

Bear River Basin Advisory Group Meeting Record
Cokeville, WY
March 18, 2002

Welcome

River Basin Planner Barry Lawrence welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. All attendees introduced themselves, followed by a review of the overall meeting agenda. A sign-in sheet was passed around to record attendance. Meetings are scheduled July 15 in Kemmerer and November 18 in Evanston.

Water Development Commission Report

Jon Wade, River Basin Planning Administrator, indicated both the planning and construction bills were uncontested during the legislative session. 32 planning projects are currently in the consultant selection process. Opportunities in the basin include: Alpine Raw Water, Alta Master Plan, Bairoil Master Plan, Pinedale Intake, Little Snake River Small Dams Phase II, Baggs Master Plan, Church Reservoir (Green River ASR), Pinedale Hydropower, North Alpine Water Supply, Viva Naughton Enlargement, and Green River Supply Canal projects. Also, supplemental funding of \$1 million for the Groundwater Grant Program was received.

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAGs for the Snake/Salt and the Wind/Bighorn Basins will be meeting April 9 in Cody and April 10 in Jackson; whereas the BAGS for the Green, Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting March 19 in Lyman, March 20 in Buffalo and March 21 in Newcastle. Barry discussed the status of these interim basin studies, and schedule for future meetings.

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 as of March 18, the Snotel average for entire state ranges from 57% in Laramie County to 84% in the Yellowstone area. The snowpack average for the Bear River area is 80%.

The state drought task force is meeting March 19. New online data includes a monthly climate report, drought monitor/studies, and links to other regional and national data sources. Of special interest is:

- Surface water supply index for March, which ranges from -2.25 to -3.9. Drought maps and forecast products are also available.

The water library is acquiring part of State Engineer's Office collection. The 2002 municipal system survey study will be available in another month or so. The Green River Basin report, including the GIS products, is 99% online with the Bear River Basin report due to be online by mid-April.

State Engineer's Office Report

Jade Henderson, Division 4 Superintendent for the State Engineer's Office, discussed the potential need for water right regulation both in state and interstate. He indicated regulation could occur as early as April/May in the lower basin and due to low water levels in Woodruff Narrows Reservoir, the upper basin might be called upon to supply the lower basin.

Bear River Commission Report

Bear River Commission Chairman Denice Wheeler presented an update to several ongoing issues within the basin.

- Carly Burton, Scottish Power, reports the elevation of Bear River Lake is 5911.07.
- A contract has been awarded to Cirrus Ecological Solutions to perform a TMDL study for Bear River Lake. The study is funded by a \$25,000 EPA grant.
- Bear River Commission will be meeting April 16.
- Proposed dredging of Deer Lake will be performed in April, if a permit is issued by the USCOE.
- A summer symposium will be held with updates on the TMDL study report and USGS report on core sampling of Bear River Lake.

Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge

Ed Rodriguez, US Fish and Wildlife Service, explained that refuges, such as the Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, are a branch of the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Department of Interior. He outlined the mission statement of the USFWS, and stated that by law, the refuge system is dedicated to wildlife observation, fishing, hunting, photography, and environmental education. 98% of refuge system lands are open to the public. There are 7 Wyoming refuges with 80,776 acres. The Cokeville Meadows Refuge must not be larger than 27,000 acres, lands must be purchased from willing sellers, state owned lands must be purchased or leased, and state water laws must be abided by. The refuge contains unique wetlands that support 65 species of migratory birds, especially redhead ducks, which are found no other place in Wyoming. Currently, the refuge is working with cooperators, cleaning up contaminated sites, repairing fences, treating weeds and reducing grazing, controlling trespass, especially by cows, monitoring wildlife populations, providing food plots for wildlife, posting boundaries and purchasing additional lands.

Watershed Planning to Address Impaired Waterbodies in the Bear

Chuck Harnish, Department of Environmental Quality, stated that the purpose of the 303(d) list is to

- Notify individuals where credible data supports either a pollutant or a threat to beneficial use of a stream;
- Prioritize development measures;
- Schedule TMDLs or watershed plan; and
- Locate funding

3 segments are on the proposed 303(d) listing: Bear River, 2AB Woodruff/Sulphur and Sulphur Creek to the reservoir and above the reservoir. Factors contributing to 303(d) list development include waterbody classification, state standards, credible data, and weight-of-evidence. According to water quality standards, there are 4 types of streams 1) outstanding waters, 2) fisheries and drinking water, 3) aquatic life other than fish, and 4) agriculture, industry, recreation, wildlife.

Watershed plans typically are locally led, are activity specific, have multi-pollutant considerations (habitat, sediment, etc.), and have a monitoring plan. In addition, there are three phases in developing a watershed plan. Phase I identifies concerns, inventories resources, analyzes resources and determines goals/objectives. The formation, evaluation, and selection of alternatives are the main components of Phase II, with Phase III implementing and evaluating the plan.

There are currently watershed plans in progress for 16 creeks/rivers around the state.

Smiths Fork Water Development Project

DeMont Grandy, Lincoln County Conservation District/NRCS, addressed the possibility of a reservoir on the Smiths Fork River and possible local sponsoring entities. Jim Schwartz, Wyoming Dept of Agriculture, addressed a sponsoring entity. He indicated the community must first identify what is needed, be in total support, and form a workable entity. He suggested a new group, such as Smiths Fork Watershed Improvement District, sponsored by the Lincoln Conservation District, which would represent the Smiths Fork Irrigation District, the Cokeville Development Company, and the Cokeville Watershed Improvement District be formed.

Jade Henderson, State Engineer's Office, stated that under the Bear River compact, 4300 acre-feet of water is available, with an additional 21,000 acre-feet available, but subject to Bear Lake elevation.

John Jackson, Water Development Commission, recommended that a watershed improvement district be formed, which could request a Level II analysis of compact allocation site(s).

Ken Short, State of Utah, indicated that the Smiths Fork project had been modeled in 1980's, and all available Idaho water was already stored in Bear Lake. Idaho would support building the project, but would not be investing any capital. Helen Harrington, State of Idaho, indicated Idaho did not feel the project would provide any financial aspects, but possibly water quality benefits would be realized.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.