Nov 2004 through Mar 2006. Selenium loads generally increased in all washes downstream the entire length of all washes. Notable items: Persigo Wash - Persigo wastewater plant diluted concentrations by 50%; Adobe Creek - observed higher selenium concentrations in early part of irrigation season instead of later irrigation season; Lewis Wash – changing land use over time (34% reduction/conversion of agricultural to urban lands) and salinity control program has resulted in decreased selenium and salt load since the 1970s.

5. **Proposed dates of 2008 meeting – January 24, April 17, July 17, October 16**

6. Agenda Items for January 24, 2008 meeting:
   a. Future transfers of BLM to private land use need input from STF for wise water usage to prevent selenium and salt loading
   b. Gunnison River TMDL update