Wind/Bighorn River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Lander, WY
June 11, 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.

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

August 13th - 3 p.m. - Worland, WY
October 8th - 3 p.m. - Thermopolis, WY
December 17th - 3 p.m. - Powell, WY

Planning Team Issues

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.

Consultant Update / Future Water Use Investigation - BRS Engineering, Inc.

Doug Beahm, BRS Engineering, Inc., gave a presentation on the screening criteria that would be used to rate future water use opportunities for the Wind/Bighorn River Basin. This criteria was developed in the Green River Basin planning process and is fixed for compatibility with the State=s other existing plans. Doug went on to indicate that the projects would be categorized into four groups: rehabilitation projects that preserve existing uses and economic dependencies, projects that rectify existing demands/needs/shortages, projects that meet projected future demands/needs/shortages, and trans-basin diversions of water that enhances in-state uses.

It was noted that projects would be judged within each of the categories using six different criteria. These criteria would be weighted differently for each category. The criteria to be utilized were: water availability, financial feasibility, public acceptance, number of sponsors/beneficiaries/participants, legal/institutional concerns, and environmental/recreational benefits. Each of the criteria for a particular project would receive a ranking between 0 and 10, with 0 being the most difficult or unfavorable, and 10 being the easiest or most favorable. These values were then to be multiplied by the inherent weighting factors and finally added together to determine the project=s overall score.

Doug finished by noting that these resultant scores were only to place the projects in some sort of relative order, and were in themselves meaningless. Also, the rank of a project would represent the relative likelihood that a project is desired and feasible. Furthermore, such a project could only be compared to projects within the same category. It was stressed that input from the Wind/Bighorn Basin Advisory Group would be critical during this phase of the planning process.

Wind River Reservoir Study - Phil Ogle, WWDC

Phil Ogle, WWDC Project Manager, opened by describing the Upper Wind River Level I Study that was recently completed. He stated that the purpose of the project was to determine the need for water storage within the basin and to evaluate alternative storage sites to meet those needs. Phase 1 of the project entailed gathering and reviewing available information about the area, evaluating the modeling of water demands within the basin, and the initial screening and evaluation of potential reservoir sites. It was noted that through the process of screening the sites, 150 potential sites were narrowed down to 75 sites, and then again, down to 26 sites. Phase 2 of the study focused on an evaluation of recommended alternatives, including: hydrology and water rights analyses, geologic conditions, permitting and environmental constraints and mitigation, cultural resources constraints, conceptual designs and cost estimates, and finally funding sources.

Phil then gave a summary of the results of the study which identified basin runoff per year, the current surface water use per year, and the amount of water that was potentially available. The timing of the flow, future awards, and other future demands were discussed as well. Phil then showed the group a set of five plans for potential projects in the Upper Wind River area and explained the benefits and disadvantages of each. The five projects discussed were: Bull Lake Enlargement, Little Wind River North Fork No. 3, Dinwoody Lake Enlargement, Wind River East Fork No. 1, and Steamboat. A comparison of the costs, capacities, and storage costs between the projects was then made.

Popo Agie River Watershed Level I Study - Phil Ogle, WWDC

Phil Ogle, WWDC Project Manager concluded his remarks by detailing another WWDC project, the Popo Agie Watershed Level I Study. It was noted that the purpose of this project was to evaluate and describe the Popo Agie River Watershed and to develop a watershed management plan which would identify problems and propose practical economic solutions. Phil mentioned that the plan would provide a baseline which could be used and expanded. Specific concerns within the area included: flooding within areas of the watershed, the lack of late season flows through Lander, the efficiency of irrigation systems, channel structure and erosion in the lower watershed, water quality within the watershed, and water storage needs and opportunities. A brief question and answer period followed this presentation.

Popo Agie Watershed Planning - Jeri Trebelcock, Popo Agie Conservation District

Jeri Trebelcock, District Coordinator with the Popo Agie Conservation District, discussed the geographic area in which the district had responsibility, including three tributaries of the Popo Agie River (Middle Fork, North Fork and Little Popo Agie) and more than 500,000 acres. Jeri noted that there were 20 members on the district=s steering committee, and that the group was advised by

Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs). Jeri continued her presentation by going through the current efforts of the conservation district, including ongoing water quality and quantity investigations. Also discussed was the potential for flooding within the Lander city limits and what measures could be taken to minimize the risks to the city. A brief question and answer period followed Jeri=s presentation.

Fisheries of the Wind River - Joe Deromedi, Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Joe Deromedi, with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, discussed the management of the Wind River fisheries, which included 1111 streams and 883 lakes. Currently, efforts were being directed at 10 salmonid species, 10 cool or warm water sport fish species and 17 non-game fish species. Joe continued by briefly describing sampling methodologies, including: electrofishing, gill netting, seining, via sonar, and/or angler surveys. It was noted that five basic management concepts were employed by the agency, including: catchable, basic yield, trophy, wild and unique. Joe detailed each of these philosophies and the reasons that such might be employed in a particular area.

Joe then stressed why fisheries were important to Wyoming, by showing examples of the number of fishing licenses, the number of angler days available, and the amount of revenue generated (commercial importance, etc). The biological impacts were then discussed as well. Joe concluded his presentation by detailing the agencies= priorities in the basin, including native fish, important waters, whirling disease, aquatic nuisances, access issues, and habitat concerns. Specific examples of progress within the basin relative to these priorities were then discussed.

In summary, it was noted that the Wyoming Game & Fish were: (1) increasing efforts to maintain native fish communities; (2) taking steps to prevent spreading of disease and introduction of aquatic nuisances; (3) placing more emphasis on long term habitat projects rather than short term projects; and (4) looking for access to quality fishing areas.

Public Comment Period

The floor was then opened for comments from the public in attendance. There were no comments from the group.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.