



Aspen Alley

Water News

Framework Water Plan Update

Progress on the Framework Water Plan was reported at the 50% progress meeting on July 11 in Casper. Progress meetings have been scheduled for 5%, 50% and 90% project completion. Representatives from each Basin Advisory Group (BAG) attended the meetings to discuss basin issues and to relay information from the Framework consultant back to their groups. The BAGs learned that each basin is unique but many issues identified by the seven basins are similar.

Murray Schroeder, project manager for the Western Water Consultants (WWC) team hired to complete the Framework Water Plan, attended both the 5% and 50% progress meetings to give an update. One of the first tasks the team completed was a review of the seven basin plans. During this review the Framework team discovered several areas where the plans were inconsistent or inaccurate. This information will be used later when the individual plans are updated.

Phil Ogle of the Wyoming Water Develop-

ment Office also gave a presentation at the 50% progress meeting. In his presentation, it was stated that the Water Development Office will be seeking funding to update two basins this fall. Mr. Schroeder will be responsible for making the recommendation in October regarding which two basin plans should be updated first. Several factors will be considered, including the following:

- The length of time since the last plan was written;
- Which basin has the most issues;
- Which basin has had the most water use changes; and
- Which basin has had the most population gain.

One of the topics that will be addressed in the next round of basin planning is groundwater. WWC's team is responsible for making recommendations on how groundwater should be updated. In recent years the drought has highlighted the need for better groundwater data. This information will be used to help protect and manage one of Wyoming's most valuable resources.

A major task the WWC team will be completing soon is the BAG survey. A survey will be e-mailed to those people who have regularly attended the BAG meetings to gain their perspective of the Framework planning process. If you have attended one of the BAG meetings and included your email on the sign-in sheet, you may see a short survey in your inbox in the next couple of weeks. Your response would be greatly appreciated.



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Special points of interest:

- As always, look for activities in your area in the Calendar of Water Events

Platte River Basin Plan is Completed

The last of the basin plans is complete and ready for distribution. Trihydro Corporation has put the finishing touches on the report and executive summary. The Platte River Basin was the first basin to develop an online presentation tool that is being called the Platte River Water Atlas. The Water Atlas presents many of the results, tables, and maps of the plan in an easy to use online format that can be printed from any home computer. The online products will be available shortly so keep your eyes open for them at <http://waterplan.state.wy.us/>

News from the WWDC

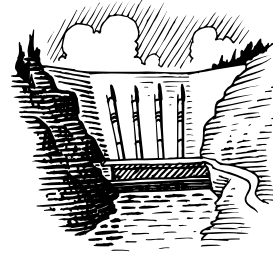
Changes Occurring at the Water Development Office

Over the last several years, which have been punctuated by drought, requests for projects and studies have increased. In some years, the number of applications doubled from the average number of requests. The large number of projects has stretched the Water Development Office staff and resources. Staff time spent on individual project development, direction and coordination has decreased with the large number of projects potentially affecting project results. This is especially true for the

construction division. Projects move from the planning division to the construction division as they advance from Level II planning to Level III final design and construction. Completing final design and construction of a project can take a number of years, which causes a build up of projects. If more projects are being initiated at Level III than are being closed out, the work load increases.

In addition, there has been increased interest over the last several years, in dam and reservoir storage projects. Interest in building

storage projects has been expressed by the governor and by the legislature. The legislature approved creation and funding of Water Development Account No. 3 in 2005 specifically for the construction of dams and reservoirs. A new section of the water planning division was also proposed by the governor and approved by the legislature in 2005. This legislation created three new positions to concentrate on development of dam and reser-



voir projects.

The Water Development Commission and Office have been working diligently to address the changes that are occurring. The planning division, dam and reservoir section has been established and efforts are underway to fill these positions. There are a number of projects underway that could result in development of dams and reservoirs.

