

**PURGATOIRE RIVER WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT  
MINUTES, THURSDAY, April 6, 2023**

**Board Meeting:** Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District monthly meeting was held on Thursday, April 6, 2023, at 7:30 P.M. City Hall Chambers, Trinidad, CO.81082

**Directors Present:**

Tom Verquer, Frank Milinazzo, Joey DeGarbo, David Philpott, Tony Paradisa, Jeremy Yoder, Jarrod Tortorelli, Joe Amato & Daryl Aubuchon

**Directors Absent:** None

**District Staff:**

Steve Kastner; General Manager, Connie Mantelli; District Secretary (Absent)

**Guests:**

Kim Falen (Corps of Engineers, Jeff Montoya (Water Commissioner), Sammie Molinaro (NRCS), Michael Yoder (Enlarged South Side Ditch, TJ Verquer (Chilili Ditch), Robert, Holden and Connor Philpott (John Flood Ditch), Clint Winter (Picketwire Ditch), Tony Arnhold (Picketwire Ditch), Rene Martinez (Regional Director to Senator Michael Bennett) and Cathy Garcia (Regional Director to Representative Lauren Boebert)

**Enterprise Account**

There was no activity to be reported at this time

**Regular Monthly Board Meeting**

Tom Verquer made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 2, 2023 meeting (as amended to correct a motion seconding error). Joe Amato seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed.

Jarrold Tortorelli made a motion to approve the Financial Statements and Cash Disbursements for the March 2023 as printed. Frank Milinazzo seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed.

**Chairman's Report:**

Chairman, David Philpott introduced guests present at the meeting.

**District Manager's Report – April 6, 2023**

Steve Kastner reported that he and David Philpott had dinner with Cathy Garcia and Rene Martinez and discussed the District operations & maintenance costs.

**A. Trinidad Reservoir and PRWCD Operations Report**

- The total content of Trinidad Reservoir on March 31 was 23,643 acre-feet. A net increase of 569 acre-feet from the end of the previous month. This net increase is due to Non-Irrigation Season storage.
- The Project Account currently contains 5,020 acre-feet. An increase during the preceding month of 432 acre-feet.
- The Model Account currently contains 2,454 acre-feet. An increase during the preceding month of 331 acre-feet.
- The Joint Use Pool currently contains 2,826 acre-feet.
- The Permanent Fishery Pool currently contains 13,342 acre-feet.
- Purgatoire River computed inflows into Trinidad Reservoir averaged 17 cubic feet per second for the month of March. The long-term average flows at this gage site for February are 25 cfs.
- March precipitation in Trinidad was 0.30 inches. Average March precipitation is 0.81 inches.
- One stock water release was made during March from the 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup>. Water was supplied from both the river and from the reservoir. The Picketwire, Baca and John Flood Ditch diverted stock water. A total of 214 acre-feet was diverted. For this Non-Irrigation Season the total is 490 acre-feet. The new Picketwire/Baca diversion dam appeared to be able to fully sweep the river flows at its location. This is an efficiency improvement for the District.

- The water commissioner also conducted a Trinidad Reservoir release for delayed return flow purposes.
- The Hoehne Ditch began irrigation on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Approximately 22 cfs is being diverted with 18 cfs being provided from Trinidad Reservoir Project Account storage. The Lewelling & McCormick Ditch also began irrigation on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 4-5 cfs is being diverted by the Lewelling & McCormick Ditch.
- Opening of the Irrigation Season for the remaining ditches and Hoehne Ditch allocation. The board voted to query the ditch companies on April 17<sup>th</sup> regarding their preference of when to begin the 2023 Irrigation Season. The board also voted to allocate a volume of water to the Hoehne Ditch storage account equal to the district's remaining contractual obligation to the Hoehne Ditch Company for the remainder of the irrigation season.
  - There was discussion to decide when the remaining ditches in the District want to start running water. It was mentioned that the longer they (the ditches) stay in storage the greater the storage amounts.
  - Joe Amato of the Picketwire said they would like to wait until closer to the end of April.
  - Tom Verquer of the Baca would like to wait until after the 15<sup>th</sup> of April or closer to the end of the month
  - Jeremy Yoder of the Enlarged South Side would like to begin close to the 20<sup>th</sup> of April: plus or minus 5 days depending on moisture
  - Tony Paradisa of the Model would like to start between April 15 & 20<sup>th</sup> depending on the weather
  - The Chilili would like to begin April 15-20<sup>th</sup> of April, depending on the weather

