**Ark Basin Roundtable - Environmental & Recreation Committee**

**APRIL UPDATES SUMMARY**

**Monday, Apr 27, 2020**

**April Summary:**

**Ark Basin Roundtable Executive Committee Updates (from Zoom Meeting on Apr 22)**

**Ark River Watershed Collaborative (ARWC) - first budget proposal**

-Chelsea Nutter presented a draft of the very first ARWC (2020) budget to the exec committee's review.

-There were questions, comments, and discussions about the document.

-Chelsea emphasized that the document was created with a certain scope in mind as the very first budget document and reminded committee members that it's a new process and ever-evolving; Also, Covid19 will certainly have an impact on this budget moving forward.

-No vote was held to approve, but based on the comments and discussions, it will be refined for a future vote.

**Colorado State Forest Service - updating 5 year strategic plan**

-Mark Shea announced that the State Forest Service is updating their next long term strategic plan.

-Forest health and watershed health are important components of this plan which pertain to Roundtable interests.

-Basin Roundtables may be involved in reviews, or may use the info for decision-making.

-Go here for info: <https://csfs.colostate.edu/strategic-plan/>

**Technical Update and BIP Update**

-Russ Sands updated the exec committee on moving forward.

-The "Technical Update" (formerly known as Statewide Water Supply Initiative) is updated every ~10 years to reflect CO's water supply & demands for future.

-Russ went over a workshop task list describing details that will consider climate change, population changes, ag demands, etc.

-This update is still on track, timewise, but might have delays due to Covid19.

-The contractor team will adjust to virutal meetings, etc.

-Go here for info: <https://cwcb.colorado.gov/technical-update-plan>

**Purgatoire River - new Stream Management Plan proposed**

-Julie Knudsen with Purgatoire Watershed Partnership presented an idea to develop a stream management plan - a 1 to 2 year endeavor.

-From her state-wide research, she's learned that SMP's can be flexible to "fit" the watershed (no two watersheds are alike).

-Terry Scanga suggested the plan should incorporate a study to consider potential impacts to water rights (done by a qualified engineer).

-Julie is in a phase of gathering appropriate stakeholders right now. She's challenged with reaching out by phone & virtual with Covid19 impacts.

-It was agreed that both the Envi-Rec Committee and entire Ark Basin RT should be updated & involved frequently.

-Since the SMP will result in proposed projects of various types, these projects should certainly be part of the Basin Implementation Plan (BIP) update.

**Canon City High School River Science Program**

-Luke Javernick is requesting a grant from the CO Dept of Education for this program, teaching high-schoolers about water quality, field sampling, analysis.

-He was asking the Ark Basin RT for a letter of support.

-There was some discussion about the letter of support policy. It was ultimately decided to approve to provide a letter of support.

-If individual entities (water districts, municipal, etc.) would like to provide a letter, contact Luke.

-Letters are due April 30.

**Environmental - Recreation Committee Updates (April 2020)**

**Bennett Creek (Huerfano County) - ISF right decree issued on Apr 21**

-CWCB announced on Apr 21 that the Bennett Creek in-stream-flow right decree was received.

-This ISF was recommended by CPW to CWCB to protect the creek's self-producing population of brook trout.

**Pueblo Reservoir - "spill" averted**

-BOR and DWR coordinated with many ag & muni entities in Feb, Mar, & Apr and successfully avoided a "paper spill" of account water so far this year.

-CPW says the BOR has done a great job so far with keeping upper Ark River "fish flows" in the fall & spring flow ranges prescribed by the VFMP.

**Trout Unlimited - plans for Ark River Tailwater Improvements Downstream of Pueblo Reservoir**

-Dan Omasta reached out to the E/R committee this month to show TU's plans to move forward on Pueblo tailwater bank stabilization improvements.

-TU eventually intends to submit funding requests for engineering studies and work.

-Rena shared these plans with CPW aquatic bios for initial review.

-CPW aquatic bios are arranging a site visit with TU in the future to take a look at specific stream segments and needs.

-More will be known after the site visit.

-There's still questions about how and when TU would apply for CWCB funds or funding from other sources, and/or partnering with other stakeholders.

**CPW Update: Mt. Shavano Hatchery Water Studies / Salida Low Head Dam Removal**

-Background: CPW hired a contractor to analyze alternatives to bring the hatchery back to full operation (now operating at 1/3 capacity due to inability to use Ark River as source due to whirling disease.

