

**Bear River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Town Hall, Cokeville, WY
March 19, 2001**

Welcome

River Basin Planning Manager Jon Wade welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. The overall meeting agenda was reviewed, followed by an introduction of all attendees. A sign-in sheet was passed around to record attendance.

Planning Team Issues

Jon Wade discussed the status of the Green River Basin planning process. He explained that the final plan has been published. The online version will be available in a couple of months. This includes not only the final report, but also all the digital geographic information that went into the plan. Such information will be available on the website: <http://waterplan.state.wy.us/>

Jon also gave an update of the planning efforts underway in the Powder/Tongue and Northeast Basins. He briefly discussed the status of consultant work, as well as presented a summary of the basin advisory group meetings held in Ucross and Moorcroft, respectively. Additionally, Jon discussed the recent open houses held in the Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basins to introduce river basin planning. BAG formation meetings will be held in these basins in May.

The draft Bear River Basin Plan has been received and will be reviewed by state staff over the next couple of weeks. The plan has been delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, which were encountered by the consultant. Once finalized, the plan will be made available in a similar manner. Jon reiterated the benefits of accessing the plans online versus hard copies when they are available. Denice Wheeler made a request of the planning team to present an update on the Bear River Basin Planning process to the Bear River Commission when it meets in April in Salt Lake City. Denice also mentioned the upcoming Upper Bear River tour, which is being hosted by the Commission August 13th and 14th. Denice invited members of the Basin Advisory Group to participate in the tour.

Jon briefly discussed the role, functions, and objectives of the basin advisory group during the interim until the Bear River Basin water plan is updated. The next Bear River Basin Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 9th at 6 p.m. at the Lincoln County Library in Kemmerer.

Water Development Commission Report

New Projects - John Jackson, WWDC Planning Administrator, gave a brief report on the projects that were authorized by the 2001 Legislature during the recent session. Those projects are as follows:

Level I New Development Projects:

Lodgepole Aquifer Storage and Retrieval	\$ 50,000
Prairie Dog Watershed (increased appropriation)	\$ 35,000
Three Horses Watershed	\$ 100,000

Level II New Development Projects:

Casper Zone II Supply	\$ 60,000
Hot Springs/Worland Regional Pipeline (increased appropriation)	\$ 670,000
Moorcroft Well (increased appropriation)	\$ 145,000
North Uinta Water Supply	\$ 100,000
Opal Regional Water Supply (increased appropriation)	\$ 90,000
Story Fire District	\$ 25,000

Level I Rehabilitation Projects:

Popo Agie Watershed Study	\$ 200,000
Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basin Plans	\$ 1,550,000
University of Wyoming Research	\$ 140,000
Wyoming Geological Survey - NE Wyoming	\$ 400,000

Level II Rehabilitation Projects:

Alpine Spring Irrigation Supply	\$ 40,000
Dayton Water Supply	\$ 50,000
Deaver Irrigation Rehab	\$ 100,000
Granger Rehab	\$ 65,000
Riverton Valley Rehab No. 2	\$ 40,000

State Engineer's Office Report

Pat Tyrrell, Wyoming State Engineer, stated that he had been on the job for about two months. Pat also indicated that he has been as busy, as he has ever been, and is loving it. Pat mentioned that he is trying to get up to speed on the issues in the Bear River Basin. He then proceeded to give an update on current activities in his agency.

The State Engineer's Office has processed between 4,000 to 5,000 coalbed methane (CBM) permits over the last 18 months. CBM issues have taken a considerable amount of time for his staff. The quantity of the wells, the ephemeral channels, and the sodium adsorption ratios all play a part in the issue. CBM production is considered a beneficial use of water.

Pat briefly discussed the current activities being undertaken regarding the North Platte settlement. Additional manpower may be needed in his office to implement the agreement. Criteria have been created for the operation of the river. In the Bighorn lawsuit, the State Engineer's Office is still adjudicating Indian rights, states' rights, and Walton rights in accordance with court decree. The deadline for these activities is 2003.

Pat then discussed the status of the instream flow permitting process, pending compact issues, and a recent trip to the Mexican delta. He also indicated that he was looking forward to meeting with the Bear River Commission at its meeting in April.

