

Green River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Sublette County Library, Pinedale, WY
March 20, 2001

Welcome

Jon Wade, WWDC Administrator for River Basin Planning, welcomed the group and the meeting was opened at 10:10 a.m. The agenda was reviewed and introductions were made. A sign in sheet was passed around to record the attendance. The group was reminded that the next meeting of the Green River Basin Advisory Group would be July 10th in Savery. A tour of the High Savery Dam site will follow the meeting.

Update on River Basin Planning in Adjoining Basins

Status Update on the Development of River Basin Plans for the Bear, Powder/Tongue, and Northeast Basins - Jon Wade then reported on the activities of the other river basin planning efforts. The Bear River Basin Plan is not quite ready. A draft report has been submitted and is being reviewed by the planning team. In the Northeast and Powder/Tongue River Basins the irrigated lands mapping is almost complete and the hydrologic modeling effort is well underway. HKM Engineering was hired to produce both of the later two plans.

Status Update on the Initiation of the Snake/Salt and Wind/Bighorn Basins - Open houses were held in the Wind/Bighorn (WB) and Snake/Salt (SS) Basins on January 29th and 30th respectively in Thermopolis and Alpine. Ninety people attended the open house in Thermopolis and 40 people attended the open house in Alpine. The legislature allocated \$1.55 million dollars for these two basin plans. Formation meetings will be held in these two basins on the 14th and 15th of May. Jon invited any Green River Basin Advisory Group (BAG) member who is available to attend either formation meeting and talk to the new group(s) about their experience.

It was noted that there will be a summary document published when all seven basin plans have been completed. The only remaining basin to be undertaken is the North Platte River Basin. The Wyoming Water Development Commission (WWDC) will then start over updating each of the basin plans. Jon stated that the order of the revisions might change if there is a need that warrants it, for example, such as coalbed methane, etc.

River Basin Planning in the Green River Basin

Status Update on the Finalization of the Green River Basin Plan - Jon Wade reported that the final Green River Basin Plan is complete, however, it has not been signed by the professional geologist and cannot be released yet. Distribution will be as soon as the signing is done. Jon said that due to significant printing costs, the WWDC would be pushing CDs and web access as the preferred method of plan dissemination. The Water

Resources Data System (WRDS) will be updating the water planning website with this information.

Review of the Role, Functions, and Objectives of the Green River BAG During the Interim - Jon Wade stated that the function of the Green River BAG during the interim planning period may be similar to that of the days of the Colorado River Basin Coordinating Council. Other agencies have approached the WWDC with an interest in presenting topics to the BAG for their review. For example, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will be at the July meeting to discuss CBM discharge permitting.

Water Development Commission Reports

New Projects - John Jackson, WWDC Planning Administrator, gave a brief report on the projects that were authorized by the 2001 Legislature during the recent session. Those projects are as follows:

Level I New Development Projects:

Lodgepole Aquifer Storage and Retrieval	\$ 50,000
Prairie Dog Watershed (increased appropriation)	\$ 35,000
Three Horses Watershed	\$ 100,000

Level II New Development Projects:

Casper Zone II Supply	\$ 60,000
Hot Springs/Worland Regional Pipeline (increased appropriation)	\$ 670,000
Moorcroft Well (increased appropriation)	\$ 145,000
North Uinta Water Supply	\$ 100,000
Opal Regional Water Supply (increased appropriation)	\$ 90,000
Story Fire District	\$ 25,000

Level I Rehabilitation Projects:

Popo Agie Watershed Study	\$ 200,000
Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basin Plans	\$ 1,550,000
University of Wyoming Research	\$ 140,000
Wyoming Geological Survey - NE Wyoming	\$ 400,000

Level II Rehabilitation Projects:

Alpine Spring Irrigation Supply	\$ 40,000
Dayton Water Supply	\$ 50,000
Deaver Irrigation Rehab	\$ 100,000
Granger Rehab	\$ 65,000
Riverton Valley Rehab No. 2	\$ 40,000

Water Conservation Activities Update - Ron Vore, Wyoming State Engineer's Office Conservation Officer, has been transferred to the WWDC. Effective in July, Ron can be contacted at the WWDC office in Cheyenne.

Green River ASR and Alternate Storage Study - Jack Meena of States West Water Resources Corporation reported on the progress of the project. The short list of project sites from the Green River Basin Planning Effort has been reduced to 11 sites for further study using the following criterion:

- Screening Criteria 1 - Priority 1, preserve existing demands
 - Priority 2, rectify the need for existing shortages
 - Priority 3, meet projected future demands
- Screening Criteria 2 - Score of 190 or greater
- Screening Criteria 3 - Projects where the State can go ahead with the project
- Screening Criteria 4 - Number of beneficiaries the project will serve

All category IV projects were eliminated, as were trans-basin diversions. The following project sites remain for consideration:

