

Ark Basin Roundtable - Environmental & Recreation Committee

Meeting Summary

Monday, July 29, 2019**

(**always the last Monday of the month unless otherwise noted)

10:00am – Noon, BLM Office, 3028 E. Main, Canon City

Environmental & Recreation Committee Purpose and Goals: (see end of document).

July 29, 2019 Attendees: Bob Hamel, (Envi-Rec Chair for Ark Basin RT & Ark River Outfitters Assoc), Chelsea Nutter (Ark River Watershed Collaborative Exec Director), Rena Brand (Colorado Parks & Wildlife – Water Specialist – SE Region), Amber Shanklin (Ark Basin Envi At-Large Rep & Palmer Land Trust), Julie Knudson (Purgatoire Watershed Partnership), Tyler Benton (Co Springs Utilities), Lisa Walters (Co Springs Utilities Watershed Planning), John Smeins (BLM), Ryan Bouton (PhD Student). By Phone: Jackie Brown (Tri-State Generation), Amber Weber (Ark Basin RT PEPO, DARCA), Mike Weber (Ark Basin RT Vice Chair & LAVWCD).

-We welcomed Julie Knudson with the Purgatoire Watershed Partnership (Trinidad / Las Animas County Region) to educate us on the group's goals and current issues.

Key points :

-Julie started her position in September 2018. PWP's focus is to improve the Purgatoire Watershed in the region, with **emphasis on river improvements, cleanup, infrastructure upgrades, Ag, environmental (flow needs), recreation, water quality, community involvement & education, etc.**

-Current issues are water quality (surface & groundwater) – available studies and needed studies; river cleanup, stream management planning, river hydrologic modeling studies (to better prepare for floods or determine needed Ag infrastructure upgrades).

-Other challenges include public education and outreach efforts – getting many stakeholders at the table to work together to solve problems and meet various needs. There's still a lot of divisions among stakeholders.

-Like many Colorado towns, Trinidad's tourism has increased as a result of legalized marijuana (and it being a "border" town). This has created an economic boost to the area, but also homelessness along the river... keeping up with camping enforcement & trash.

-**Fisher's Peak** – a recent agreement was reached for The Nature Conservancy and others to acquire this property south of Trinidad for conservation and recreation. This is a big deal for the community, and will likely result in a possible park, wildlife area, or other region amenity. Read more about it here:

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/explore/newsroom/agreement-reached-on-fishers-peak-crazy-french-ranch/>

-Purgatoire River “webisode” being made

-Amber Weber announced PEPO is working on a short film that features the Purgatoire watershed.

-Ark Valley Conduit

We briefly discussed a recent article in the La Junta Tribune here:

<https://www.lajuntatribunedemocrat.com/news/20190716/crowder-continues-push-for-arkansas-valley-conduit>

-Colorado Data Sharing Network (water quality data sharing website)

Mike Weber is in the process of helping develop a GIS story map related to identifying water quality studies available in the Ark Basin.

-For your awareness, here’s the current Colorado Data Sharing Network link:

<https://www.coloradowater.org/colorado-data-sharing-network>

-Agency / Organization updates (BLM, USFS, ARWC, CPW, etc.)

On June 21, **BLM announced release of Draft Eastern Plains RMP and EIS. Comments due Sep 20.** See the helpful online story map [here](#) .

-ARWC reported some big rains and minor flooding occurred in the Spring Fire area last week (near Town of La Veta), but there was no severe flooding in La Veta or Walsenburg along the Cucharas River.

-Water 101 events planned

-Chelsea, Amber W. and Kristie Nackord are working to arrange water rights 101 sessions in the basin. Stay tuned for details.

-Canon City Council Meeting on Aug 21 - Bob & Chelsea attending as an outreach effort

-to educate the council members on the Ark Basin RT, Envi-Rec Committee goals & purpose, and grant opportunities for Ark River improvements through Canon City.

-this is an outreach effort in our ongoing discussion regarding the Oil Creek diversion improvements, Black Hills property issues, and related discussions.

-Great Plains Reservoirs near Eads, CO - Chelsea, Amber W., and Rena are planning a meeting or site visit with Amity Canal to discuss Lower Queens dam replacement needs

-to help them get started on a Colorado Water Conservation Board grant application for repair/replacement of Lower Queens dam.

Many thanks to everyone’s input and feedback!

Mark your calendar:

Next Ark Basin Roundtable Meeting – Wed, Aug 14, 12:30 – 3:30, Pueblo Community College.

Next Envi-Rec Committee Meeting - Mon, Aug 26, 10:00 to Noon, BLM, Canon City

About us: Arkansas Basin Roundtable – Environmental & Recreation Committee

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.