



# RIO GRANDE BASIN ROUNDTABLE NEWSLETTER

VOL 1 . ISSUE 1

SANTA MARIA RESERVOIR. PHOTO: KEITH HOLLAND

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## WELCOME!

For more information on the Rio Grande roundtable, visit [rgbrt.org](http://rgbrt.org)

## GENERAL NEWS

Hi All,

Welcome to the inaugural Rio Grande Basin RT Newsletter! We hope this newsletter is a source that keeps you updated on current events and general information regarding the Rio Grande Roundtable.

We see this as a platform for sharing projects our basin has funded or is currently involved in. Additionally, we will share links and articles we find that pertain to the RGBRT.

As we continue to publish this newsletter, let us know what questions or comments you have, and what you want more information on. We'll talk to the experts and find you your answers!

Thank you for your participation in the Rio Grande Roundtable.

Sincerely,  
RGBRT Members

## NEXT MEETING:

October 11, 2016  
2 pm  
623 Fourth St  
Alamosa, CO 81101

## UPCOMING EVENTS, MEETINGS AND TOURS:

October 8 - Congreso de Acequias, San Luis, CO | 8:00 am registration  
October 18 - Rio Grande Water Conservation District Board Meeting, 8805 Independence Way  
Alamosa, CO 81101 | 10:00 am  
October 19 - Prairie Ditch Project Tour, Meet in the Monte Vista Coop parking lot at 2:00 pm |  
Please see invitation for details.

## TIPTON VISITS THE RIO GRANDE

Helen Smith

On August 17th, 2016, Congressman Scott Tipton visited the Rio Grande Basin! The Congressman was given a tour of Rio Grande Reservoir by CWCB Basin Representative, Travis Smith along with San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District Manager, Heather Dutton.

The tour party met at the San Juan Ranch where a joint meeting of Mineral and Hinsdale County Commissioners was also being held.

A test site plot for replanting of trees that is a part of recovery efforts in the aftermath of the West Fork Complex Fire was the first stop. Dutton described the process that the Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team (RWEACT) went through to bring the effort about. Dutton was the lead for Natural Resources Team and was largely responsible for spearheading this effort. Most notably, approval had to be secured from the US Forest Service. Once the approval was granted, an extensive process of mulching and replanting began. As result, new life is now being seen on a fire-scarred landscape three years later. Progress is now even better than expected.

Next came a stop at River Hill, an outlook point below Rio Grande Reservoir that is an example of the extent of the damage that occurred in 2013.

Most notably, the tour visited Rio Grande Reservoir. Smith briefed Congressman Tipton on the Rio Grande Cooperative Project and the Slope Liner project along the dam that was also completed in 2013. Tipton was also made aware of the changes that have taken place within RWEACT since the fire including the obtainment of non-profit status. There was much that was seen on the trip in a very short amount of time. Tipton was very pleased all that he saw and heard and commended those involved.

The event concluded with Travis Smith presenting the proposed scope of work for Phase Two of the Rio Grande Cooperative Project along with the Congressman addressing the joint meeting of the commissioners. The visit was deemed a success. ■

## UPDATE ON FUNDING

CWCB

**Basin Account Balance:**  
\$345,156

**Statewide Account Balance:**  
\$2.18 Million

To learn more about the Water Supply Reserve Account Grant (WSRA) funding, visit:

<http://www.rgbrt.org/wsra-grants.html>



The group discusses important collaborative projects, with Congressman Tipton (second from right), taking place in the headwaters of the Rio Grande. Photo: Helen Smith.



Rio Grande Reservoir. Photo: Helen Smith.

## LINK TO ARTICLES, RADIO SPOTS AND VIDEO VIGNETTES:

Please visit <http://www.rgbrt.org/education-and-outreach.html>

## SANTA MARIA RESERVOIR COMPANY CELEBRATES

Helen Smith

Reservoirs have long since been an integral part of San Luis Valley. They have played a huge role in water administration and flood control. Reservoirs are a part of sustaining a way of life for southern Colorado and beyond. The Santa Maria Reservoir Company has been a part of this role since 1946. On August 5th, an open house was held at the headquarters of Santa Maria Reservoir to celebrate the contributions that both Santa Maria and Continental Reservoirs have given to the San Luis Valley and its people. They are a part of history.

As the owners of both Santa Maria and Continental Reservoirs, the Santa Maria Reservoir Company supplies irrigation water to four counties in the San Luis Valley including Rio Grande, Saguache, Costilla and Alamosa for Irrigation Division No. 3. In addition, Rio Grande Compact Water, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy Water District water, Colorado Parks and Wildlife water, Trans-Mountain Water, and water for Sub-district No.1 is stored at both Santa Maria and Continental.



Santa Maria Reservoir. Photo: Keith Holland.

The initial design for Continental came in 1911 and then the dam was redesigned and constructed between 1925 and 1928. In 1910, Santa Maria Reservoir was built into an old volcanic crater. Both were intended to have storage and distribution capabilities. Ninety percent of the water from both reservoirs goes to the Rio Grande Canal. Santa Maria Reservoir Company has 5,400 shares of stock which are owned by 225 stockholders, the majority of which is split into groups of 10. All together, the Santa Maria Reservoir Company services nearly 70,000 acres of San Luis Valley farmland. Santa Maria and Continental are resources that many depend on for continuing their livelihood. Every drop stored has become even more critical in drought years.