1. Sand Hill-off channel
2. Sander's Ranch (Leckie Ranch)
3. Fontenelle Creek
4. East Fork
5. East Fork Gorge
6. McNinch Wash off-channel
7. Snider Basin
8. Boulder Lake Enlargement
9. South Cottonwood
10. Silver Spring Creeks
11. North Piney Creek

One questioner asked about the Upper Green River, specifically an enlargement of Green River Lakes. Jack said it was not included as it scored to low, below the 190-point cutoff due to its location in a wilderness area. Jack further explained some of the problems with the development of Green River Lakes, including the permitting restraints required to build a new dam in the wilderness area and restrictions based on the least damaging environmentally practical alternative. A suggestion was made by a member that the project should be re-looked at, and to leave on hold, those projects, which were doable if politics were to change. Another questioner asked about the Red Creek and Vermillion Creek reservoir sites. Jack explained that they fell out due to the low number of beneficiaries. Jack also explained the storage restrictions that are in place for Eden Reservoir and why it was not included on the list of sites designated for further investigation. The reservoir is not included in the list, as the US Bureau of Reclamation owns the dam and they would have to be part of any changes.

The next step in the project will be to further narrow the 11 sites down to only 5 for a more in-depth analysis. A report of the progress on the project will be made at the next Green River BAG meeting in July.

Break

Eden Valley Irrigation District Cloud Seeding Program

Shirley DeLambert gave a brief presentation on the weather modification efforts that the irrigation district has been conducting. The purpose of the program is to increase and stabilize the water supply by using cloud seeding technology. The season of operation is Nov. 15th to April 15th, with the best time of day appearing to be between the hours of 7:00 am to 4:00 pm. Shirley said they have three ground-based generators located at mileposts 55, 65, and 75 along Highway 191, and have obtained weather modification permits from the Wyoming State Engineer's Office. One questioner asked about the cost per unit of water. Eden Valley does not calculate the cost but feels it is very low. Utah has reported that the cost varies, and has reached about \$1/acre foot for seeding efforts along the Wasatch Front.

State Engineer's Office Reports – Pat Tyrrell, Wyoming State Engineer

Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program – Pat Tyrrell provided an overview of this multi-state, multi-agency cooperative program which has been ongoing since 1988. The Program has as its dual objectives to recover four species of fish native to the Upper Colorado River Basin while water development is allowed to proceed in compliance with the ESA. Pat distributed copies of a briefing booklet that has been prepared to summarize the Program's initiation, progress to date and highlights accomplishments during fiscal year 2000. The Program's participants are particularly pleased that their long-term efforts met with success when the President signed Public Law 106-392 into law on October 30, 2000. The new law authorizes funding for the Bureau of Reclamation to continue as a cost-sharing partner in implementing the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program and a sister program initiated in 1992 designed to recover two species of the endangered fish in the San Juan River Basin. The USBR is authorized to contribute up to \$46 million of appropriations for federal cost sharing for the two recovery programs. The Act prescribes that the total costs of the capital projects undertaken for the Recovery Programs shall not exceed \$100 million, of which \$82 million through the year 2005 is for the Upper Colorado River Recovery Program and \$18 million through the year 2007 is for the San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program.

The four participating states will contribute \$17 million and \$17 million will be contributed from revenues derived from the sale of hydroelectric power from the Colorado River Storage Project. The Act recognizes the remaining \$20 million as being contributed through sunk costs incurred due to replacement power purchased as a result of the modification of the operation of the hydropower facilities associated with the Colorado River Storage Project, chiefly at Flaming Gorge Dam. PL 106-392 further provides that up to \$6 million annually of CRSP hydropower revenues may be used for base (non-capital)

funding for these two programs. The capital construction program includes facilities for the genetic conservation and propagation of the endangered fish species, for the restoration of floodplain habitat and fish passage, for regulation and/or supply of instream habitat flows, for preventing fish entrapment in canals and for the removal or relocation of non-native fishes. These recovery programs represent the best opportunity for recovery of these four species of native fish in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Public Law 106-392 will allow the completion of capital construction programs for the two recovery programs so self-sustaining populations are established and the fish are delisted pursuant to the federal ESA.

The fifteen year period for the Recovery Program will be ending in January 2003. An extension of the Cooperative Agreement for an additional period of ten years is being considered, and pursuant to a provision in the new public law described above, must occur prior to January 22, 2002. Recovery goals for the four endangered species and the difficult issues associated with non-native (introduced) game fish species in managing the Upper Colorado River system for the endangered fish were also discussed.

Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program – Pat Tyrrell reported that also on the Congressional front recently was the enactment of Public Law 106-489 that increased the funding authorization for the Bureau of Reclamation’s basin-wide salinity control program. In 1995, the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974 was amended to authorize an entirely new way of implementing salinity control. Reclamation’s new Basinwide Salinity Control Program opens the program to competition through a public process and has greatly reduced the cost of salinity control measures accomplished through Congressional appropriations to Reclamation. P.L. 104-20 that created the Basinwide program provided an authorization of \$75 million in expenditures by Reclamation. In recognition of the merits of the Basinwide program approach, Congress authorized an additional \$100 million of appropriations in the recently enacted law.

