

Wind/Bighorn Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Thermopolis, WY
July 15, 2003

Welcome

Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 6:05 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. The next meeting is scheduled for November 18 in Cody at 3:00 p.m.

Water Development Commission Report

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAGs for the Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting July 16 in Kaycee and July 17 in Lusk. Open houses for the Platte River Basin were held June 2 – 4 in Saratoga, Douglas and Pine Bluffs. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and agendas for future meetings.

The National Weather Service in the Wind/Bighorn Basin

Joe Sullivan and Melissa Smith of the National Weather Service (NWS) presented an overview of their agency. The NWS, which is affiliated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has 123 offices nationwide with 13 river basin centers. The Riverton office serves this basin. NWS information can be accessed through the NOAA weather radio, the national website <http://www.nws.noaa.gov> or <http://weather.gov>, the local website <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/riw>, or by telephone (800)211-1448 or locally (307)857-3898. Of particular interest on the national website are the Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS), Hazardous Weather Outlooks, 7 day advance forecasts, radar images, and climatological data. The Riverton office website includes local and regional weather information as well as satellite imagery and warnings.

Joe requested that the public assist the NWS by reporting observed severe weather conditions, including tornadoes, flooding, large hail, damaging winds, heavy snow, or dense fog to the Riverton office.

Fremont County Drought Task Force

Kim Lee, Fremont County Emergency Management Agency, presented an overview of the Fremont County's Drought Task Force and local interaction with the Statewide Governor's Drought Task Force. Fremont County is experiencing the fourth year of drought and has been under disaster guidelines since 2001. Priority has been given to developing an effective task force in Fremont County, which reports to the Fremont County Commissioners. The steps in this process are to appoint a task force, inventory the resources, develop an organizational

structure, publicize the proposed plan, and form subgroups to work on specific issues. The issues to be addressed are wildfire mitigation, agriculture, tribal concerns, health and safety, economic impacts, drought proofing, damage assessment, and the development of action plans. The focus is to create a task force made up of sub-working groups with specific strategies and targets to create a community action plan that will solve local drought problems. This local group was patterned after the Governor's Drought Task Force, with a vision of creating a "drought proof" county. More information on the drought in Fremont County can be found at <http://www.fremontcounty.org/drought.htm>.

Salt Cedar in the Bighorn

Laura Hudson, University of Wyoming, Botany Department, presented an overview of salt cedar and eradication efforts in the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. Salt cedar is a riparian shrub from Eurasia. Laura pointed out that cottonwood trees and salt cedar both require a moist area to become established, produce an abundance of seeds, and can grow, flower, and seed in water. However, salt cedar is superior in that it is salt tolerant, can tolerate an inundated water condition as well as drought, taps deeply into the water table, and comes to seed continually from May through October.

The eradication efforts in the Crooked Creek area were discussed. The trees must be cut down with the herbicide being applied within 3 to 4 minutes. Herbicides must be applied annually for a timeframe of 4 to 5 years to control the seedlings. Potential wildlife issues were discussed with the removal of salt cedar, especially for birds and toads. Discussion followed.

Kirby Creek Watershed Plan

Evan Simpson and Jason Linford, Sunrise Engineering, stated that the Kirby Creek Watershed Plan is a Level I reconnaissance planning effort. Management recommendations must be based on thorough technical analysis, be environmentally sound and be financially feasible. A description and inventory of the basin, including basin geology and hydrology, land use, stream channels, irrigation systems, water quality, and water storage will be mapped. A biological assessment will be performed and baseline data on all management activities that affect surface erosion, sedimentation and water flow will be obtained. Cost estimates and financing options will also be computed. Discussion followed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.