

Green River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Rock Springs, Wyoming
March 23, 2004

Welcome

Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 10:00 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 July 20 in Savery and will include a tour of High Savery Reservoir.

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 Basins will be meeting March 24 in Alpine. The BAGs for the Wind/Bighorn, Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting April 6 in Lander, April 7 in Buffalo, and April 8 in Beulah. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and agendas for future meetings. Handouts from the prior meeting were distributed.

John Jackson indicated that 33 new projects were authorized in the Omnibus Water Bill – Planning. The Statewide Water Research program was appropriated an additional budget of \$200,000. The Small Water Project Program was amended to include irrigation as a purpose and to increase the monetary size of the project from \$50,000 to \$200,000. However, WWDC participation is still limited to a maximum of \$25,000. Funding for the program was increased by \$1,500,000, which is split equally between the Rehabilitation and New Development accounts.

In the Green River basin, the following projects were approved:

Planning

Baggs Water and Raw Water Supply	\$ 50,000
Weather Modification, Upper Wind River Range	\$ 100,000
Green River Canal PAM Study	\$ 40,000
Washam Water Supply	\$ 40,000

Construction

Grieve and Cottonwood Creek Dams	\$5,800,000
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More information can be found at:

<http://wwdc.state.wy.us/legreport/2004/approvals.html>

Big Sandy Working Group Riparian Habitat Enhancement Project

Mary Thoman, Sweetwater County Conservation District and Jay D'Ewart, BLM, stated that the Big Sandy Working Group was formed in 1996. The group includes 18 livestock permittees on four grazing allotments with 59 miles of river. The Big Sandy Working Group plans to modify the grazing plans, develop water sources away from the river and install electric fences to establish riparian pastures to improve water quantity

and quality as part of the Riparian Habitat Enhancement Project. There are three reservoirs, 14 new wells, and six miles of pipeline construction associated with the project. Funding sources include the WWDC, BLM and the State Grazing Board. The goal is to restore 32,593 acres of riparian habitat and 466,659 acres of upland habitat. A lengthy discussion followed.

Snow Telemetry & Current Conditions

Dave Taylor indicated that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) installs, operates, and maintains an extensive system to collect snowpack and related climatic data in the western United States called SNOTEL. Locally, the cooperative snow survey program monitors sites in Wyoming and the western half of South Dakota. Cooperators include various municipalities, the State Engineer's Office and the US Bureau of Reclamation. The first snow survey was conducted in 1906 by Dr. Church in the Lake Tahoe area. The program is in the 10 western states and Alaska, with Wyoming having 83 SNOTEL sites with automated equipment and 65 manually read sites. South Dakota has 2 sites each of the automated and manually read courses.

SNOTEL sites are designed to operate unattended and without maintenance for a year. Manually read courses are measured with a snow sampler, which takes a core and is weighed to determine the snow water equivalent. The standard SNOTEL site has a shelter for electronic equipment, a snow pillow, a storage precipitation gauge, a snow depth sensor, a temperature sensor, plus other sensors, including humidity, wind speed and direction, soil moisture, and solar radiation. The data is transmitted to two base stations in Boise, ID and Ogden, UT via meteor burst technology, and is then transmitted via telephone to Portland, OR. Most Wyoming sites report every three hours. Discussion followed.

The snow survey data is available through the Water Resources Data System at <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/nrcs/nrcs.html> . Another site with snowpack information is the National Water and Climate Center at <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/> , with specific Wyoming SNOTEL sites at <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Wyoming.wyoming.html> .

Wyoming's Drought Status

Jan Curtis, State Climatologist, presented an overview of the revised Climate Atlas, which is available at: http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/climateatlas/title_page.html, particularly referencing the Drought chapter (<http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/climateatlas/drought.html>). The current drought started in 1999, with 2000 and 2001 being the driest back-to-back years since 1895.

The greatest months for precipitation are May and June. The effectiveness of the moisture falling during this time is critical to emerging plants. Jan went on to say that precipitation in this state is a function of elevation; the lower elevations experience four times more evaporation than precipitation. Without the mountains to capture the moisture in the form of snow, Wyoming would be a virtual desert. Until March 1, this year looked favorable for improving water supplies. However, higher than usual

temperatures coupled with below normal precipitation have eliminated any gain and this year's drought is expected to be extreme to exceptional across much of the state. The current forecast products are available at <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/dtf/drought.html> .

Jan distributed flyers on the Community Collaborative Rain and Hail Study (CoCoRaHS) and discussed the importance of the data and how it would be used in Wyoming. Funding for this program comes from the Colorado State Climate Office. Further information on this program can be found at <http://www.cocorahs.com/> .

Upper Green River Joint Powers Board (JPB)

Randy Bolgiano indicated that the JPB meets monthly, with the meeting location rotating among Sweetwater, Lincoln, and Sublette Counties. The next meeting will be held on April 21 at 3:00 pm in the Commissioners Chambers in Green River. The JPB is currently working on its bylaws. The board consists of two members from each county, appointed by the county commissioners. Randy indicated that the group felt that its focus was too narrow (water storage projects only) and wanted to broaden to water development projects and serve as a center for such activity in the basin. Such changes would require review and approval by the Attorney General's Office and each of the corresponding counties. Considerable discussion followed.

State Engineer's Office Report

- Putting Historical Colorado River Hydrology in Current Context. Pat Tyrrell stated that the Colorado River Compact provides for the sharing of any burden which might arise because of a water treaty with Mexico in that the burden is to be met first from the surplus above the apportionments, and, if insufficient, the deficiency to be shared equally by both basins. Also, the compact prohibits the Upper Division from withholding water and the Lower Division from requiring the delivery of water, which cannot reasonably be applied to domestic and agricultural uses. The Upper Division states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming cannot cause the flow at Lee Ferry to be depleted below an aggregate of 75,000,000 acre-feet for any 10-year period. During the past five years Lake Powell has been receiving only half of the normal water supply inflow. However, the compact also apportions 7,500,000 acre-feet per annum to the Upper Division in perpetuity. The Lower Division first reached full use of its 7.5 maf in 1989, whereas the Upper Division is working towards its full allotment, particularly in Colorado and Utah.
- Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. The FY 2004 federal budget has zeroed out \$691,000 for staff in Region 6's fish recovery program. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking restoration of its recovery budget of \$2.281M.

The meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.