

Basin Roundtable Education Update: 05/2010

I. Roundtable Educational Activities

Arkansas – will be hosting a series of three meetings starting in June, 2010 to update the public and local decision-makers on their needs assessments and Arkansas Basin Roundtable progress.

South Platte – hosted two full-day meetings in early 2010 to update the public and local decision-makers on their needs assessments and South Platte Basin Roundtable progress. They also funded a WSRA grant to produce a basin-specific issue of CFWE's *Headwaters* magazine to education over 6,000 people in the West.

Southwest – hosted a series of public meetings across the basin to gather input on their non-consumptive needs assessments.

Yampa/White – is hosting a series of four community workshops through a WSRA grant sponsored by the Community Agriculture Alliance to educate the public on water planning processes. They also funded a WSRA to produce a basin-specific issue of CFWE's *Headwaters* magazine to education over 6,000 people in the West.

II. Education Action Plans

As part of their current scope of work with CWCB, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education has selected six basin roundtables with which to work on educational activities. The Arkansas, Colorado, Gunnison, Metro, North Platte and Rio Grande basin roundtables will receive assistance from CFWE over the next year in forming an Education & Outreach Committee, writing an Education Action Plan, and applying for funds to implement the plan. As part of their scope of work beginning on July 1, CFWE will also be assisting the South Platte and Southwest basin roundtables with the same process.

III. Education Liaison Workshop

In July, 2009, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education and CWCB hosted an all-day education workshop for the basin roundtables' Education Liaison and Chairperson. Each roundtable in attendance was asked to give a brief overview on the past and current educational activities of their roundtable.

Colorado – RT did a series of evening town hall meetings through a CSU grant and help from the River District. There were mixed reviews on the success of these meetings as attendance was composed of water people and not too many general public members attended. Publicity for the event included press releases, email blasts, flyers and newspaper ads. The RT has an Education Committee who has been more or less active in the past year but they have no formal plan for internal education. Jim asks RT for ideas on presentations and the most informative meetings are discussion-based. Denis Reich developed a presentation to be used for public outreach (i.e. county commissioners). The committee did a rigorous review of the website's content and now they're waiting for the new site to be launched. A web link could be distributed for public outreach.

Gunnison – How do we drive traffic to the website to relay information back to the community? We need to re-tool informational tools for public outreach. The RT has been focused on educating the members and not so much on public outreach besides reporting back to their respective constituents. However, they did take the powerpoint presentation on the road to all RTs. They need to make public education relevant to what the RT is working on. They've been trying to get as much information as possible to the meetings as well as recruiting members for an education committee. The RT worked with the Colorado RT on the State of the River meeting as well as the four-RT meetings.

Metro – How do we involve the public when there isn't a water crisis? A legislator education program is needed. The RT is well educated on water issues but they need to be given the tools to bring appropriate information back to their constituents. However, they've been more focused on their needs assessment. Some are not even aware of the Ed Liaison position. We need to make it easy for RT members to give feedback on education activities. Denver Water has done a lot of outreach on conservation issues but not necessarily supply concerns. More press could be used on the RT.

North Platte – The RT has been focused on member education and has had lots of informational presentations. They are struggling with the same question – how to make the public care about water when there is no apparent crisis? The truth is that the members' and volunteers' time is stretched too thin and not having a budget is an issue. Funds should be funneled to entities that already exist and we should focus on IBCC and legislator education. The PEPO scholarships were an excellent use of funds. There have been a few elementary school programs and newspaper articles are written pro-bono. Word-of-mouth is the most successful method of publicity because the basin is so small. The website is really only used for interbasin information. The joint meetings are really valuable and they see potential for partnerships with other RTs to develop educational programs.

Rio Grande – We can tend to forget that RT members are volunteers and it's a challenge to expect people to take on additional tasks (i.e. education). They need additional money and resources to execute educational initiatives (i.e. develop travel expense account). Funding the Ed Liaison position would help motivate a more effective program. An education fund needs to be flexible for basin-specific needs. However, does the law allow funds for non-IBCC related education (i.e. general water issues)? The RT as a whole needs education on fundamental water issues to create a common knowledge level (i.e. new member orientation program). It would be helpful to get six more copies of the Director's Notebook. A bit of outreach to the local schools has been pursued but need a broad public education program (i.e. public-specific meetings) to promote public support of water issues and the RT process. The meetings are advertised on the radio and newspaper but how do we actually get the public to attend? There are not many hits on the website from the public so why spend so much money on its re-design? We need to be realistic on where to put our resources – internal education makes most sense because we already have the audience. The RT worked really hard on a list of local water contacts for the website and they're frustrated because it's still not posted.

South Platte – Agreed that more resources are necessary for comprehensive RT educational activities. The SP River Basin Tour was a great educational event to demonstrate where water comes from in their basin. There was also a group of middle school students from a CU-Denver program that took a tour of water projects in Golden. Also, the SP Headwaters issue was very well received and it would be good to tabulate Headwaters articles on particular topics.

Yampa/White – The RT is well educated on the basics and there is little turnover among members. They spend the majority of meetings on educational efforts for the needs assessments and they've had great presentations (i.e. oil shale, Flaming Gorge). There has been basically no external education besides taking meeting minutes. There was one article in the Steamboat Pilot. The Yampa public cares greatly for water issues because of the agricultural community and threats to the water supply. There's been some newspaper coverage but they need to do a better job on getting the message out.

CSU-Extension – Denis Reich has been involved with the Colorado RT on developing programs and presentations. Extension has been focused on agricultural topics and he sees the biggest disconnect between the farming community and the RT due to lack of time or even suspicions of the process.

Please contact Kristin Maharg, CFWE, with any questions at 303.377.4433 or kmaharg@cfwe.org