- o Robert Philpott suggested April 15<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup>

Tom Verquer made a motion that Steve Kastner call all of the ditches on the 17<sup>th</sup> to get a final decision. Joe Amato seconded the motion. The motion was voted upon and passed unanimously.

- Tom Verquer questioned the amount of water had been typically allocated to the Hoehne ditch.
  - o In the past, we have done as low as 3500 and up to 4,000 acre-feet or more in other years.
  - o Hoehne decision = do you want to start with stored water for everyone?

Frank Milinazzo made a motion to allocate the Hoehne their remaining amount by the 17<sup>th</sup> of April. Tony Paradisa seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed.

### **B. General Information**

The City of Trinidad has agreed to lease 500 acre-feet of fully consumable water to the District in April. A proposed lease was provided to the board for review and a decision. The board voted to approve this lease agreement. The district will complete this lease document, forward appropriate funds to the city and notify the ditch companies of the availability of this water supply. Jarrod Tortorelli made a motion to approve the signed contract for leased water with the City of Trinidad. Jeremy Yoder seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed.

The District filed its Irrigation Improvement Rules Plan for 2023 with the Division Engineer's Office on March 29<sup>th</sup>. 26 sprinkler systems are included in this plan. An increase of 2 from last year. 9 sprinklers are under the Model Canal and the remainder under the Enlarged Southside Ditch. A net return flow deficit of 71 acre-feet is projected. Invoices will be forwarded to the sprinkler system owners as per District policy next week.

A new Rubicon headgate has been installed on the Hoehne Ditch. The installation occurred on March 28 & 29th. The installation went generally as planned. This was the last ditch to receive a new headgate this winter joining the Enlarged Southside Ditch and the Model Ditch. This new Hoehne Ditch headgate began operating on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

The District is still awaiting final approval and contracting for its applied for WaterSmart grant funds for the purchase and installation of the new headgates for the Picketwire and John Flood Ditches.

Colorado Legislative Updates. Three legislative efforts were included in the board's meeting packets last month. House bill 1010 regarding high altitude snow reservoirs failed in committee. House bill 1011 concern agricultural equipment repairs is still proceeding through conference committee. The third effort to provide for stream channel restoration work was introduced yesterday (SB270). This bill would allow stream restoration project work that limited stream surface area increases of up to 8 acres per mile under a presumption of non-injury. The district board voted to forward a letter to its state legislative representatives stating its opposition to this bill. Jarrod Tortorelli made a motion for Steve Kastner to write a letter to the powers that be regarding the Stream restoration Bill. Joe Amato seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The District received its annual operations, maintenance, and replacement invoice from the Corps of Engineers on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Per this invoice this bill is due April 1. This invoice was for \$209,002. For several financial reasons of the District and the ditch companies, the District has requested on February 2<sup>nd</sup> an extension of the due date from the Bureau of Reclamation of this invoice until August 31<sup>st</sup> which date has been the due date for this invoice in recent years. The Bureau on March 8<sup>th</sup> has approved this temporary change for this year. They have also begun work on a contract modification letter to make this change formal for future years.

The District and the City of Trinidad continue discussions on the city's proposed conditional right of exchange from its WWTP upstream to Trinidad Reservoir. The city provided a new proposed

decree to the District on March 31<sup>st</sup> for review. The District will review this draft this month and provide a response to the city. The next status conference is set for April 26<sup>th</sup>.

