

**Wind/Bighorn River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Cody, WY
April 9, 2002**

Welcome

The facilitators for the Wind/Bighorn Basin Advisory Group, Sherri Gregory-Schreiner and Cathy Lujan, of Counterpoise Consulting, Inc. in Cheyenne, opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. They introduced themselves and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Participants then introduced themselves by stating their name, place of residence, and affiliation. The sign-in sheet was then passed around the room.

Planning Team Issues

The next three basin advisory group meetings were scheduled as follows:

June 11th - 3 p.m. - Lander, WY
August 13th - 3 p.m. - Worland, WY
October 8th - 3 p.m. - Thermopolis, WY

Barry Lawrence, WWDC River Basin Planner, distributed copies of past presentations to be added to the basin advisory group reference notebook. Barry then updated the group on the status of the planning processes for the Snake/Salt, Powder/Tongue, Northeast, Bear and Green River Basins. He detailed the activities in each, as well as the invited BAG speakers, and consultant work in progress (if applicable). He then invited interested individuals to attend any or all of the BAG meetings in the other basins.

Surface Water and Groundwater Modeling B BRS Engineering, Inc.

Doug Beahm introduced Jerry Gibbons from Montgomery, Watson and Harza. Jerry discussed the surface water modeling effort. He indicated that they were trying to assess current water availability by synthesizing available data. It was noted that they were modeling historical diversions, and not water rights. Jerry mentioned that the model would be broken out into sub-basins, including the Clarks Fork, Yellowstone, Bighorn, Wind, Madison and Gallatin Rivers. He continued his presentation by discussing the sources for the information, the study period chosen (1973-2001), the determination of dry, average, and wet years, and the various model nodes, etc. He concluded by asking for help from the Wind/Bighorn BAG members, by reviewing the schematics placed around the room, and assisting in identification of available data sets which would aid in model development.

Doug Beahm then introduced Chris Lidstone from Lidstone and Associates. Chris discussed the status of the effort to evaluate the basin's ground water resources. He discussed identification and characterization of a variety of well types, including, domestic, agricultural, industrial, etc. Chris noted that they were in the process of sorting the wells not only by use, but by size, and were also looking at impacts amongst the wells, aquifer capacities, etc. He further noted that they were not

looking at wells producing less than 50 gpm. Chris showed numerous maps of the area which detailed the ground water characteristics discussed.

Conditions and Operation of the River System in the Wind/Bighorn Basin B John Lawson, Area Manager, US Bureau of Reclamation

John Lawson opened by discussing the US Bureau of Reclamation's presence in the basin. To illustrate this, he showed the group a series of maps detailing current areas of operation, including the Riverton, Boysen, Owl Creek, Hanover-Bluff, Shoshone Project and Buffalo Bill Units. He then discussed each of the units' features and contributions to their respective areas. This included water for irrigation, power generation, flood control, and recreation.

After discussing the system, John explained the current conditions within the basin. He then detailed the water supply forecast, noting that conditions were still better than last year. He indicated that the Bureau of Reclamation still felt that they could meet the demands of the water users this year. A brief question and answer period followed John's presentation, including a discussion of dust abatement problems in the area.

Instream Flow Law B John Barnes, Wyoming State Engineer's Office

John Barnes opened by stating that only the State could own an instream flow water right. John described what an instream flow water right was, and the genesis for the Instream Flow Law which was passed by the legislature in 1986. He noted that prior to this, it was generally accepted that water had to be diverted to be beneficially used. Also, there were questions regarding the ability to abandon such rights since water was not being diverted.

John explained that the instream flow process involves three agencies. The first is the Game & Fish Department which selects the stream segment on which to file an instream flow application. This is done using knowledge of the fisheries in question. Following Game & Fish Department input, the Water Development Commission performs a hydrologic assessment to evaluate the potential to supply the flow amounts requested under the instream flow application. This may include streamgaging as part of the evaluation. The Water Development Commission submits the water right application with its findings. The State Engineer's Office then provides for public comment and a public hearing on the application. Following such input, the State Engineer's Office decides whether or not to approve, approve with modifications, or reject the application.

John indicated that there are currently 83 instream flow applications filed with the State, with 16 having been permitted. He also noted that during the last week, the first instream flow filing to utilize stored water was submitted, with the proposed section being located below Fremont Lake.

Fisheries of the Bighorn River B Steve Yekel, Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Steve Yekel opened by telling the group how the Wyoming Game & Fish Department manages the fisheries of the Bighorn River Basin, noting that they apply management by concept. Steve noted that five management concepts existed: catchable, basic yield, trophy, wild, and unique. He then proceeded by giving examples of fisheries managed under each concept.

Steve continued by discussing how many waters were managed in the Cody region, which turns out to be 1,452 streams and standing waters (917 which are suitable for trout). It was noted that diversity best describes the fisheries of the basin, with 7 native game species, 12 native non-game species, and 28 non-native species. Specific concerns for the basin include habitat losses through erosion, overgrazing and fire suppression; instream flow dewatering; barriers (i.e. - fish losses to diversions); and non-point pollution. He closed his presentation by giving examples of special projects that the Game & Fish Department have been working on in the area.

Public Comment Period

The floor was then opened to comments from the public. One BAG member asked for more time on the agenda to comment on the planning process and to interact with the consultants preparing the basin plan. No other comments were forthcoming from the group.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.