

Green River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Pinedale, WY
November 4, 2003

Welcome

Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.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 March 23 in Rock Springs.

Water Development Commission Report

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAG for the Snake/Salt Basin will be meeting November 5 in Afton. The BAG meetings for the Wind/Bighorn, Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting November 18 in Cody, 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.

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, the current drought in Wyoming, and the upcoming 2004 legislative session. 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>

Joint District Water Development Studies/Yampa River Basin Management Plan

Larry Hicks, Little Snake Water Conservancy District, indicated that there are 4 impoundments along Muddy Creek. To date, 450-500 acre-feet of water have been put to beneficial use through these ponds. Ducks Unlimited has been a funding partner. The Little Snake area is a tributary to the Yampa River, which has endangered species and sediment loading considerations. A joint Yampa River Basin Small Reservoir Study with the Colorado River Water Conservation District identified potential small reservoir storage sites ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 acre-feet. Those sites included Willow Creek, Pot Hook, and south fork of the Little Snake. The purpose of the small reservoirs is to augment agricultural supplies.

Dan Birch, Colorado River Water Conservation District, indicated that the district was created in 1937 and is comprised of all or parts of 15 western Colorado counties. The district has both statewide and regional roles with regard to Colorado River water, and it participates in drought mitigation and in the Colorado River recovery program

Dan gave an overview of the Yampa River Basin Endangered Species Management Plan. The plan identifies and offset impacts to endangered species due to depletions; develops alternatives and identifies a preferred alternative for flow augmentation; and addresses efforts needed for recovery, which include flow augmentation and non-native species management. He further indicated that 7,000 acre-feet (AF) of water is needed to augment river flows, and the alternatives for supplying the 7,000 AF include a variety of existing and new storage supplies and non-structural measures. The preferred alternative is the Elkhead Reservoir enlargement. Current depletions are 110,000 AF per year due to uses in the agricultural, industrial, and municipal sectors. The Elkhead Reservoir enlargement would enlarge the existing capacity from 13,000 AF to 25,000 AF at a cost of \$19.5M to aid in endangered fish recovery and future water uses. Discussion followed.

State Engineer's Office

John Shields provided an update on Colorado River programs and issues. These included:

- California's 4.4 Plan and QSA Status. On October 16, 2003, the Quantification Settlement Agreement was signed by the seven basin states, four California water agencies, and the Department of Interior.
- Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum. The Forum met October 27-29 in Santa Fe, NM where federal agencies presented accomplishment reports for FY03. The next meeting will be June 2004 in Rock Springs, WY, which will include a tour of the Big Sandy Salinity Control project. The 2005 Triennial review of water quality standards is underway.
- Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. A non-native fish management policy was authorized by the Implementation Committee at its September 6 meeting. The next meeting of the committee is December 9 in Denver.

John then briefly discussed the Yampa River Basin Endangered Fish Recovery and Water Management Plan, the purpose of the Yampa River Basin Programmatic Biological Objective (PBO) and why a PBO is appropriate for the Yampa Basin.

The National Weather Service in the Green River Basin

Tom Frieders 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.

Jade Henderson introduced the new Water Division IV assistant superintendent Chris Carlson.

The meeting adjourned at 2:53p.