

**PURGATOIRE RIVER WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT  
MINUTES, THURSDAY, September 7, 2023**

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

**Directors Present:**

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

**Directors Absent:**

**District Staff:**

Steve Kastner; General Manager, Connie Mantelli; District Secretary

**Guests:** Michael Yoder (Enlarged SouthSide), Julie Knudson (PWP), TJ Verquer (Chilili Ditch), Kim Falen (Corps of Engineers)

**Enterprise Account**

Connie Mantelli reported that there were 3 deposits and one debit for the Enterprise Account for the month of August. Frank Milinazzo made a motion to accept the report. Tom Verquer seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

**Board Meeting Minutes & Cash Disbursements**

Tom Verquer made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 2023 meeting. Jarrod Tortorelli seconded the motion which was voted upon and passed.

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

**Chairman's Report:**

Nothing to report at this time.

**NRCS :**

Sammie Molinaro was not present at the meeting but he sent copies of the most current Snotel Report for each of the PRWCD Board members and attendees.

Steve Kastner reported that there was a total of 26.5 inches of rain at Whiskey Creek accumulation to date. There was 5.7" in August.

**District Manager's Report – September 7, 2023**

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

- The total content of Trinidad Reservoir on August 31st was 18,403 acre-feet. A net decrease of 2,927 acre-feet from the end of the previous month. This net decrease in storage is principally due to Irrigation Season storage releases to meet crop irrigation demands.
- The Project Account currently contains 1,725 acre-feet. A decrease from the preceding month of 2,748 acre-feet.
- The Model Account currently contains 40 acre-feet. A decrease from the preceding month of 18 acre-feet. This account is empty except for this remaining 40 acre-feet which is owned by the River Canyon Ranch.
- The Joint Use Pool currently contains 3,628 acre-feet. A net increase of 316 acre-feet, which increase is principally due to City of Trinidad's storage of its changed John Flood Ditch and Model Canal water rights.
- The Permanent Fishery Pool currently contains 13,006 acre-feet.
- Purgatoire River flows for the month of August averaged 47 cfs at the PURMADCO stream gage. Historically August flows average 116 cfs.

- The District remains in Project Administration. Most District ditches continue to receive at least some direct flow river waters. The Model Canal and Southside Ditch are essentially out of stored Project Account waters. Due to the low level of river flows, no water is currently being required to be passed to water rights located below the District area.
- Hoehne Ditch Irrigation Season diversions through August total 4,162 acre-feet. The District's remaining obligation to the Hoehne Ditch is 736 acre-feet. The Hoehne Ditch's storage account currently contains 792-acre feet. 490 acre-feet of water was transferred from the Hoehne Ditch's storage account to the other Project Account ditches during August.
- District sprinkler systems have diverted 1,600 acre-feet of water through July. Lagged return flow deficits through July total 71 acre-feet. This value is higher than modeled. The majority of replacement obligations continue to be made by use of reusable irrigation return flows from District ditches. It is anticipated that these reusable lagged return flows will provide for the majority of the remaining return flow obligations through the rest of the irrigation season and into the winter/spring period.

#### **B. Certification of Valuation - Las Animas County Assessor**

The Las Animas County Assessor provided the District with its preliminary certification of values of properties within the District. This valuation totals approximately 11% greater than last year's valuation. District property tax revenues however are uncertain at this time due to Proposition HH to be on the November ballot. The District plans to confer with the assessor prior to submitting a proposed budget to the board next month.

#### **C. General Items**

##### Stock Water Policy

Following this summer's Stock Water Committee recommendations, the General Manager has drafted a Non-Irrigation Season Stock Water

policy and has submitted this draft policy to the board for review. It was suggested that the District provide this draft policy to the District ditches this month for their review. Any comments from the Ditches can be provided to the board at its regular October meeting prior to approval of this policy.