-Looking at water sources and/or treatment options & costs.

-Contractor recently performed tests on existing wells to better understand yield potential of the aquifer.

-Next, contractors may look at how return flows from neighboring irrigation is contributing to groundwater at the hatchery.

-Once water source alternatives are recommended, CPW would eventually move forward in exploring removal of Salida Low Head Dam (a rafting safety issue).

**CPW Update: Fishers Peak State Park development (near Trinidad)**

-Biological studies, site evaluations, and planning is ongoing to prepare this property to be a State Park this year.

**CPW Update: Upper Ark Flow Forecast for Rafting Outfitters - Apr 16**

-On Apr 16, the Annual Outfitters workshop was canceled, however, CPW's John Kreski sent pertinent info via e-mail.

-CPW Engineer Jon Erickson provided a general flow forecast from NRCS - flows at Salida for summer are predicted to be about 100% of normal.

**CPW update: Great Plains Reservoirs 2020**

-Latest news is Amity Canal opted not to submit a grant request to the Ark Basin RT for Queens Dam replacement since the application process is too cumbersome. They opted to run their water to John Martin this year (mostly due to maintenance needs of Queens Dam and ditches).

-Kiowa County economic development group is still interested in talking with Amity to encourage them to find ways to get water back to the GPR's.

**Other Envi-Rec topics...**

Grape Creek / DeWeese Dye Reservoir expansion Feasibility Study - (no recent update).

Oil Creek Diversion / Ark River Canon City Improvements - (no recent update).

Hayden Creek Fire Restoration efforts (Fir in 2016, Coaldale, Fremont County)

Spring Creek Fire Restoration efforts (Fire in 2018, LaVita, Costillo & Huerfano Counties)

Decker Fire Restoration efforts (Fire in 2019, Chaffee County)

Lower Ark Valley Water Quality studies (no updates).

BLM projects

USFS projects

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Next Ark Basin Roundtable – May 13, 2020 via GoToMeeting. Watch for e-mail announcements.

Next Envi-Rec Committee Meeting - TBD

**About us:**

**Arkansas Basin Roundtable – Environmental & Recreation Committee Purpose and Goals**

**The Environmental - Recreation Committee's purpose**

- Ark Basin RT legislative directive...to propose projects or methods, structural and non-structural, to meet environmental and recreational needs.

-Constantly review Basin Implementation Plan, evaluate goals and priorities.

-Consider sustainability values (economic, social, environmental) as we evaluate environmental & recreation issues, projects, and priorities.

-Work with Needs Assessment Committee to advise on environmental and recreation priorities (but do not infringe on Needs Assessment Committee).

-Encourage environmental & recreation groups to come to this committee before approaching Needs Assessment Committee or Roundtable. This committee can aid by providing letters of support of certain projects.

-Outreach and education. Continually strive to bring awareness of past, present, and future envi & rec projects.

**Environmental - Recreation Committee structure**

-Bob Hamel (AROA), Ark Basin Roundtable At Large Recreation Rep, Chair

-Rena Brand (CPW) Vice-chair

-Amber Shanklin (Palmer Land Trust) Ark Basin Roundtable At Large Environmental Rep

-Mark Shea (CSU)(ARWC) Ark Basin Roundtable Chair

-Mike Weber (LAVWCD) Needs Committee Rep and Ark Basin Roundtable Vice Chair

-Chelsea Nutter Ark River Watershed Collaborative (ARWC)

**Difference between Non-Consumptive Committee and the Ark River Watershed Collaborative (ARWC)?**

-Discussion: ARWC is like the "operating body" or "fiscal agent" of the NC committee...

...whereas the NC committee itself is the group of experts offering advisement on projects and priorities.

**Meeting Goals**

-strive for a purpose for every meeting; provide an agenda prior to each meeting.

-set a regular schedule - last Monday of every month in Canon City (and occasional other locations).

-send out a meaningful agenda, ahead of meeting.

-emphasize all folks are welcome; grow the invite list; invite special guests for specific planned topics.

-for each month's agenda, expect agency updates from USFS, BLM, CPW, and ARWC.

-offer folks to join the meeting by telephone or web-meeting options, if needed.