Pat also discussed the progress being made at the only U.S. Department of Agriculture salinity control project in Wyoming, the Big Sandy Project located in the Eden Valley Irrigation and Drainage District. One member of the group from the Farson area asked a question about groundwater impacts, and expressed the view that producers in the Farson area are going their own way and no area wide consideration of ground water quality are being addressed.

Interim Surplus Guidelines/Colorado River Delta Water Quantity Issues – Pat Tyrrell explained that on January 17th then Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt had implemented Interim Surplus Guidelines for the Colorado River. This “bridge” of surplus water allows California to reduce its demand at an achievable pace, without economic dislocation. The California Plan works by conserving California’s agricultural water and redirecting that water for urban use. The Surplus Guidelines adopted this year allow water anticipated to be surplus to reservoir storage to flow to California for 15 years, while the conservation/transfer programs are being implemented. The continuation of the Surplus Guidelines is contingent upon California Plan progress, including completing a binding agreement among the California agencies to implement conservation/transfer programs, and achieving defined conservation /transfer targets by specified dates.

The California Colorado River Water Use Plan (“California Plan”) is dependent upon using Colorado River water made available from surplus declarations on the Colorado River as a way to ease the State’s transition to living within its basic apportionment. The other Colorado River Basin States have been insistent that changes to the reservoir operating criteria on the Colorado River to accommodate California must only be an interim measure while California steps down its Colorado River water use. The Six States insisted that California demonstrate a tangible commitment to reduce its water use before entertaining discussions of reservoir operating criteria that might facilitate that reduction. That commitment has been demonstrated in several ways, including the appropriation by the California State Legislature of over \$238 million dollars for the lining of the All-American and Coachella Canals.

Over the past several years, those seeking to increase the flow of the Colorado River at its mouth in the Gulf of California have become more vocal and visible in their calls for more water for maintaining and “restoring” the ecological values of the estuary area at the Colorado River’s terminus. On December 12, 2000, the International Boundary and Water Commissioners (IBWC) for the United States and Mexico executed Minute 306 entitled “Conceptual Framework for United States – Mexico Studies for Future Recommendations Concerning the Riparian and Estuarine Ecology of the of the Colorado River and Its Associated Delta.”

The Minute indicates the intent of the United States and Mexico to establish a framework for cooperation for developing studies and recommendations for preservation of the riparian and estuarine ecology of the Colorado River Delta. This work will be carried out through an existing binational technical task force that was established to facilitate such studies. Further, the IBWC will establish a forum for the exchange of information and advice among government and non-government organizations in the United States and Mexico.

As a follow-on to that agreement, the IBWC, working in concert with small planning committees in both the United States and Mexico, is completing arrangements to hold a Symposium on Colorado River Delta ecosystem issues on September 11-12, 2001 in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. The intent of this symposium is to provide United States and Mexican stakeholders with “baseline information” on the Delta. The two country’s planning committees have agreed that the symposium will address three topical subjects. These are: 1) the legal framework for water use and allocation in both countries; 2) the water conveyance systems in the Lower Colorado River Basin from Imperial Dam to the Gulf of California; and 3) the ecological/scientific knowledge based on existing studies and research of the Colorado River Delta ecosystem and its geographical area.

North Platte Lawsuit/Settlement – The settlement of the lawsuit involved a consumptive use cap and a continuing cap on irrigated acreage. There will be room for growth by municipalities. A group of meetings on the settlement will be held to inform the public on the provisions of and changes in river administration inuring from the settlement.

Water Resources Data System Report

Robin Gray gave a brief overview of the current activities of the Water Resources Data System (WRDS). She also reported that Dennis Feeney has resigned his position as the coordinator of WRDS. Robin stated that she is currently working on getting the Green River Plan on the website. Other activities have included placing WRDS water library holdings online, assisting the WWDC with its public water supply system and irrigation systems surveys, and the initiation of a project to do a geohydrologic analysis in coalbed methane areas of NE Wyoming. This latter project is being done in cooperation with the Wyoming State Geological Survey and utilizes technology and processes developed for the Little Snake River Project.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Report

Ron Remmick of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department gave an update on his agencies' activities. Discussions centered on the status of the listing of species with specific attention being paid to cutthroat trout. Ron then handed out copies of a publication on "Reducing Trout Losses from Irrigation Diversions".

Other Issues

One member stated that if water development projects were to be pursued, local legal entities would need to be formed. Possible entities include irrigation districts, watershed improvement districts, and conservancy districts. The present economic situation of the agricultural sector was then discussed relative to the ability to sponsor projects. One member asked if information could be provided at the next meeting as to the pros and cons of the various types of sponsoring entities available to receive WWDC funding. Another individual asked that information on revenue streams (i.e.- taxes levied on coal, etc.) be presented at the next meeting as well. These items will be covered at the July Green River Basin Advisory Group Meeting.

Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.