A new chapter for SMRC began in 2007 with age generating a need for repairs to both Santa Maria and Continental and necessitating the Santa Maria Reservoir Company Rehabilitation Initiative. Though this initiative, funding was obtained from the Water Supply Reserve Account for the purpose of conducting hydraulic and hydrologic analysis. The URS Corporation was contracted to conduct the engineering study. These studies identified the deficiencies that were present

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in the Continental dam and spillway and the Santa Maria conveyance system. Solutions to these findings were also addressed along with. URS evaluated the potential dam safety issues that existed at Continental and focused on the seepage occurring on the dam's left abutment. This is an issue that has caused storage restrictions to be put on Continental Reservoir. The State of Colorado has imposed a storage limitation at Continental for twenty with only 15,000 acre feet being stored when the designed capacity is 26,716 acre feet. As a result, Continental Reservoir has been operating with a storage deficiency nearly at 12,000 acre feet.

**WANT MORE INFORMATION ON THE ROUNDTABLE OR WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED?**

**VISIT:** [RGBRT.org](http://RGBRT.org) or email [Info@RioGrandeHeadwaters.org](mailto:Info@RioGrandeHeadwaters.org)

Let us know what you want to see in the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable Newsletter!

Now, after two years of construction in 2014 and 2015, the refilling process has begun. Everyone involved in the work that has taken place is hopeful that this project will be deemed satisfactory and that the restriction will finally be lifted. The conveyance system which transports water to Santa Maria from North Clear Creek was also repaired with the project being completed in 2014. All construction is now complete except for warranty work both reservoirs and their connecting systems should now be able to function at full capacity.

There were many who attended the celebration in spite of the fact that there was heavy rain. The open house festivities included a welcome and introductions by SMRC Board President, Keith Holland. SMRC Board members were present as well as many representing the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District, the San Luis Valley Irrigation District, and the Colorado Division of Water Resources. Many were recognized for their assistance in a variety of aspects to the SMRC Board. Following the opening, a delicious catered meal from Dos Rios Restaurant was then served.

Following the meal, a presentation was given by San Luis Valley historian, Melvin Getz which described the great lengths that the original overseers of Rio Grande, Santa Maria and Continental Reservoirs went to in the 1940s and 1950s to properly administer water rights and provide flood protection, particularly for Alamosa. The presentation mentioned the importance of the daily professional diary of David Mathias who was the Division Engineer for Division 3 during this time

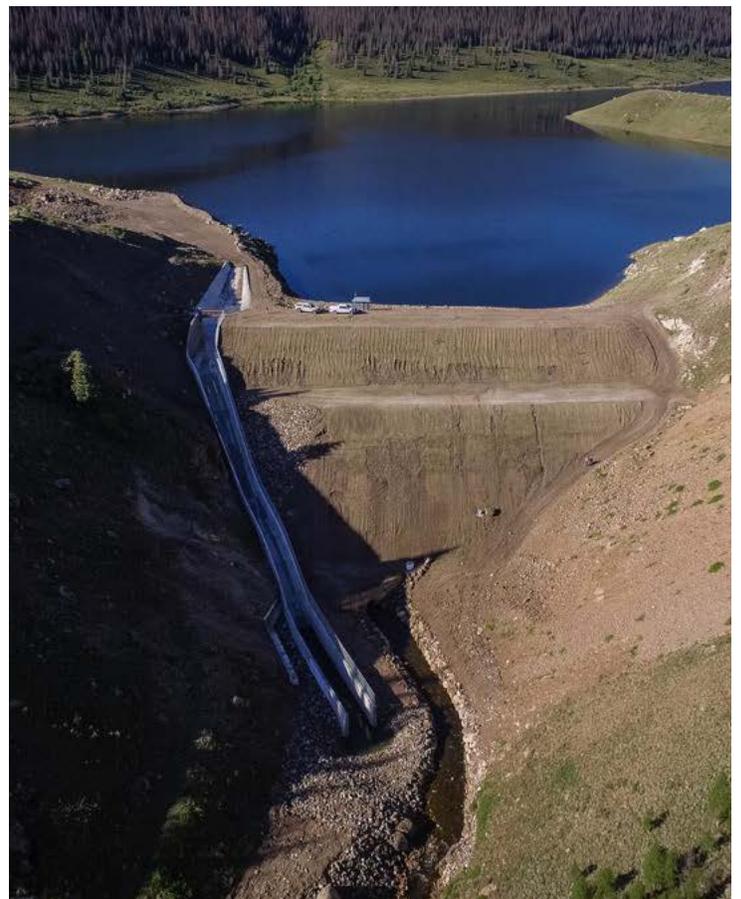
**“ Their successful efforts ... have taken place to preserve a way of life in valley and the heritage that goes along with it.**

period. These diaries provide valuable insight into San Luis Valley history and the foundations of water administration because they describe each procedure in great

detail. The diaries were found by Melvin and Camille Getz at a yard sale and purchased for a mere fifteen dollars and, as a result, a valuable piece of history was unearthed. The diaries can now be seen in the Colorado Room in Nielsen Library at Adams State University. Getz told the story of how he has been a long-time advocate for “Fixing our reservoirs.” He also commended each

of the reservoir-owning companies present for their successful efforts that have taken place to preserve a way of life in valley and the heritage that goes along with it.

Once Getz concluded his remarks, the festivities then transitioned to and concluded with a tour of Santa Maria and Continental and the newly repaired systems that comprise each. A display of reservoir history including excerpts from the Mathias Diaries brought by the Getz’s was also available for viewing. The event had an air of satisfaction and accomplished, and those who came were pleased with the work that has been done.



Continental Reservoir’s spillway. Photo: Keith Holland

The Santa Maria Reservoir Company has been a steady provider of water for the San Luis Valley, and those who are involved in the process hope that this tradition will be continued and even improved with the repairs that have been made and the progress that has come about. Because of cooperation and collaboration, the future seems to look bright on the upper Rio Grande. ■