

**Snake/Salt Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Thayne, Wyoming
February 13, 2002**

Welcome

Facilitators Cathy Lujan and Sherri Gregory-Schreiner opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Thayne Senior Center. Each person in attendance was given the chance to introduce himself or herself. Following the introductions, the agenda for the meeting was reviewed. There were approximately 35 people in attendance.

The following schedule was agreed upon for the next three Snake/Salt BAG meetings:

Wednesday, April 10, 2002 – Jackson
Wednesday, June 12, 2002 – Alta
Wednesday, August 14, 2002 – Moran (Jackson Lake Lodge)

After some discussion, it was determined that the times would remain the same for the meetings (6 – 9 pm).

Basin Planning Update – Barry Lawrence, WWDC

Barry Lawrence gave a brief review of the items discussed at the last BAG meeting, and distributed handouts from that meeting. Barry also presented an update on the planning process in the other basins of the State. He indicated that the Wind/Bighorn BAG Meeting had been held the previous day, and approximately 75 people had attended. Also, Barry discussed the final presentations held last month for the Powder/Tongue and Northeast basins.

Schedules for future BAG meetings for the Bear and Green River basins were discussed. The Bear River BAG will meet in Cokeville on March 18, and the Green River BAG will meet in Lyman on March 19.

Water Resources Data System Update – Robin Gray, WRDS

Robin Gray presented an update regarding the current snowpack and future runoff forecast for the State. As of Monday, the snowpack in the basin was at 80% of normal, however it was noted by some in attendance that this percentage is dropping approximately 1% per day at this time due to lack of additional snowfall. Robin also noted that the lowest current snowpack in Wyoming was in the South Platte basin, which was currently at 53%. Based on current snowpack data and long-term weather predictions, the runoff in the Snake/Salt basin is forecast to be 10% to 15% below average.

Robin presented information available from the WRDS website, such as the Monday Morning Snow Report. The WRDS website is located at <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu>. Also, maps of landslide areas in Western Wyoming have been digitized and are accessible from this site. A handout was also distributed containing numerous sources of Wyoming water information on the web. In other items of interest, Robin indicated that the Governor's Drought Task Force would be meeting next month, and would discuss initial recommendations based on the snowpack and precipitation conditions at that time. Also, WRDS is beginning work on a new climate atlas for Wyoming.

TMDL's and Effect on Watershed Planning – Chuck Harnish, DEQ

Chuck Harnish discussed regulations and issues regarding TMDL's (total maximum daily loads) for streams and rivers in the State. Chuck indicated that a TMDL is the level of a pollutant that the stream can handle and still provide its beneficial use. He stated that the Clean Water Act requires a 305(b) Report, which covers statewide water quality, and a 303(d) list, which is a list of impaired streams in the State. In preparation of this list, the DEQ first classifies the various water bodies according to the use of the stream. Standards are then applied to the stream, both numeric standards that are measurable and narrative standards that are more subjective. Data on the streams are then collected, and then reviewed to determine reliability. The evidence is then weighed to determine whether or not the stream should be placed on the list. Chuck stated that the purpose of the list is to notify the public of possible water quality problems in the State, and also to prioritize the funding and effort put into water quality. Also, the list helps DEQ with decisions on which TMDL's to work on.

Watershed plans were also discussed. These plans are generally locally led, and can address and monitor a variety of pollutants. Chuck stated that the first phase of these plans is to know and understand the resources. The second phase is to formulate and evaluate alternatives, and to decide the action to be taken. The third phase is to implement the plan and evaluate its success. Chuck indicated that there are approximately a dozen watershed plans currently in progress across Wyoming. He also stated that if local groups are working and progressing on a watershed plan for an impaired stream, that stream would generally not be a high priority for DEQ.

During the question and answer period, Chuck stated that the most widespread pollutant in streams in Wyoming is fecal coliform.

Local Basin Issues – Jeff Lewis, NRCS (Afton Area Office)

Jeff Lewis indicated that he was scheduled to discuss a local water issue of interest, so he chose to discuss wellhead protection. He stated that the purpose of wellhead protection is to protect drinking water by properly managing the area around a well. In Wyoming, approximately 75% of residences rely on groundwater, completely or in part, for drinking water. Also, many wells in an area can obtain water from the same aquifer, which means that if one well is polluted, all of the wells obtaining water from the same aquifer may also become polluted. Jeff stated that cleaning up a polluted aquifer can be very difficult

and expensive, and that pollution prevention by means of wellhead protection is a much more desirable alternative.

Jeff presented the best management practices (BMP's) for wellhead protection. The first is the location of the well, which should take into account surface drainage and location of potential contaminants. Second is the construction of the well, which should be properly sealed, capped, and vented. Various types of wells and their construction were presented. Third, wells should be properly maintained to help prevent contamination. Backflow prevention, sewer system upgrades, and general testing and maintenance were discussed. Jeff mentioned that an old pump may leak lubricants and so forth, which could contaminate a well. Fourth, new wells should be constructed to current standards by a competent driller. Fifth, abandoned wells should be properly sealed to prevent contamination. Jeff stated that it can be relatively simple and inexpensive to seal an abandoned well, depending upon the well characteristics. In closing, Jeff stated that owning a well is a large responsibility, and that contamination at one well can affect many people.

Consultant Update / GIS Mapping - Sunrise Engineering

Ryan Erickson presented a brief overview of the basin planning process, and indicated the types of data and information collected throughout the study. This data involves the various water uses in the basin, as well as the system of rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs. To effectively compile and utilize this data, geographic information system (GIS) technology is being utilized as part of the basin plan. Bob King presented the GIS, showing how the data interacts with the mapping. As an example, locations of irrigated lands were shown, along with canals and headgates that serve the irrigated land. Other information such as USGS topographic quadrangle maps, forest boundaries, geology, and soil types were shown and discussed. Use of aerial photos was also discussed by Bob, including the advantages and limitations of their use.

Economic Development in the Basin – Roger Bower, Wyoming Business Council

Roger Bower discussed the current economic situation in the basin. Roger indicated that the number of tourists has been down this winter, which corresponds to a reduction in collected income tax. This reduction in tax revenue has significant impacts on government. Roger mentioned that there are approximately 80 manufacturers located in the Jackson area. While many of these products are actually produced in Jackson, some are made in the Star Valley area, while still others are made elsewhere in the world. Companies utilizing production from other parts of the world operate with just the company management located in Jackson. Roger also indicated that the Star Valley area serves as a bedroom community for Jackson, as evidenced by the commuter traffic each day.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.