

Flaming Gorge Task Force Situation Assessment Report

May 2011

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Background

- Funding: WSRA grants through the Arkansas Basin Roundtable and Metro Roundtables
- Goal: Talk to stakeholders and determine if a stakeholder dialogue is viable
- Leadership: 5-person Executive Committee, directing our assessment/interview process, representing Ark, Metro, CO, and Yampa/White/Green Roundtables and the CO Water Institute at CSU
- Respondents: 48 phone interviews and 32 online survey responses



Brief Overview of Results

- Most respondents support having a dialogue, but some have reservations.
- Opinions vary widely regarding the appropriate role of the State, the IBCC, and CWCB.
- A majority of respondents want to be at the table.
- Most respondents want State and federal regulatory agencies in the room but not at the table.
- Opinions vary about whether a stakeholder process should seek agreement or just explore issues and ideas.
- Most respondents also think there is merit in stakeholders discussing Yampa Pumpback and Blue Mesa.



Recommendations: Overview

- Free-standing stakeholder dialogue
- Neutral, professional facilitation
- 17 individuals on the decision-making “Core Group”
- Seek CWCB endorsement and Board member participation
- Regulatory agencies, project proponents, and others participate as “resources” but not at the table
- Three-stage process, with decision to proceed or not at the end of each stage



Recommendations: Core Group

- 4 from potential water-receiving project beneficiaries from geographically diverse areas from the Front Range
- 2 from the Yampa/White/Green Basin
- 2 from the environmental community (Front Range & West Slope)
- 1 from the recreational community
- 1 from the Colorado River Water Conservation District
- 2 from the ranching/farming community (Front Range & West Slope)
- 2 from other basins or roundtables
- 1 from the Colorado Water Conservation Board staff
- 1 from the Colorado Department of Natural Resources
- The Governor's Advisor on Water Policy / Director of Compact Negotiations (or his designee)



Recommendations: Phases

- Phase 1: Identify interests related to a possible Flaming Gorge project
 - Seek agreement on interest list
 - Determine whether to proceed to Phase 2
- Phase 2: Discuss whether there are any legal, hydrological, financial, or other threshold barriers
 - Seek agreement on whether there are threshold barriers or on range of views regarding threshold barriers
 - Determine whether to proceed to Phase 3



Recommendations: Phases

- Phase 3: Discuss benefits and concerns; identify criteria or components of a project
 - Seek agreement on a list of necessary or preferred criteria, characteristics, or components of a Flaming Gorge project
 - Prepare final report
- NOTE: The process would not seek stakeholder agreement about whether to build a Flaming Gorge project or which such project should be built.



Additional Recommendations

- Early and regular discussions with basin roundtables and stakeholder groups—at the beginning of each phase and then as appropriate
- Consensus-based decision making
- First Core Group decisions:
 - How to fund the process (WSRA grants, contributions, mix, or other approach)
 - Who should facilitate the process



Next Steps

Based on the advice of the Executive Committee and with the support of the Arkansas and Metro Roundtables (and using remaining WSRA funds in grant account):

1. Develop list of criteria for CG members
2. Solicit nominations for CG members
3. Interview nominees
4. Select 14 non-State CG members and coordinate with State regarding 3 State CG members
5. Convene initial CG meetings to determine how to proceed re timing, funding, facilitation, protocols, etc.



Questions?