

Wind/Bighorn Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Cody, WY
November 18, 2003

Welcome

Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 3:00 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 April 6 in Lander.

Water Development Commission Report

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAG meetings for the Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting November 19 in Story, and November 20 in Newcastle. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and agendas for future meetings. Handouts from the prior meeting were distributed.

Shoshone Municipal Pipeline

Lowell Ray Anderson, Manager, presented an overview of the project. In 1982, a feasibility study was performed and the project design was completed in 1985. The pipeline is 70.2 miles in length, stretching from Buffalo Bill Dam to Frannie, Wyoming. The pipe diameter ranges from 8 inches to 36 inches, and is gravity flow. The water treatment plant is situated at the foot of Cedar Mountain. 354 stations have been installed throughout the pipeline to check the water flow. Every low point in the pipeline has a blow-out point while air vacuum valves are located at the high points. 60 tests on lead and copper are performed annually. The presentation concluded with a discussion of the water rights associates with the project.

Wyoming's Water Development Program

Mike Besson, Director of the Water Development Commission (WWDC), discussed the responsibilities of the WWDC and presented an overview of each division: planning, construction, and river basin planning. The agency consists of 19 full time staff and one full-time contract person. In 1998, additional personnel were added to staff the basin planning efforts, including watersheds. The additional staff gives the WWDC the ability to share information and the opportunity to talk about issues that are pertinent to individual basins.

Other topics of discussion included the Small Water Project Program, Buffalo Bill Dam, the current drought in Wyoming, and the upcoming 2004 legislative session. Mike noted that the stakeholders needed to work together as we entered into a debate as to how we should use the state's water. For more information about the WWDC, visit the website at <http://wwdc.state.wy.us>

An Overview of the State Engineer's Office (SEO)

Harry LaBonde, Deputy State Engineer, presented an organizational chart of the office and discussed the responsibilities of the six divisions. The Surface Water and Engineering Division is responsible for reviewing permit applications for any request to put surface water to beneficial use as well as operating the Safety of Dams program. The Ground Water Division is responsible for reviewing and approving water well permits and managing a statewide cooperative stream gaging program. The Board of Control is responsible for the adjudication process on each water right and any changes to the adjudicated rights. The Interstate Streams Division participates in a number of interstate river compact commissions and organizations and regional water programs. Two additional divisions include the Administrative Division, which handles the general agency administration and the Support Services Division, which manages all information technology functions for the agency. The State Engineer serves by statute as the secretary/treasurer for the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. It was also noted that the Water Well Drilling Contractors and Water Well Pump Installation Contractors Certification Board will be fully operational in 2005.

Current issues include permitting challenges in both the surface and groundwater divisions as related to coal bed methane development, the North Platte Decree Committee and Modified North Platte activities, and weather modification permitting activities. To obtain more information on the SEO, visit the website at <http://seo.state.wy.us>

SEO Water Division III Update

Loren Smith, Superintendent, indicated that in 2003 there were 14 administrative regulation activities as well as weekly accounting on the Shoshone River and on the Wind/Bighorn River above Worland. Other activities during the 2003 water year included:

- Greybull River leveling program, which gages and diverts the majority of flow into Roach Gulch Reservoir immediately and releases it at an even rate the next day.
- Hamilton dome by-product water issue
- Challenge in Shell area to W.S. 41-5-111 dealing with removal of unauthorized obstructions placed in canals
- Efforts to get un-recorded exchange agreements legalized, primarily on the Greybull River and Upper Wind River systems
- Discontinued conveyance water credits
- Effort to reduce backlog of proof inspections
- Increased use of available technologies, including GIS, GPS
- Databases, including tracking of new permits and diversion records

Shoshone National Forest Watershed Management Program

Greg Bevenger, US Forest Service, indicated that both the Bighorn National Forest and the Shoshone National Forest were located within the study area.

Both national forests were established in 1897 under the Organic Act to secure favorable conditions of water flows. The Shoshone National Forest watersheds serve as the headwaters for many of the major drainages in the area. It was noted that there are 19,087 miles of streams, 2,100 lakes, and 50,000+ acres of wetlands and riparian areas within the watersheds.

Key program areas within the watershed management program include

- Support to other programs, i.e. environmental assessment (NEPA) team members and project monitoring in implementing the state's best management practices,
- Watershed assessments and improvement projects, i.e. ecosystem analysis at the watershed scale (fifth level HUB [hydrologic unit boundary]) on a 10 year cycle,
- Water uses/water rights,
- Base inventory/monitoring, i.e. integrated resource inventory and air quality,
- Burned area emergency response, and
- Hazardous materials, i.e. cleanup, storage and handling.

US Forest Service Integrated Resource Inventory for the Bighorn and Shoshone National Forests

Brad Higginson, US Forest Service, stated that the purpose of the integrated resource inventory was to spatially locate, integrate, and describe basic water, land, and vegetation data for use in a geographic information system (GIS).

There are three themes unique to an integrated resource inventory: common water unit, common land unit, and common vegetation unit. The common water unit was mapped to the sixth level HUBs. Mapping started at the watershed level, and the stream network, ditches, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs were inserted. Brad noted that aerial photos are used to stratify perennial and intermittent streams into valley segments attributes, including channel materials, gradient, and riparian zones. He discussed the Rosgen stream scale for attributes of a valley segment. Each type was depicted pictorially.

The Bighorn National Forest was completed in 1999 with the Shoshone National Forest scheduled for completion in 2004.

The data can be used to identify reaches that are sensitive to management activities and to identify road/stream crossings. Brad indicated that while the information was not currently available online, it was for sharing with other resource management agencies.

The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.