



## **THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE**

### **Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley**

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: [rotary.org](http://rotary.org) [rotary5470.org](http://rotary5470.org) [northforkrotary.org](http://northforkrotary.org)

**Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall**

**District 5470**

**Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22**

**Vol 59 Issue 33 - October 22, 2020**

**LAST MEETING: October 15, 2020 (via Zoom)**

President Campbell presided.

Visiting Rotarians: Peter Jeschofnig (Glenwood Springs)

Other Guests: None

Key Guest: No key guest

(Annette now has the key).

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- We had a 52% turnout for the Zoom meeting today.
- The question of when we may resume in-person meetings came up. Since Covid-19 infections are increasing in Delta County at the present time, and it will soon be too cold to meet outside (the only safe way to meet), the consensus was that it was too soon to consider meeting in person.
- The Rotary Club signs to install at the highway entrances to Hotchkiss and Crawford have been received. The Crawford welcome sign is being refurbished, so the Rotary sign will go up when that work is done. An installer for the other signs has been identified.
- Friends of Gueoul received \$575 from the Kids Pasta Project.
- Senior Connections Fall Service Saturday to be held on November 7<sup>th</sup>. Meet in Town Park. "Pods" that consider themselves Covid-safe around one another will work as teams. Only outside work will be done. It is not currently considered safe to go into members' houses. Call 527-3482 or email [nfseniorconnections@gmail.com](mailto:nfseniorconnections@gmail.com) for more information or to sign up.
- The annual District Governor's visit is scheduled for October 29<sup>th</sup>. This is a 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday, so unclear if there will be a regular noon meeting to meet with Chip and then a 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday evening meeting, or perhaps Chip will be able to join the evening meeting. More details to come.
- Highway Cleanup scheduled for Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Will begin delivering dictionaries to the third graders around the beginning of November.
- If the Club would like to sponsor an exchange student for year '21-'22, we would need to let them know by November 20, 2020. Contact Greg if you are interested.
- No North Fork Children's Christmas Party this year. Gift bags will be distributed to the children instead along with a frozen pizza for the family. Wrapping will be done by invitation at Memorial Hall in groups of 20 or so, multiple shifts. Contact Pam for more information.
- Committee Chairmanship positions available for:
  - Public Relations Committee. Facebook familiarity (or willingness to learn) would be helpful.

- Fundraising Committee. Ideas for non-contact fundraising needed. Contact Pam or Randy.
- Anyone wishing to take over as Newsletter Editor is welcome to do so. Contact a Board Member.

**PROGRAM: Local Water Update and Colorado Water Compact  
Water Commissioner Luke Reschke**

Kevin introduced Water Commissioner Luke Reschke. He is a graduate of Paonia High School and then from Mesa State with a degree in music. He taught choir at Delta High School and Middle School for three years before taking a job as water commissioner in 2008. He has been learning on the job ever since, and said that he has learned the importance of water in people’s lives, and come to the realization that people will fight over water when they won’t fight over anything else. It changes people, he says.

Mr. Reschke began with an explanation of what a Water Commissioner does. He works for the State of Colorado’s Division of Water Resources, under the Department of Natural Resources. As Water Commissioner, he reports to the Division Engineer out of Montrose as his “hands and feet”. The Division Engineer is responsible for the entire Gunnison River Basin and all of its tributaries as well as the San Miguel. Mr. Reschke said he is responsible for the Paonia/Hotchkiss area and supervises four other Water Commissioners, with responsibility from McClure Pass to the Mesa County line as well as out toward Crawford.

A primary responsibility of the Water Commissioners is to administer the priority system. They also keep diversion records for the larger structures and a bunch of small ones. The water of Colorado belongs to the people of Colorado, who have a right to know what is being done with that water. The Commissioners also act as consultants for the Colorado Water Court, which decides on issues of water rights, such as applications for new water rights. There is also a Well Commission and a Dam Safety Branch, as well as a Hydrography Branch with responsibility for measuring water, mostly in the rivers. Providing information to the public and assisting in water disputes are additional responsibilities of the Water Commissioners.

**Local Water Update:**

This last year was a bad one for water, but not as bad as 2018. There was no monsoon this year or last (a “non-soon”). The snow pack water, while reasonable, largely soaked into the ground due to the previous dry year and not as much made into the reservoirs and ditches. On an average year, the North Fork river will produce 295,000 acre/feet of water (at Somerset). This year it produced 142,000 acre/feet (48% of normal).