(Continued on page 4)

News from Water Resources Data System/State Climate Office

New WRDS Director. Big changes are underway at the Water Resources Data System (WRDS). Beginning in June 2006, Dr. Stephen Gray was hired to be the new director of WRDS. Steve comes from the U.S. Geological Survey in Tucson, Arizona where he worked as a research scientist studying drought and water availability throughout the western U.S. Steve is also a graduate of the University of Wyoming, and brings a wide range of experience in water resources to the position. Earlier this year Governor Freudenthal appointed Steve to be the Wyoming State Climatologist. Since then Steve has taken a very active roll in statewide drought monitoring, and he is working on a number of projects aimed at improving the access to climatic data, forecasts, and analysis for Wyoming.

New Products Under Development. WRDS is

the largest single provider of water and climate-related information for Wyoming. Some of the most important products currently "in the works" focus on combining information from a variety of partner agencies and, in turn, providing new and unique products for understanding water and climate. In one example WRDS' hydrologist Tom Dietrich is working on a suite of projects that use snowpack data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, streamflow measurements from the U.S. Geological Survey, and temperature observations from the National Weather Service to better track runoff from high mountain areas. Likewise Tony Bergantino, senior WRDS programmer, is compiling updated maps of statewide precipitation from a vari-

ety of sources. These maps will aid in water resources planning and drought monitoring, and provide an invaluable reference tool for people throughout the state. Tony and the WRDS staff are also engaged in a variety of "salvage" projects that will make numerous hardcopy datasets—many of them quite rare or unique—more widely available over the internet.

WRDS Library. In addition to the wide variety of electronic and hard copy databases the office houses, WRDS also features one of the most outstanding water libraries in the western U.S. Recently, head librarian Barbara Muller has been working with the WWDC staff to expand the substantial collection of water-related documents and consultant's reports. Earlier this summer

the library acquired a large-format optical scanner that has already proved invaluable in preserving many of the one-of-a-kind records WRDS houses. WRDS is also very near an agreement with the University of Wyoming that would allow the staff to provide online copies of every water and climate-related Master's thesis or Doctoral dissertation produced at the university within days of a student's graduation.

Completed products and access to many resources from the WRDS library are available at <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/>. Information on Wyoming's climate and current drought conditions are available at <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/wsc.html>. For more information please contact Steve Gray at (307) 766-6659 or by email at wrds@uwyo.edu.



What's Up in the State Engineer's Office...

Hello from the State Engineer's Office. In this newsletter, we will look at the Belle Fourche River basin, the Yellowstone River basin and the Missouri River basin.



Belle Fourche: The Belle Fourche River Compact divides the water of the Belle Fourche River between Wyoming and South Dakota. Unlike several of our other compacts, the Belle Fourche Compact does not specifically provide for a formal Commission. But the two states determined there were enough issues in the basin that an annual meeting would be a good forum for the two states, the Bureau of Reclamation Rapid City office and the two main irrigation districts (Crook County Irrigation District in Wyoming and Belle Fourche Irrigation District in South Dakota) to meet and discuss concerns. The last meeting was held December 8, 2005 in Belle Fourche, South Dakota. Doug Yadon with SEH Inc. presented the final report information from their Level I WWDC study reviewing Crook County reservoir sites. Wyoming will host the next meeting sometime within the first two weeks of December 2006.

Yellowstone River: The

Yellowstone Compact between Wyoming and Montana covers the 4 main tributaries to the Yellowstone River (Clarks Fork, Wind/Bighorn, Tongue and Powder Rivers). The Commission is comprised of Pat Tyrrell, Wyoming State Engineer and a yet to be appointed commissioner from the state of Montana. The former Commissioner was Jack Stults, Administrator of the Water Resources Division, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, who recently retired. Bill Horak with the U.S. Geological Survey is the Federal Chairman. The Commission met on April 13, 2006 in Thermopolis. At the height of the past few years' drought, Montana had raised concerns over administration interpretations of the compact. Pat Tyrrell requested and was granted funds during the 2006 legislative session for a joint study between the two states to look at water usage in the Tongue River basin and the distribution and priority of water rights in both states.

