

**Powder / Tongue Basin Advisory Group  
Meeting Record  
Ucross Foundation Big Red Barn – Ucross  
February 28, 2001**

**Welcome**

The facilitators opened the meeting at approximately 6:00 pm and reviewed the agenda to set the expectations for the meeting. Participants introduced themselves by stating their name, affiliation, and place of residence. A sign-in sheet was passed around the room. The facilitators then stated that the next two BAG meetings, as selected by the BAG members, will be held April 11th in Buffalo, and June 13th in Dayton. The BAG then scheduled the August meeting for the 8th in Story.

**Planning Team Issues**

Jon Wade gave a status report of the other basin plans. The final reports for the Green River and Bear River Basins are nearly complete. These reports should be on the website in a couple of months. Distribution will be primarily by compact disc, but printed copies will also be available. The first post-plan BAG meetings will be held March 19th in Cokeville for the Bear River Basin and March 20th in Pinedale for the Green River Basin. These meetings will be held every four months after the formal planning process has been completed to discuss water resources topics and implementation of the plan.

The Northeast BAG will be meeting tomorrow night and will probably finish their issues identification work. The Wyoming Water Development Commission is trying to arrange a tour of a coal mine on August 9 in conjunction with the late summer BAG meetings. Members of both the Powder/Tongue and Northeast BAGs will be invited to participate in the tour.

The 2001 Wyoming State Legislature authorized river basin planning efforts in the Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basins. Basin advisory group formation meetings will be held in Thermopolis May 14<sup>th</sup> and Jackson May 15<sup>th</sup> for these two new basins.

**Consultant Update – HKM Engineering**

Joe Lord presented a status report of the activities of the consulting team. The work under Task 2, which is developing a profile of water use in the basins, is nearly complete and the team's focus is moving to Task 3, which is determining available surface water and groundwater availability. Task 4 activities have begun with the collection of economic and demographic data.

Question: Will the ditch operation memoranda be obtained from the Board of Control?

Response: These memoranda were not obtained from the Board of Control but were prepared by the consulting team based on interviews, record data collection, and site visits.

## **Water Rights Attribution – HKM Engineering**

Joe Lord explained the water rights attribution process. Specifically covered were: an explanation of water right attribution; why there is a need to define water right attributes; how the water rights are identified and attributed; and what is produced at the completion of the process.

Question: How are instream flow water rights identified?

Response: Instream flow water rights are identified under a separate process using the actual permits that have been granted.

Question: Will coalbed methane water use be identified?

Response: All coalbed methane wells will be inventoried and an estimate will be made of the quantity of water produced by these wells.

Question: Will water right permits be rectified to lands that are actually irrigated?

Response: No.

## **Coalbed Methane Coordination Coalition – Mickey Steward, CBM Coordinator**

Mickey Steward began her presentation by indicating she was hired to help resolve issues associated with the rapidly evolving and developing coalbed methane play in Wyoming. Using aerial photography Mickey displayed and explained the transboundary issues associated with CBM development. She defined transboundary issues as issues that are not completely resolved by the execution of a surface use agreement because the impact of the development extends beyond the boundary of the agreement. Issues presented included:

- Control of sediment and erosion during a rainfall event
- Land settlement
- Water trespass, defined as when water is discharged and the receiving landowner does not want the water for any of a number of reasons
- Water retention, defined as when water is retained on a CBM site and is not delivered at the time the downstream irrigator is accustomed to receiving it
- Reservoir construction
- Road construction
- CBM withdrawals causing other wells to go dry
- Seepage of gas from orphan wells
- CBM discharge water killing livestock
- Temporary wetland creation resulting from CBM discharges that are eliminated when CBM production stops
- Sodium adsorption ratio
- Social and economic impacts
- Noise from compressor stations
- Power lines versus on-site power generation

- Visual impacts to viewscape
- Transmitting noxious weeds
- Habitat preservation
- Fugitive dust and other air pollutants from power generators
- Use of roads and dust generated from roads.

Question: How can Mickey be contacted?

Response: Phone number in Buffalo is 684-7614, email address is cbmcc@vcn.com.

Question: What is the background leading to the development of the CBM Coordination Coalition?

Response: Five counties (Campbell, Sheridan, Johnson, Converse and Carbon), the Lake DeSmet Conservation District, the Campbell County Conservation District and the State of Wyoming, formed The CBM Coordination Coalition. Mickey serves as the coordinator for the CBMCC.

Question: Does amount of methane vary between wells?

Response: Yes, methane production varies between 0.2 to 500 million cubic feet per day per well, depending on the location of the well, the quantity of water pumped, and the age of the well. Information on CBM development can be obtained from the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission website.

Question: Are there lessons to be learned from other areas where CBM development has been occurring for a longer period of time?

Response: Yes, however there is always the argument that there are significant differences between the Wyoming Powder River Basin development and the development in the other areas.

Question: What is the definition of an orphaned water well?

Response: A hole in the ground that nobody knows anything about or takes any responsibility for. These wells can present a problem when they discharge water and/or gas.

### **Issues Identification Process**

The facilitators explained that as of the last meeting the BAG had identified ten major water resources issues and associated sub-issues for the Powder/Tongue River Basins. At the last meeting the BAG began the process of combining and rearranging the subissues under the main issues and completed this process for the **Future Use Projection** issue.

The facilitators explained that the next step in the process was to prioritize the sub-issues under the main issue by basin. The BAG discussed how the basins should be subdivided for the purpose of prioritizing subissues and agreed on the following subdivisions: Little Bighorn River; Upper Tongue River (above the mouth of Goose Creek); Lower Tongue River; Upper Powder River (above the headgate of the Sahara Ditch); Lower Powder River; and the Little Powder River. Through extensive discussion the BAG prioritized sub-issues for the Little Bighorn and Lower Tongue River basins as presented in the following table:

**Issue: Future Use Projections**

Sub-issues	Little Bighorn River	Upper Tongue River	Lower Tongue River	Upper Powder River	Lower Powder River	Little Powder River
Technology, Industry and Energy Use	3		1			
Agriculture / Technology	2		1			
Aesthetic / Visual / Recreation / Tourism Use	1		3			
Carrying Capacity – Sustainability	1		1			
Population Projections / Pressures on Infrastructure	3		2			
Government Use (Forest Service, BLM, State, etc.)	2		4			

The facilitators explained that prioritization of sub-issues for the other sub-basins will continue at the April meeting. The BAG will then address the remaining nine issues.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:05 pm.