

Green River Basin Advisory Group  
Meeting Record  
Western Wyoming College, Rock Springs, WY  
December 12, 2000

**Welcome**

Facilitator Joe Lord welcomed the group and the meeting was opened at 1:10 p.m. The overall meeting agenda was reviewed, followed by an introduction of all attendees. A sign-in sheet was passed around to record attendance.

**Planning Team Issues**

A review of the upcoming meeting schedule was provided:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2001	Rock Springs	1:00 p.m.	White Mountain Library
March 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2001	Pinedale	10:00 a.m.	Sublette County Library

Jon Wade then updated the group on the schedule for upcoming basin plans. The WWDC has agreed to advance legislation this upcoming session to begin plans in the Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basins. Open houses will be held in each of these new basins during the last week of January, 2001.

**Consultant Update**

Pat Tyrrell of States West was introduced. Mr. Tyrrell stated that during the meeting there would be a presentation giving an overview of the GIS aspects of the plan followed by continued discussion of criteria for ranking future water use opportunities.

Mr. Chris Jessen of States West was introduced and provided a review of how GIS will be used to access different aspects of the technical products prepared for the plan. Mr. Jessen presented a computerized presentation showing how irrigated lands, water rights and water right attribution interact. Also, an example was given of how to evaluate a future project, using an enlargement of the Green River Supply Canal as the example. This evaluation showed how the existing irrigated lands, potentially irrigable lands, and surface water availability results can be used to make a first cut of project operation. Mr. Jessen then also went through an example of how a potential groundwater development could be evaluated using the water well information compiled for the plan.

Mr. Tyrrell then took over from Chris to discuss further evolution of the future water use opportunity ranking scheme. Since the last BAG meeting, and due to further work by Mr. Tyrrell and Gary Watts (and due to comments received in the interim), the priorities and ranking criteria have changed. As well, the numbers used in the rankings have been altered. To review, the priorities are now as follows:

1. Rehabilitation projects that preserve existing uses and economic dependencies.
2. Projects that rectify existing demands/needs/shortages.
3. Projects that meet projected demands/needs/shortages.
4. Trans-basin diversions of water that enhance in-state uses.

The previous priority no. 5 involving the concept of sale or lease has been removed.

Under each priority, six criteria are used to rank projects qualitatively. These criteria (as modified from the previous BAG meeting) include:

1. Water availability
2. Financial Feasibility
3. Public Acceptance
4. Number of sponsors/beneficiaries/participants
5. Legal/institutional concerns
6. Environmental/recreation benefits

Each project under the various priorities contains rankings for each of the above criteria. And, for each priority, the criteria themselves are weighed differently. For criteria weighting under each priority, values from 1 to 10 are assigned depending on the relative importance of each criteria. For example, water availability is ranked less heavily for rehabilitation projects (priority 1), which should already have a water supply established, than for new projects (priorities 2, 3 and 4) where a new water supply is more crucial. Likewise, institutional constraints rank less important for priority 1 projects than they do for the other priorities because existing features should have fewer legal/permitting hurdles than new projects.

Then, under each potential project, each criterion is ranked from 10 (large positive effect) to 0 (negative effect) to express differences in water availability, institutional problems, financial feasibility, etc. among the possibilities.

The ranking process uses the priority/criteria combination in a scoring system to determine the most favorable projects under each priority. The relative “importance” of each of the six criteria (from 0 to 10) is multiplied by the ranking (0 to 10) of each project to determine an overall score. While the score in itself is meaningless, the relative ranking it provides is designed to sort projects among the different priorities on the basis of most to least favorable or most to least likely to succeed.

The most recent rankings were presented for review. A copy of the rankings will be distributed to the BAG and made available online. Some questions were received on the process as put forth.

An initial comment seemed to imply that earlier draft priorities either recommended the sale or acknowledged that sale of Wyoming water had occurred. Mr. Tyrrell emphasized that no sale has occurred and such an action was not recommended in the plan. In fact, as

mentioned earlier, priority 5 from the previous BAG meeting has been removed from further consideration.

One questioner wondered whether the final “score” numbers were to be viewed in an absolute sense, i.e. whether one should “tick down” through the numbers by picking the literal numeric order regardless of priority. Mr. Tyrrell answered that the final scores were only a relative representation of preference and are more properly viewed within each priority only (because of variations in criteria weighting among the priorities). In effect, they really represent the order of favorability within each sub-basin within each priority.

Another wondered about the advisability of scoring a “zero” for the Green River Lakes enlargement proposal under the headings of “public acceptance” and “legal/institutional concerns.” This comment centered on the view that institutional and acceptance can change over time, resulting in a different score. In response, Tyrrell noted the comment but stated that as of now this ranking seemed reasonable for a project that would affect a wilderness boundary, but that future plans could modify this value if public or legal climates moderate.

Another commenter wondered why, for legislative reasons, more effort wasn’t put into cost/benefit analysis. Tyrrell responded that because much information comes from publications of greatly different vintage with vastly different levels of effort put into cost estimating, no pure cost/benefit analysis could objectively be made. Therefore, the criteria of “financial feasibility” attempts to describe the cost information that is available for a project viewed from the standpoint of the use to which the water would be put, in an effort to rank its chances of being funded and repaid under existing public funding criteria.

Some discussion took place on how results will be presented. Tyrrell indicated that a draft final report was hopefully going to be submitted to Wyoming Water Development Commission (WWDC) by December 22. Following planning team review and acceptance, information will be available from the WWDC in a variety of formats, including via the water plan website. This later, preferred method of access will be available only after a sufficient amount of time has been given the Water Resources Data System to post the information online.

### **Additional Presentations**

Ann Strand made a brief presentation on continuing a possible BAG-sponsored request to the legislature to advocate funding changes (putting the State Engineer’s Office under the General Fund, for example), and in opposition to de-earmarking of funds. Whether the BAG should authorize this letter is still a subject of debate. Ann will write a “white paper” for dissemination at the next BAG meeting. Rose Skinner (Mayor of Pinedale) presented the WAM position against de-earmarking of state funds.

### **Closing**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.