



Water Planning News

Green and Bear River Basin Planning Underway

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Special points of interest:

- Open Houses for Proposed Northeast and Powder-Tongue Basins scheduled.
- New River Basin Planning Staff Hired
- Water Resources Data System hires a new coordinator.

The 1999 Session of the Wyoming Legislature authorized the Water Development Commission to initiate the new statewide water planning process. This effort officially commenced in the Bear and Green River Basins in July with the execution of consultant contracts. Forsgren & Associates Inc. is preparing the Bear River Basin Plan, and States West Water Resources Corporation is working on the Green River Basin Plan. Completion is set for October and December, 2000, respectively.

Once the consultants were selected they were introduced to the Basin Advisory Groups (BAG), and work on both sides commenced. The consultants began to collect information for the extensive databases to be compiled as part of the plans, and the BAGs started the arduous process of completing a document identifying the important water issues for their basins. This process was initiated in the Bear Basin during the feasibility phase in 1998 culminating in an issues document, while the Green River BAG is in the process of completing this effort. The issues identification documents are an excellent resource for the Basin, and very

important to the Planning Team (Wyoming Water Development Commission, State Engineer's Office, Water Resources Data System) in scoping the direction for the Basin Plan.

The consultants are making substantial progress on several of the database generation tasks. Those include irrigated lands mapping, water rights attribution, hydrologic modeling, and population and demand projections. As this work progresses it will be presented at BAG meetings for review and input. When the individual products are ready for public review they will be published to the Water Planning Process website: <http://waterplan.state.wy.us>

Concurrent with the BAG meetings the members requested informational presentations on water issues. This has been an excellent way for the BAGs to receive updates on compact issues, endangered species concerns, water project operations, inter-state negotiations, etc. The BAG also requested presentations from local water interests relative to each meeting location. These have been



Green River BAG members working on issue development.

informative and very interesting.

The Bear River BAG has gone to an alternating month meeting schedule, with the second Monday in January, March, and May as the upcoming meeting dates. The Green BAG is meeting the second Tuesday of each month. All BAG members receive notices prior to each meeting, and their reference notebooks are updated on a monthly basis with mailings, etc.

Please feel free to attend any river basin planning meetings, and, as always, if you have questions please give us a call or send an email. Also please check here regularly and look around. There are lots of good things happening.

Basin Advisory Groups Formed

Key to the River Basin Planning Process is the formation of a Basin Advisory Group (BAG) in each of the basins. Both the Bear and Green River Basins have active Basin Advisory Groups, which are playing an integral role in the creation of a water plan for their individual basin. The BAG is comprised of citizens living within the basin and is called upon to provide public input to state staff and hired consultants as they develop the plan. This includes, but is not limited to, assisting with consultant selection, identifying priority issues and concerns for the basin, advising the planning team on the basin plan, and reviewing consultant work products.

As individuals living in each of the basins determined the structure for each of the Basin Advisory Groups, currently there are two very different BAG

“models” operating in Southwestern Wyoming. The Bear River Basin Advisory Group has been in existence for more than a year and was an active participant in the “feasibility phase” of river basin planning for the State of Wyoming. This group is comprised of 15 individuals representing various interests in the basin (agriculture, municipalities, recreation, environment, etc.) Other citizens in the basin who were not selected to serve on the BAG are welcome at the meeting and encouraged to participate and share ideas with the planning team, consultants and BAG members in attendance. Federal and state agency representatives are equally welcomed at the meeting as a “technical resource”, but do not serve on the BAG itself. The group operates on a consensus-based approach, as no votes are taken. Meetings occur

on a bi-monthly basis.

Individuals in the Green River Basin charged with forming a BAG felt that it was important to include everyone as a BAG member, and there was to be no distinction as to who “sat at the table” and who did not. Anyone who attended the meeting could be a BAG member. Due to this “open” approach, BAG membership is more than 100 persons, with attendance averaging around 50 per meeting. Furthermore, given the expanse of the basin, meetings are rotated between each of the sub-basins. As before, the group operates on a consensus-based approach, as no votes are taken. Meetings occur on a monthly basis.



Basin Advisory Group Meeting in Evanston.