The District filed its water court application for reasonable diligence on the remaining conditional portion of the District's Joint Use Water Storage right in Trinidad Reservoir on January 12, 2023. The case number is 23CW3000. Publication of the application occurred in February. Any statements of opposition were due by March 31. No statements of opposition were filed with the court by this deadline. This District is now awaiting the Division Engineer's Office Consultation Report which will be due by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Secretary's Report:**

Steve Kastner reported that Connie Mantelli (absent) had received the annual construction repayment invoice from the Bureau of Reclamation. Invoices have been mailed to the ditches, City of Trinidad and Colorado Parks and Recreation. The District currently has enough funds in the checking account and payment will be sent to BOR next week.

CD rates have increased. District longer term funds are currently in Money Market accounts. Certificate of Deposit rates have increased. District staff will investigate current Certificate of Deposit and Money Market rates to see if greater guaranteed investment yields can be obtained and report back to the board. Steve reported that the current CD rates in Pueblo are up to 4-5%. Chairman, David Philpott stated that the District needs to keep its banking local.

**Water Commissioner's Report:**

Jeff Montoya reported that the Division 2 office has a division wide pond evaluation effort - and it is a big concern for this district - whether it's a livestock pond or sprinkler pond. Last month Jeff mentioned that he and Ed Diemer would be evaluating what needs to be maintained or fixed throughout the district; including measurement structures. They will be working with each ditch president to accomplish this.

75-acre feet of delayed return flow was released. This water goes to the stream, passes the District. CPW and the City of Trinidad, when they converted water rights, went through a big assessment. They came up with a 10% value. This water has to pass the Hoehne dam, then it is available for diversion.

**Corp of Engineers:**

Kim Falen reported that the annual inspection for the Corps had taken place on March 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

New crack gauges will be installed into the dam in the coming months.

New land use classifications will be implemented. Should be decided at the next COE meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Trinidad Dam is set to receive another \$7 million coming next year. These funds will be used for further rip-rap installation on the dam face.

Kim announced that a natural resource management staff member is to be hired soon.

**City of Trinidad:**

No One present

**Purgatoire Watershed Project**

Julie Knudsen requested both a letter of support and up to \$15,000 of funding support from the District for the Baca/Picketwire Ditch proposed ditch lining project. After discussion this support and funding request was approved by the board.

**Other Business:**

Jeremy Yoder presented some ideas for board discussion regarding irrigation water efficiency.

- He would like the District to be thinking about different ways that we could be more efficient
- Items that Jeremy feels that could be addressed in the District
  - o Head stabilization pond related to the Hoehne Ditch

- o The running of the stock water in winter
  - Believe he wants stock water to be allocated?
  - This year - ran 100% of available water as stock water.
  - He feels like there are better ways to incentivize stock water use.
  - He says the water is supposed to be distributed equitably.
  - The original Bureau of Reclamation studies for the project referenced a 5 cfs livestock diversion rate limit for the non-irrigation season?
  - Jeremy's point is that people should choose whether want to use water for crops or stock, and should pay for any water they take?
  - Tony says that ditches and pond entrance points need to be clean before stock water runs if people are taking stock water.
  - Frank pointed out that stockwater supplies to the Picketwire Ditch are very important as there is limited groundwater and no river frontage available to those shareholders.
  - Jared pointed out that stock water operations would not change, the only thing that would get changed is how stock water is charged. Because right now the whole district gets charged for stock water, but not everyone takes stock water. So the people who DO take stock water should get charged for stock water.
  
- o Water wasting and efficiency - what can we do to become more efficient

Jeremy Yoder made a motion to have Julianne Woldridge look into the legalities of district stockwater allowances and allocations and of changing how stock water is charged to the ditches. Tony Paradisa seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed.



Tom Verquer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tony Paradisa seconded the motion. The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 4, 2023 at 7:30 pm.

---

**Connie Mantelli, Secretary**