

Northeast Wyoming River Basin Advisory Group Meeting Record
Newcastle, WY
March 21, 2002

Welcome

River Basin Planner Barry Lawrence welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. All attendees introduced themselves, followed by a review of the overall meeting agenda. A sign-in sheet was passed around to record attendance. Meetings are scheduled July 18 in Lusk and November 21 in Moorcroft.

Water Development Commission Report

Jon Wade, River Basin Planning Administrator, indicated both the planning and construction bills were uncontested during the legislative session. 32 planning projects are currently in the consultant selection process. Opportunities in the basin include: Ranchester Master Plan, Ten Sleep/Hyattville Master Plan, York/South Side Ditch Master Plan, Buffalo Tank, Gillette CBM Aquifer Storage and Retrieval, Dayton Groundwater, Pine Haven Well, Sheridan Hydropower, Lake DeSmet Master Plan, Wright Well, Sleepy Hollow, and Town of Upton Tank projects. Also, supplemental funding of \$1 million for the Groundwater Grant Program was received.

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAGs for the Snake/Salt and the Wind/Bighorn Basins will be meeting April 9 in Cody and April 10 in Jackson. The Bear, Green, and Powder/Tongue BAGS met March 18 in Cokeville, March 19 in Lyman, and March 20 in Buffalo. Barry discussed the status of these interim basin studies, and schedule for future meetings.

State Engineer's Office Report

Sue Lowry, Interstate Streams Engineer, reported the first meeting of the North Platte Decree Committee, which includes Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, and the Bureau of Reclamation will be held April 12. Due to the additional reporting of consumptive use and total numbers of acres under irrigation required as part of the North Platte River settlement, 7 new people, mainly field people, have been added to the staff of the State Engineer's Office.

Sue led a general discussion of compacts and related negotiations, particularly, the Belle Fourche River Compact.

Water Resources Data System Report

Robin Gray gave a brief overview of the current activities of the Water Resources Data System (WRDS). She also reported that as of March 18, the Snotel average for entire state ranges from 59% in Laramie County to 88% in the

Yellowstone area. The snowpack average for the Northeast Wyoming River Basin area is 71%.

The state drought task force is meeting March 19. New online data includes a monthly climate report, drought monitor/studies, and links to other regional and national data sources. Of special interest is:

- Surface water supply index for March, which ranges from -2.25 to -3.9. Drought maps and forecast products are also available.

The water library is acquiring part of State Engineer's Office collection. The 2002 municipal system survey study will be available in another month or so. A Powder River Basin Project is being done cooperatively by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, WWDC, and the Wyoming Geological Survey. The project is compiling various sources of water quality data correlated to the coal seams in northeast Wyoming. The Green River Basin report, including the GIS products, is 99% online with the Bear River Basin report due to be online by mid-April.

Coalbed Methane Activities Update

B.J. Kristiansen, CBM Coordination Coalition, indicated the coalition is a joint powers board of Campbell, Carbon, Converse, Johnson and Sheridan Counties and conservation districts. He indicated the main issues of coalbed methane development in 2001 included water discharge/quality and its effects upon soils, vegetation, and wildlife. The methodology used and effects of CBM development are constantly evolving. One of the major responsibilities of the coalition is to gather information and distribute data to facilitate rational coalbed methane development. The CBMCC website is www.cbmcc.vcn.com.

One of the primary issues is "divided estate", or who has the surface/mineral rights. A "value added" concept has developed from the development, such as CBM water discharge being utilized to develop wetlands, and the resultant development of better, or more complete, ecosystems. This is showing up in small areas in different basins.

CBM Discharge Water Development

Mike Collins, Natural Resources Conservation Service, presented the concept of a community livestock water distribution system. Water from numerous coalbed methane wells is discharged into a main waterline, which is delivered to a treatment facility. From the treatment facility, the water is conveyed via a 6 to 8-inch pipeline and delivered to livestock at numerous points.

Belle Fourche River Watershed Plan

Wayne Garman, Crook County Natural Resource District, indicated the district had received a Clean Water Act grant to perform monitoring on the Belle Fourche River. The reaches from Keyhole Reservoir to Hulett, and from the Campbell

County line to Keyhole Reservoir have been placed on the 303(d) list for fecal coliform. One year of data has been collected at both sites, and will continue for a second year. Currently, the data is not showing a problem with the reach from Keyhole Reservoir to Hulett, but there are some problems in the Campbell County reaches.

Wetlands Reserve Program

Mike Collins, Natural Resources Conservation Service, stated the Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program to restore and protect wetlands on private property. Landowners may sell a conservation easement or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agriculture land. There are three options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum 10-year duration. Several projects, including the J.O. McDonald property, were mentioned as participants in the program.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.