WRDS Hires New Coordinator

The Water Resources Data System (WRDS) hired a new coordinator in August. Dennis Feeney filled the vacancy created when Barry Lawrence took a job at the Wyoming Water Development Commission. Feeney has set some important goals for the future. He feels that WRDS should be “unique and complimentary

to all other information clearing houses in the State.” In addition as the new coordinator he wants WRDS to be recognized for their willingness to work for a “diverse clientele.” To accomplish these goals Feeney plans to participate in such groups as the Wyoming Geographic Information Advisory Council, the

Wyoming Libraries Consortium, the State Water Forum, and the Wyoming Water Association. A tour of WRDS facilities is available. Presentations can also be given to groups who are interested. For more information please go to the WRDS website at: <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/>

Planning Staff Hired

During the 1999 Session of the Legislature funding for additional planning staff was authorized. The authorization provided funding for three new positions in the Water Development Office, one in the State Engineer's Office, and one in the Water Resources Data System at the University.

The WWDO hired the following people:

Jon Wade was hired as the head of the river basin planning effort. Jon has been with the WWDO in water project planning since 1980. Jon is a hydrogeologist and a licensed professional geologist.

Barry Lawrence was hired to fill the position of river basin planner. Barry comes to the WWDO from

the Water Resources Data System at the University of Wyoming where he was the director for 14 years. Barry has extensive experience with water resource data, databases, and data resource requirements.

Jodie Jackson was hired to fill the position of river basin planning specialist. Jodie comes to the WWDO as a new graduate from CSU in Bioresources and Agricultural Engineering. She has experience in agriculture from jobs with the USDA and Agro Engineering. She is a Wyoming native with prior residence in Laramie for 18 years.

Chace Tavelli was hired by the State Engineer's Office to fill their river basin planning position. Chace is a Wyoming native and

graduated from the University of Wyoming with a BS degree in Civil Engineering. Chace comes to the SEO from the Wyoming Department of Transportation where he was employed as a hydrologist.

Robin Gray was hired by the Water Resources Data System to fill their GIS/River Basin planning position. Robin is a graduate student in Geology/ Water Resources at the University of Wyoming, and has considerable experience with databases and GIS.

Consultants Selected for Green and Bear Basins

The Water Development Commission completed selection of consulting firms for the first phase of implementation of the State Water Plan. A team led by States West Water Resources Corporation of Cheyenne was selected to develop the Green River Basin plan. Other members of the team include Boyle Engineering, who assisted with the feasibility study completed in 1998, and Purcell Consulting, also of Cheyenne. Gary

Watts of Laramie is working on the economic forecasting and demand projections for the States West team, while Frank Carr, Water Rights Services, LLC of Cheyenne is doing the water rights attribution.

A team consisting of Forsgren Associates of Evanston, Leonard Rice and Associates, and Anderson Consulting Engineers is completing the Bear River plan. BRC Research and Consulting is handling the economics and fore-

casting, while Frank Carr, Water Rights Services, LLC of Cheyenne is completing the water rights attribution for this basin as well.

Both teams were given the notice to proceed in July of 1999. The Bear River final report is due October 2000, while the Green River final report is due December 2000.



Map of the Bear and Green River Basins



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DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

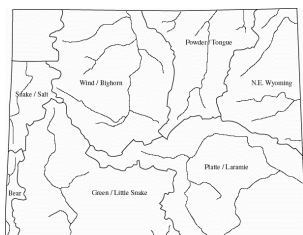
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Northeast Wyoming and Powder/Tongue River Basin Plans



**State River Basin Delina-
tions**

The original schedule outlined by the Water Development Commission for the statewide water planning process dictates that river basin plans should be completed for the entire state within five years. To maintain that schedule the Water Development Commission has submitted a request to the 2000 Legislature for authorization of the next two river basin plans. That request is for a total of \$800,000 for consultant services needed to complete the Powder and Tongue River Basin Plan as one project, and the Northeast Wyoming River Basin Plan (Little Missouri, Belle Fourche,

Cheyenne, Niobrara) as the second project. If authorized by the legislature, the consultants selected to prepare these plans should be under contract by July.

Concurrent with this request to the legislature the WWDC will hold several public meetings in the project areas to introduce the statewide water planning process, and to begin formation of Basin Advisory Groups (BAGs). The first meetings will be an open house format, and will be held in Buffalo on January 25 at Colonel Bozeman's

Banquet Facility from 4-7 pm, and at Newcastle on January 26 Michaels Senior Center from 4-7 pm. Displays and presentations are planned.

Over the next few months following the open houses BAGs will be formed, and the first BAG task of identifying the water issues important to the basins will be initiated by the BAG. This is important work - please attend and participate in the process for the benefit of the residents of Wyoming.