

**Snake/Salt River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Alpine, Wyoming
October 9, 2002**

Welcome

Facilitators Cathy Lujan and Sherri Gregory-Schreiner opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Civic Center in Alpine. A light meal was provided to BAG members and other participants in the meeting. 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, December 18, 2002, 6:00 p.m. - Jackson
Wednesday, January 29, 2003, 6:00 p.m. - Afton
Wednesday, March 26, 2003, 6:00 p.m. - Alpine

Basin Planning Update – Barry Lawrence, WWDC

Barry Lawrence distributed handouts from the last BAG meeting held in Moran. He also discussed the activities in other basins across the State. A BAG meeting for the Wind/Bighorn River basin had been held the previous day, which included discussions on glaciers, hydropower, future water use opportunities, and recreation. Other Basin Advisory Group meetings are scheduled for November, with the Bear River BAG meeting in Evanston on the 18th, the Green River BAG meeting in Green River on the 19th, the Powder/Tongue BAG meeting in Sheridan on the 20th, and the Northeast BAG meeting in Moorcroft on the 21st. Barry invited anyone to attend these meetings, as well as follow the progress of the various basins on the State Water Plan website.

Snake River Resource Management Plan – Kellie Roadifer, Bureau of Land Management

Kellie Roadifer, Planning Coordinator for the BLM Pinedale Office, presented information regarding the Snake River Resource Management Plan (RMP). BLM currently manages 1,073 acres of land in the Jackson Hole area, mainly consisting of small parcels scattered across the valley south from Grand Teton National Park. The RMP will address issues such as recreation, access, land use, wildlife habitat, and gravel resources on these parcels. The plan is currently under internal review, and it is anticipated that the document will be made public in early December. There will be a 90-day public comment period, which will include a public meeting to be held in Jackson on January 28.

Kellie stated that an economist had been hired to evaluate the non-market value of the parcels of land. Also, they looked at the willingness of people to pay to leave the parcels as-is. Preliminary results indicate that the public wants the parcels to remain under public ownership, and that they are utilized for wildlife habitat, not gravel mining.

There are 6 alternatives in the RMP, although the alternative preferred by BLM has not yet been made public. Kellie explained that alternative #1 was for no action. Alternative #2 consists of development, with the river corridor parcels closed to oil and mineral extraction but all parcels available for gravel mining. Alternative #3 promotes conservation, with no mineral or gravel extraction allowed. Permits would be required for outfitters, and livestock permits would be eliminated. Kellie stated that there are currently four livestock permits located on the larger parcels. Alternative #4 would keep the grazing as-is until the permit holder changes their land use, and then the permits would be eliminated. Alternative #5 would dispose of the parcels through sale. She indicated that this would likely result in a loss of public access. Alternative #6 would transfer the lands to another public entity that would manage the lands for public use.

Questions were asked about having separate alternatives for individual parcels. Kellie stated that this might happen later in the planning process.

Future Water Demand Projections – Ed Harvey and Marc Carey, BBC Research & Consulting

Ed Harvey presented their findings regarding economic, demographic, and water demand projections for the Snake/Salt River basin. He stated that his presentation last year, which covered the current status of the basin, indicated that agriculture was flat or declining, tourism and recreation was rapidly expanding, and that other economic sectors were modest and stable. Since that time, they have been working on projections of key economic and water use activities in the basin. This is done by selecting a forecast technique, examining agricultural and recreation prospects, and creating economic and demographic projections.

Ed reviewed various forecasting techniques, pointing out the pros and cons to each. Due to limitations in projections done by others, BBC utilized their own methodology specific for the basin plan. This methodology consists of analyzing the economic base, modeling the economic and demographic future using planning scenarios, and then using the results to determine future water use. Three scenarios were used in the process. The high scenario was the most optimistic outlook that could reasonably occur. The low scenario was the lowest growth or largest contraction that could reasonably occur. The mid scenario represents the most realistic level of growth likely to occur. Ed stated that an interesting interaction between agriculture and seasonal homes is occurring in the basin. As tourism, recreation, and seasonal homes increase, land values also increase, which results in the reduction of agricultural land as it is converted into residential use. He stated that this relationship between sectors makes the mid scenario most likely to occur.

Ed stated that many local farmers and ranchers were interviewed to determine trends in the agricultural sector. From their research, they have found that residential development pressure and increasing land prices are reducing grazing and farm land. Also, grazing on public lands is becoming more restrictive over time. Two-thirds of the cattle in the basin are grazed on public land at some time during the year. Also, there has been a historic decline in sheep and cattle numbers, which support the hay demand in the area. The only exception to the decline was

horses, whose numbers have increased with second home development and tourism. As a result, projections for agriculture were for a decline in all but the high scenario.

Economic activity related to tourism and seasonal residents was reviewed. Ed stated that there has been extraordinary expansion in tourism and recreation, and that this growth has covered all seasons. This growth is likely to continue, although federal land managers are concerned about over use. All scenarios show an increase in tourism and recreation related jobs, as well as overall population. There was a discussion regarding the projected number of horses. It was determined that horse population has very little impact on future water use.

Marc Carey discussed water demand projections for the Snake/Salt River basin. The projections were for 30 years, and included normal and maximum water use years. Water diversions and consumptive use were included. Water use factors for agricultural, municipal, and recreational use were assumed.

Marc presented current and projected water use for agriculture, municipal, industrial, and recreation uses. Similar to the projections of agricultural activity, only the high scenario showed an increase in agricultural water use in the future. Municipal use is to increase with the growing population, however industrial use is not projected to have much growth. Recreational use is projected to increase due to potential expansions of snowmaking at the ski resorts as well as at golf courses.

Figures were shown to illustrate the scale of water use for the different sectors. Agriculture represents the vast majority of use, with municipal/industrial and recreation representing a small portion of the overall use. Marc also presented current and projected water use broken down by month to illustrate the sharp increase in demand during the summer months. This increase is driven mainly by agriculture, but is also supported by summer increases in municipal and recreational use.

Marc discussed environmental water use, and presented use figures for uses such as minimum flows in the Snake River below Jackson Lake, instream flows, and various wetlands. He indicated that there is uncertainty in the projected environmental use numbers, as the in-stream flow sections are not currently permitted. BAG members discussed the salmon issue and what impact it might have for the basin.

Short List of Future Water Use Opportunities – Evan Simpson, Sunrise Engineering

Evan Simpson discussed the creation of a Short List of future water use possibilities. He indicated that the Long List was created by the BAG during the last BAG meeting and subsequent input from the BAG membership. The resulting Long List was then reviewed by the consultant team to determine what to include in the Short List. Reasons behind removing potential projects from the Long List included lack of feasibility, type of project, and so forth. The resulting Short List was then reviewed by a set of criteria to determine individual project feasibility. This criteria consisted of the following:

1. Water Availability

2. Financial Feasibility
3. Public and Political Acceptability
4. Available Users/Sponsors
5. Legal and Environmental Constraints
6. Multiple Use Feasibility

Evan stated that the project team evaluated the Short List in order to have a variety of input. It was acknowledged that the degree of background information varied from project to project, and that assumptions had to be made during the process. The results of the evaluation were presented to the BAG for discussion. Input from the BAG was received on the evaluation, with comments on what may be changed and what was acceptable. Pros and cons of various projects, such as cloud seeding, and Swift Creek Reservoir enlargement were discussed. Evaluation of the Short List will continue during the next month, and will be presented as part of the draft plan presentation in December.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.