City of Trinidad August Water Lease to the District

Of the 500 acre-feet of water that the District leased from the City of Trinidad, only 245 acre-feet has been leased from the District-by-District ditches. The general manager suggested that the remaining ditches be given a last notice to lease this water, or this remaining water will be allocated to other District ditches who may want the water. Alternatively, the District could retain some of this water as unallocated for use or allocation next Irrigation Season. Tom Verquer made a motion that the remaining ditches that have not paid be given a deadline of one more week to pay for leased water (September 14, 2023). After that day the remaining leased water will be re-allocated and offered for purchase from any ditches in the District. Jeremy Yoder seconded the motion, which was voted upon and passed unanimously.

Trinidad Reservoir Joint Use Pool Water Storage Right

The Water Court Referee signed the District's proposed ruling in its continuing diligence application for the remaining 2,810,97 acre-feet of conditional water in its 39,000-acre-foot Joint Use Pool water storage right in case no. 23CW3000. Pursuant to statute this ruling is subject to a 20-day protest period after which final approval of the case may be decreed by the Water Court judge. This final decree is expected during September.

City of Trinidad Conditional Right of Exchange (21CW3083)

The District provided another round of comments and a redlined ruling to the City of Trinidad regarding its Water Court application for a conditional right of exchange from the city's WWTP location upstream to Trinidad Reservoir. Final points are being discussed regarding the city's water right priority relative to its contractual obligation not to interfere with District operations. The time for this case to be in front of the court referee has expired. The case has been rereferred to the court judge and is now scheduled for a July 2024 trial.

Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Grant

The District has provided all information requested by the Bureau of Reclamation in the process of approving the District's application for partial funding of three new automatic headgates. The District is now waiting for cultural and environmental approval for the project from the BOR. All other funding for this project is in place. Rubicon personnel are scheduled to inspect the subject ditches later this month for confirmation of the specific gate models to be ordered and recommended construction work. Rubicon personnel are also scheduled to replace one of the sensors on the Model Canal headgate this month. The existing sensor is not functioning for the very low end of flows through this canal.

A final fiscal report was also provided to the board regarding the final costs of the completed first phase of the District's automatic headgate project. Final costs of Phase I were \$155,616 which was 4.7% over the original budgeted amount.

#### Acreage Verification Field Work

District staff has been conducting its annual acreage verification inspections during August and September. The majority of this work has been completed. Completion is anticipated later this month.

#### Federal Legislation

Proposed federal legislation regarding District financial issues has been drafted. This draft has been reviewed by congressional legal staff. Introduction of a bill is expected later this year.

#### Trinidad Project Operating Principles Annual Meeting

The annual Trinidad Project Operating Principles review meeting is scheduled for November 3<sup>rd</sup> in Trinidad. The District anticipates making a presentation regarding District operations and other activities during the 2023 Irrigation Year.

#### **Secretary's Report:**

Connie Mantelli reported that she paid the annual Operations & Maintenance bill due to the Bureau of Reclamation. All but one of the ditches in the District have paid their portion of the O&M to the District Office.

One PRWCD board position is due for appointment. Applications must be submitted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial Court no later than October 1, 2023. Connie will be placing a public notice in the local newspaper for publication September 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> notifying the public of the position in Sub-Division 4 (New John Flood. Ms. Mantelli notified the board that the health insurance provided by the District to the office manager will be have a rate increase beginning January 1, 2024. Connie and Steve will begin working on the 2024 draft budget soon. Connie reminded the Board that due to the end of irrigation season ending, the PRWCD board meetings will begin at 7:00 pm beginning October 5, 2023. Connie asked the Board members to start thinking of a venue to have our Purgatoire River Water Conservancy District Board Christmas dinner so that she can make a reservation.

**Water Commissioner's Report:**

There was no one present.

**Corp of Engineers:**

Kim Falen had nothing to report at this time. She had flyers available for the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the John Martin Reservoir to be held on October 21, 2023.

**City of Trinidad:**

No one present

**Purgatoire Watershed Project**

Julie Knudson had nothing to report at this time.

**Other Business:**

Tom Verquer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Daryl Aubuchon seconded the motion. The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for October 5, 2023 at 7:00 pm.at Trinidad City Hall Chambers.

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**Connie Mantelli, Secretary**