- The Fire Mountain Ditch ran until July 28 in 2018. Last year they ran until October 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year they were done on August 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Stewart Ditch ran until July 30<sup>th</sup> in 2018. Last year they ran as long as they wanted to (middle of October). This year they made it until August 20<sup>th</sup>.
- The Farmers Ditch was cut down to their senior rights in 2018, but not this year.
- The Paonia Ditch generally starts the call, when the river does not provide enough water for the needs of the users of this ditch. In 2018, the Paonia Ditch called on June 14<sup>th</sup> (the earliest ever). In 2019, the call was on August 14<sup>th</sup>. This year the call was on June 29<sup>th</sup>.
- In 2018, the Minnesota Canal was completely done on June 14<sup>th</sup>, reservoir and all. Last year they made it until September 23<sup>rd</sup>. This year they made it until July 9<sup>th</sup>.

Water rights are “called” when there is insufficient water in the river to satisfy everyone’s needs. Before the call, anyone can take water out of the river, even those without a decree. As the water available decreases, users are shut off by order of seniority of their rights.

## The Colorado Compact:

The big concern on the Colorado River is that there will be a point where there is not sufficient water in the Colorado to satisfy the requirements of the Colorado Compact to provide water to the Lower Basin. A minimum flow, on a 10-year running average, is one of the requirements. So far, it has not dropped below the required flow. A second requirement is a certain elevation of water in Lake Powell (required to supply hydroelectric power from the dam). Work is being done to pro-actively prepare for the day when these requirements cannot be met. The risk is currently low, in the 10%-20% range, that one of these requirements cannot be met. But water consumption is only growing, while climate change is working to reduce the amount of water available in the river. A call on the water from the Lower Basin users would have a significant effect on water rights in the Upper Basin.

Mitigation measures include developing a cushion of water in Lake Powell to meet water obligations in drought years as well as cloud seeding to encourage rainfall. Invasive vegetation is also being removed along the river banks to increase available water that the plants would otherwise consume. There is also some water stored in the larger reservoirs in the state that can be called to release water down to Lake Powell. Finally, some trials are underway with Demand Management wherein some farmers voluntarily fallow their fields temporarily, for compensation, to provide additional water for Lake Powell.

The Colorado Compact was enacted in 1922, so it does not affect water rights more senior than 1922. This includes most of the major ditches in the North Fork. 90% of the water used in the Gunnison River Basin is exempt from being called as a result of the Colorado Compact. The main water that would be affected is in the Colorado main stem, including a lot of water that is currently diverted to the Eastern Slope for domestic use.

## Q and A

Q: How much time do you spend on irrigation issues versus domestic water issues?

A: 90% of the time is spent on irrigation issues.

Q: Has work on Overland Reservoir changed the flow of water into the creeks.

A: No changes have been made to the release structure from the reservoir, but work is being done on the measurement apparatus.

Q: Where does the money to compensate farmers for fallowing their fields as part of Demand Management come from?

A: Not sure, but probably coming from those who would be hurt the most – Eastern Slope interests. Nothing is currently in place except some pilot projects, so the details have yet to be worked out.

Q: What is being done to protect the river itself and the fish, etc. that depend on it?

A: Nothing can be done about the larger diversions that have been drying up the river for years. However, the Colorado Water Conservation Board can obtain water rights for an in-stream flow for environmental purposes. Most of these rights are so junior, however, as to do little good. Environmental groups can obtain senior water rights by purchasing land that includes them, which can in turn be applied to more effective in-stream flows.



**UPCOMING MEETING PROGRAMS:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Member</b>
10/22/20		Polio Update Video	Bill Bishop
10/29/20		Fifth Thursday	
11/5/20	Mary Marshall	Solar Forward Project	Sarah Bishop
11/12/20			Norm Lewark
11/19/20			Nick Lypps
11/26/20		Thanksgiving	
12/3/20			Randy Campbell
12/10/20			Annette Choszczyk
12/17/20			John Coombe
12/24/20		Christmas Eve	
12/31/20		New Years Eve	
1/7/21			Susie Coombe
1/14/21			Glenn Dahlgren
1/21/21			Marsha Grant

