

tance of water attorney Rick Fendel and legislative liaison Dick Brown. The main thrusts of the presentation were streamlining of water permitting, giving appropriate credit to existing successful conservation and reuse projects already completed, the need to allow direct potable reuse as a part of integrated resource planning, and funding for agricultural irrigation enhancement. The final version of the authority’s comments will be submitted to the Colorado Water Conservation Board by Sept. 17.

Petersen reported that due to much higher than average precipitation that is projected to last through spring, the Pueblo Reservoir may become completely filled. Donala’s annual “if and when available” water storage contracts for its Willow Creek Ranch surface water rights have the lowest priority. Willow Creek Ranch is located just southwest of Leadville, upstream of the reservoir.

If the Pueblo Reservoir is still full next spring due to higher winter precipitation, once the snow melt starts in April there may be no storage available for Donala to use due to its relatively low water storage right priority. In this event, Donala’s 2016 surface water rights that can’t be leased may be lost downstream because there would be no room for Donala’s new 2016 snow melt water in the reservoir as surface water that flows into the reservoir has to be “spilled”/released back to the Arkansas River to prevent a reservoir over flow.

Petersen said he and the staff are looking into options for taking credit for water returns now for future years. It appears that selling some of the stored water to other Pueblo Reservoir customers with higher priority water storage rights may violate the terms of their contracts with the federal Bureau of Reclamation that only allow reservoir storage of water obtained from owned surface water rights, not spot market purchases. Another new difficulty he noted was that the spot sale market for extra water to agricultural interests has dried up and that the other reservoirs upstream and downstream of Pueblo Reservoir are “relatively full.”

Petersen noted that the district’s 2015 seasonal water right allocation for storing Willow Creek Ranch renewable surface water in the reservoir would expire at the end of August and Donala had “taken credit for as much as we can. We currently have roughly 350 acre-feet of storage in Pueblo Reservoir.” Donala’s recent water court decree

allows a rolling average use of 280 acre-feet per year over a 38-year period. Calculations of Donala’s 38-year rolling average began in 2012. Donala’s usage of fully consumable renewable surface water to date from Willow Creek Ranch has been 180 acre-feet in 2012, 280 acre-feet in 2013, and 345 acre-feet for 2014. Peterson said that Donala has requested a long-term contract from the bureau for 499 acre-feet of storage, a very small fraction of the Pueblo Reservoir’s 250,000 acre-feet total capacity.

Petersen gave high praise for the maintenance and repair work done by Donala staff members Mark Parker, JR Vialpando, and Troy Vialpando at Willow Creek Ranch during the week of July 20. “Mark, Troy, and JR are animals. You wouldn’t believe how hard they work. They’re starting at 6:30 and getting done about 5:30 and working through lunch. I was totally impressed.”

Petersen said he and Judd would attend the Sept. 23-25 annual Special District Association conference in Keystone.

Petersen, Rick Fendel, and water engineer Katie Fendel attended a Pueblo County Commission meeting on the impacts of stormwater on Aug. 14. The Pueblo commissioners indicated that they are considering a hearing to

review Colorado Springs compliance with the conditions of their 1041 permit to Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) for its Southern Delivery System (SDS), which Donala would use for transporting its Pueblo Reservoir water, if Colorado Springs and El Paso County do not meet their financial demands for high long-term stormwater control funding. Donala’s drinking water permit for SDS transport is not being processed by Pueblo County while this stormwater controversy remains unresolved.

Note: Donala’s stored renewable surface water is currently pumped north from within the Pueblo Reservoir in existing CSU pipes to a CSU water treatment plant. This treated water is then pumped through another existing CSU water main to a connection with the Donala distribution system at the south end of the district for direct delivery to Donala’s customers.

The meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Sept. 17 in the district conference room at 15850 Holbein Drive. Meetings are normally held on the third Thursday of the month. Information: 488-3603 or www.donalawater.org.

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Four from Wescott fight wildfires in CA

By Jennifer Green-Lanchoney

As a haze settles over Monument, it is a sharp reminder that much of the West continues to be ravaged by wildfires. Wescott has joined firefighters across the nation by deploying four firefighters to help maintain several lightning-sparked fires in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in Northern California.

“Deployments are a great opportunity to help other fire departments in other areas, and it’s an invaluable training experience for our Wescott firefighters to bring back to the local community,” said Wescott Fire Chief Vinny Burns.

Wescott firefighters are now on their way home after several weeks working to contain the River Complex fire.

According to a National Fire Service press release, crews in Northern California have now shifted their focus from fire suppression to repairing damage to roads and assessing erosion mitigation.

Wescott was able to provide support at no cost to the fire district with no loss of service, added Burns. All



Above: Wescott firefighters help with fire suppression at a wildfire in Northern California. *Photo courtesy of Donald Wescott Fire Protection District.*

expenses are reimbursed directly from the state. □

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Aug. 26

Wage schedule updated; I-25 tanker truck fire fought

By Lisa Hatfield

At the Aug. 26 meeting, the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) directors voted to restructure the wage schedule for district staff and to contract with a consulting firm for guidance on a possible 2016 levy vote. They also recognized the promotion of Lieutenants Maurice Ayala and Micah Coyle and discussed the wages in comparable districts in Colorado. The directors heard accounts of the tanker truck fire on I-25 that TLMFPD helped fight this afternoon.

Director Larry Smith was absent.

New wage schedule adopted

Fire Chief Chris Truty presented the directors with an updated wage schedule designed to address both actual wages and the differentials in wages between ranks or positions. He said the current schedule had no logic or rationale, but that the proposed new schedule justified the differences in responsibilities among positions. The new schedule, which was constructed with input from Local 4319 of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) union, sets a base rate starting with Firefighter I, and every position from there builds using a formula. The schedule also would now provide extra dollar amounts to be added for paramedics and engineers who maintain their certifications.

Truty said that no employee will have his current salary reduced to accommodate the formula. Instead, the memo read, “if an employee’s current salary is more than the formula salary, his formula will be frozen (or nominal increase) until formulaic pay reaches current pay. This means a multi-year transition process for that rank or individual.”

The board voted unanimously to approve the new wage schedule.

Comparable wages discussed

Truty presented the directors with comparisons of the district’s wages to other similar districts in the state. Staff research determined that there were four districts with characteristics similar to TLMFPD. Analyzing these district’s wage rates, as well as considering 75 percent of the wage rates of Colorado Springs and Castle Rock departments, would help TLMFPD set a target wage rate, Truty said.

“Right now we are 22 percent below average wage with these six districts,” Truty told the directors.

The consensus of the directors was that the long-term goal would be to “try to get our wages up to realistic,” as Treasurer John Hildebrandt summarized.

Consulting firm hired

Truty reminded the directors how future capital requirements and operational needs of the district have been compared to projected revenues over the next five years with the result being a significant shortfall. “The district’s executive staff and union leadership have concluded that the identified needs far outweigh our existing ability to fund them and that a levy increase is necessary,” Truty said.

Paul A. Hanley, senior vice president of George K. Baum and Co., presented an overview of the strategies his consulting company could provide the district to have a better chance of success in a future election. For example, they could make recommendations about the timing of the election, since this affects the demographics of the voters who participate, and whether a bond or mill levy would have the best chance of successful approval by district

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