Coalbed natural gas was also a topic discussed during the Commission meeting. Pat Tyrrell stated that the Wyoming legislature established a Coalbed Natural Gas Water Use Task Force during the 2006 session. The task force is charged with reviewing current statutes and regulations; produced-water management alternatives; and preparing a report to the legislature.

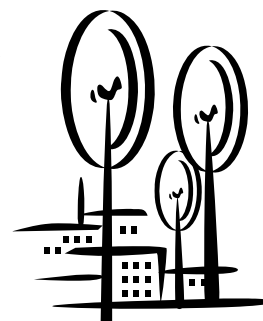
For more information about the Yellowstone River Compact, including agendas and minutes of past

meetings, please visit the website at: <http://cr.water.usgs.gov/YRCC/index.html>

Missouri River: The Missouri River flows approximately 2,500 miles from its headwaters near Three Forks, Montana to its confluence with the Mississippi River just north of St. Louis, Missouri. The Missouri River basin is the largest subbasin in the Mississippi River basin and covers more than 500,000 square miles in all or part of 10 states and numerous Indian tribal reservations. When looking at a map of the Missouri River basin, one can see that approximately two-thirds of the watersheds in Wyoming flow to the Missouri River.

Since the 1930's, the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) has built six dams in the upper basin which can store up to 73 million acre-feet of water in the reservoirs. The following is a list of those reservoirs, starting upstream and working downstream: Fort Peck Dam, Garrison Dam, Oahe Dam, Big Bend Dam, Fort Randall Dam, and Gavins Point Dam.

Major uses of the river include power generation, recreation, navigation, fish and wildlife, drinking water, irrigation, and industrial needs. Managing the river for these uses also has to be balanced with the needs of endangered and threatened species, making this a very precarious balancing act.



The Missouri River Association of States and Tribes or MoRAST (formerly known as the Missouri River Basin Association or MRBA) was formed in July, 2006 to facilitate management of the Missouri River natural resources, including water resources, fish and wildlife among the basin states, tribes, Congress and federal agencies. Their primary goal is to protect and enhance the future of the Missouri basin by combining natural resources management, water resources, fish and wildlife, and consideration of the impacts to the economic, historical, cultural, and social resources.

MoRAST will represent nonfederal game and fish agencies, tribal interests, and water management agencies. Members of the association will be comprised of up to 2 representatives from the seven participating states (Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming), and up to six tribal members. Wyoming's representative to MoRAST is Sue Lowry of the State Engineer's Office and Jodee Pring as her alternate.

The first official meeting of MoRAST was held August 31 and Sept. 1 in Denver, CO.

If you have any questions concerning interstate water issues, please contact the Interstate Streams

Division of the State Engineer's Office at 777-5927.



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Another important role of the dams and reservoirs section will be management and operation of High Savery Dam and Reservoir. Construction of this state owned project was completed in 2003 and the dam and reservoir has been in the initial operation mode

for the last two years.

The legislature also approved two new construction division positions in 2006 to help with the large number of construction projects. These positions will allow more oversight during the final design and construction of projects. These

positions have recently been filled.



Calendar of Water Events

October 4-6, 2006 - Western States Water Council Mtg, Sheridan

October 5, 2006 - Water, Drought & WY's Climate Workshop, Laramie

November 1-3, 2006 - WWA 2006 Annual Mtg, Casper

November 8-10, 2006 - WWDC Workshop/Mtg, Casper, WY

November 20-21, 2006 - Bear River Commission Mtg, Salt Lake City

November 28, 2006 - Colorado River Issues Mtg, Kemmerer

December 5-6, 2006 - Yellowstone River Compact Com-

mission Mtg, Billings, MT

December 13-14, 2006 - WWDC Workshop/Mtg, Cheyenne

December 13-15, 2006 - Colorado River Water Users Association Mtg, Las Vegas

February-March, 2007
90% Progress Review
Framework Mtg, Riverton

Snake/Salt BAG -
Thayne

Bear BAG - Cokeville
Green BAG - TBA

Wind/Bighorn BAG -
Cody

Powder/Tongue BAG -
Buffalo

NE WY BAG - Moorcroft

Platte BAG - Saratoga