

GUNNISON RIVER BASIN SELENIUM TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

April 29, 2004, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Delta Montrose Electric Association, 11925 6300 Road, Montrose, Colorado

Facilitator: Tom Peltier, Acting Gunnison River Basin Selenium Task Force Coordinator

- 1. Introductions:** Rick Krueger (USFWS), Robert Johnson (Town of Paonia), Fred Fisher (SCD, Farmer), Dave Dearstyne (NRCS), Tom Grett (Shavano CD/Farmer), Dave Kanzer (CRWCD), Aung Hla (CSU Extension), Ed Page (CSU Extension), Randy See (Western Colorado Congress), Wayne Cooley (CSU Cooperative Extension, Tri-River Area), Mike Baker (USBOR), Rick Isom (Painted Sky RC&D), Marc Catlin (UVWUA), Bob Borchardt (DCI), Andy Mitchell (City of Delta), Steve Simianer (City of Delta), Jan McCracken (Delta County Commissioner), Larry Davidson (Property Owner), Jeri Omernik (RMMC)

Steering/Technical Committee Meeting

- 2. Update on Tasks and Assignments From March Meeting** (Mike Baker): During the previous meeting, the group “brainstormed” ideas for Objectives, Tasks and Responsibilities for addressing selenium loading to the Gunnison River. Mike incorporated these ideas into an “Action Plan,” which identified five objectives: Continue Piping Irrigation Laterals; Implement Non-agricultural Best Management Practices; Encourage On-farm Efficiency Improvements in High Selenium Loading Areas; Increase Use of Soils Information, and Consider Effects of Changing Land Use. Two additional objectives, Support Water Conservation Programs, and Conduct Outreach to the Public, were identified during the meeting. As an initial priority, the group needs to shift its focus to promoting water conservation. Mike will revise the Action Plan to incorporate comments received during the meeting. These revisions will include adding columns to indicate Task Priority, and Assigned lead and Participants. The next technical meeting will focus on ironing out the details of the Action Plan and actions necessary to coordinate with other groups that are working on water conservation. Group participants suggested holding a workshop and inviting County Commissioners to encourage more involvement in water conservation. Fred Fisher offered to contribute funds from the Plant Grant to bring e to encourage more involvement in water conservation. Fred Fisher offered to contribute funds from the Plant Grant to hire experts to speak at the workshop. Dave Kanzer offered the services of the River District’s outreach person to assist in this effort. The workshop will be the second major priority for the group and will likely be scheduled sometime during this fall or winter. This effort could also be combined with activities of the Grand Valley group, though not necessarily at the same workshop.
- 3. Other Activities** (Group): The group discussed whether grant requests should include the use of pressurized piping. Marc Catlin indicated that the UVWUA’s grant application is designed to be able to convert to pressurized pipe and that no system upgrades would be necessary to convert to sprinkler irrigation. The Association considers future changes during the design phase to allow for maximum flexibility but they can not dictate irrigation practices. Demonstration projects showing the benefits of sprinkler irrigation would be a good way to encourage conservation, but funding for these demonstration projects is an issue. CSU Extension will be hosting a Field Day in Mid July at the Meaker ranch and two other projects. The Phyto-remediation Grant is winding nearing completion and Fred

Fisher is currently working on report for this program. USGS staff have been investigating infiltration rates for ponds in the area. This study includes consideration of potential benefits from lining and compacting pond bottoms. The report is expected to be completed in May. The group also considered the need for monitoring in relation major river stations and specific monitoring for projects like the Montrose Arroyo lining project and others. There is concern about how long monitoring needs to be done before projects are implemented to establish baseline conditions, and how long monitoring needs to be conducted after a project is completed. Participants suggested two to three years of baseline data prior to project implementation would be appropriate. There needs to be a distinction between monitoring of specific projects and more general water quality monitoring, such as that being conducted by the government at the Whitewater monitoring station. Participants expressed concern that the results of monitoring at Whitewater may not be representative of progress because the situation at Devil's Thumb Golf Course could possibly outweigh progress from specific projects. The group also discussed the work the USGS is planning to evaluate baseline conditions prior to construction of a new development in the Whitewater area, and the status of the Geographical Information System currently being developed by the River District. In general, the group's priorities are to focus on canal lining, outreach and education, and finding sources of funding for projects. It was noted that the Grand Valley Selenium Task Force cannot apply for grant funding because the group does not have agency status; grant funding will need to be pursued by participating agencies.

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4. **Report from Steering Committee** (facilitator, group): The Task Force was provided a brief update on the above discussion from the Steering Committee Meeting, with particular emphasis on the planned workshop.
5. **Update on Hiring New Coordinator** (facilitator, Rick Isom): Members of the group who were not already aware were informed that Sonja Chavez de Baca has been hired as the new coordinator for the Task Force. Tom thanked members of the group for working with him during the previous few months and indicated he would endeavor to make the transition as smooth as possible. Members of the group indicated that it would be advisable to conduct a meeting with Sonja prior to the next meeting to assist with this transition. The Steering Committee will be working with Sonja to provide guidance and direction.
6. **Update on Lobbying Effort for Selenium Research Funds** (facilitator, group): The group was informed that there is an on-going lobbying effort by members of the Grand Valley group and others, who have been working with Ben Nighthorse Campbell's office to seek federal funding for a five-year statewide study of selenium. This effort was prompted after the development of this year's 303(d) list, which identified 30% of river segments (90% of river miles) in the state are impacted by excessive levels of selenium, in addition to other contaminants. The group is requesting \$2,000,000 per year for five years, a total of \$10,000,000, to support this effort. The focus of the investigations would be to determine whether the selenium sources are natural or human induced, what can be done about the problem, and what studies would need to be conducted to support site specific standards for selenium. It appears unlikely that the funding request will be granted for the 2005 fiscal year, but it may be considered for the following fiscal year.
7. **Off Agenda Discussion of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)** (group) Members of the group noted that the State Department of Public Health and Environment is reportedly

developing a TMDL for selenium in the Gunnison River. It was noted that the City of Colorado Springs is developing a "plan" that may be relevant to this group. Members of the group will obtain a copy of the plan and circulate it to the group.

- 8. Best Management Practices for Golf Courses (Aung Hla):** Aung provided an update on his development of BMPs for golf courses. BMPs should be addressed during the planning and design phase of golf course development. When designing a golf course planners should take into account turf selection, irrigation system selection, water management, soils information, and other BMPs.
- 9. Landowner's Manual CD (Jeri Omernik):** Ms Omernik has developed a compact disk, which contains over 2200 pages of documents from basic water and soil data to information about water rights and various local agencies and entities involved in the area. This Landowner's CD was developed as a reference tool to assist new homeowners, particularly those on small acreages, in developing their property in an appropriate manner so that they can avoid making decisions that will result in future problems for themselves and others. The CD will be available in the near future and is expected to sell for approximately \$10-15. Fred Fisher recently revised the selenium statement for the CD.
- 10. Devils Thumb Golf Course Update (facilitator):** A subcommittee of the Gunnison River Basin Selenium Task Force has been working with staff from the City of Delta to address the issue of leaking ponds at the golf course. The subcommittee met on April 15th to discuss the issue. The group identified the need to first develop a water budget for the golf course to determine how much water is being used at the golf course and where it is going. A letter was sent from the Colorado Water Conservation Board requesting the Bureau's help using Technical Assistance to States program funding. The subcommittee will schedule its next meeting after the water budget has been completed.
- 11. Adjourn** The meeting was adjourned at 3:00