Jade Henderson, Division IV Superintendent for the Wyoming State Engineer's Office, was introduced and discussed snowpack conditions across the state. Jade indicated that the Upper Bear snowpack currently stood at 63%, and he anticipates tight controls this year, including state and interstate regulation. Bear Lake is not low yet, thus it has not triggered storage restrictions upstream to date. Jade's staff is also busy finishing the hydrographer's commissioner's report for this year. The planning team and consultants relied heavily on this later information in compiling and producing the current Bear River Basin plan.

Water Resources Data System Report

Robin Gray gave a brief overview of the current activities of the Water Resources Data System (WRDS). She also reported that Dennis Feeney has resigned his position as the coordinator of WRDS. Robin stated that she is currently working on getting the Green River Plan on the website. Other activities have included placing WRDS water library holdings online, assisting the WWDC with its public water supply system and irrigation systems surveys, and the initiation of a project to do a geohydrologic analysis in coalbed methane areas of NE Wyoming. This latter project is being done in cooperation with the Wyoming State Geological Survey and utilizes technology and processes developed for the Little Snake River Project.

Break

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Report

Ron Remmick of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department gave an update on his agencies' activities. Ron began by discussing the smallmouth bass that was caught in a sampling net in the Bear River Basin. The discovery did make the news, and Ron is hopeful that it was the only fish, and that the species would not propagate throughout the basin. To do so, would be very problematic for the fisheries being maintained.

Ron then discussed the status of the listing of species with specific attention being paid to Bonneville Cutthroat Trout. He indicated that the decision on the Bonneville was at the solicitor's office and the result could not be put out at this time due to a funding issue. Therefore, this issue is currently in limbo. Ron concluded his presentation by handing out copies of a publication on "Reducing Trout Losses from Irrigation Diversions".

Bear River Water Quality Task Force Update

Craig Thomas explained the purpose of the task force and how they have been the catalyst for the three states' (Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming) Department of Environmental Quality agencies talking together. Craig indicated that Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) were in the forefront at this time. He further discussed the USGS Great Salt Lake Basin National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Program and the synoptic monitoring of the Bear River system being done right now. This includes 38 primary sampling sites and an additional 17 others. Coordinated monitoring sites between the three states have also been useful to the individual states themselves.

Idaho is currently working on a TMDL planning effort, which has been driven by a lawsuit through the Environmental Protection Agency. This project covers portions of the mainstem of the Bear River, but does not cover the lake itself. Idaho is 45-60 days out from generating a sub-basin assessment, and then they will set proposed goals and targets. Nitrogen, phosphorous and total suspended solids are all being looked at. Utah (in the Cache Valley area) has a TMDL, and is currently working on the lower section. This work is being done through the Bear River Water Conservancy District. In Wyoming, the Department of Environmental Quality is conducting monitoring, and is evaluating its data. [*Jack Smith, Wyoming DEQ, will present the findings of these activities at the July Bear River BAG meeting in Kemmerer.*]

In other activities, Craig reported that scientists from the US Geological Survey have drilled two cores into the sediment of Bear Lake. He then further discussed the sediment traps found in Bear Lake. The north and south ends of the lake are being compared.

Finally, Craig noted some upcoming events, which may be of interest. First, on March 27th, there will be an open house, which is being sponsored by the preservation advisory committee and Pacificorp. The event will be held in Montpelier from 1 to 5 p.m. Also, the next meeting of the Bear River Water Quality Task Force will be May 29th in the Bear Lake area.

Cloud Seeding Activities Along the Wasatch

Norm Stauffer, Utah Department of Water Resources, went through the weather modification activities being undertaken by the State of Utah. He discussed the purpose and history of the program and the methodologies employed, including the utilization of aircraft and ground generators. North American Weather Consultants is the firm actually doing the cloud seeding. Norm indicated that they are utilizing 125 ground-based sites this year. They estimate a 10-20% increase in precipitation in the form of snow. Norm concluded by going through the environmental conditions that must exist for the seeding to be successful as well as the funding mechanisms needed to maintain the program.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.