

# Water Planning News

## Basin Advisory Groups Formed for the Northeast and Powder/ Tongue River Basins

With the onset of river basin planning activities in the Powder/Tongue and Northeast River Basins (Little Missouri, Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, Niobrara), basin advisory groups have been recently formed for each of the two new planning basins. Key to the planning process are the basin advisory groups, or BAGs which provide input to the planning process from the local level as they are made up of a cross-section of individuals with varying interests who actually live and/or work in that particular basin. BAGs assist in the identification of basin issues and concerns, advise the planning team on the basin plan, and review consultant work products as they are produced. It is also important to note that the BAGs will continue to meet following the plan completion. As river basin planning is a dynamic, ongoing process, it is critical that this unique group of individuals with an incredible understanding of the basin's water resources, continue to meet to discuss the issues and provide input to the State of Wyoming and the river basin planning staff.

BAGs for each of the two new basins were formed during two separate meetings held in each of the basins. With the aide of a facilitator, individuals in attendance decided how their particular group would look and feel, how it would operate, and who should be represented on the

group. While the planning team relayed the experiences with BAG formation in the Bear and Green River Basin, it was realized that each basin was unique, and a "cookie cutter" approach wouldn't suffice. It should be noted that the decisions made during the meetings were made by the individuals in the basin rather than by state staff or the facilitator. Following BAG formation, each group was then charged with developing a mission statement. Two very unique BAGs were then born.

### Powder/Tongue River Basin

Initial discussions on the formation of the Powder/Tongue BAG centered on group size and representation. There was a general feeling that if the group became too large it would be unproductive. Conversely, others felt that while the group size might be larger than originally desired, the core group that would attend meetings on a regular basis would settle down to a reasonable number. Still other concerns were voiced as to making sure that all interests were represented as well as maintaining a geographical balance (Sheridan, Buffalo, Kaycee, etc.). The inclusion of federal and state agency representatives into the group was a point of discussion as well. While some were unsure of the merits of having such representation, others felt it was critical that the resource agencies be involved in

the process.

Through such discussions, coupled with individuals stating their desire to serve on the BAG, as well as others nominating individuals not in attendance (but later followed up on by state staff), the basin advisory group for the Powder/Tongue River Basin was formed with approximately 30 members. Sectors represented on the group include: agriculture, business, industry, recreation, environmental, county and municipal government, conservation districts, and federal and state agency representatives. The group maintains a geographical balance with members hailing from Buffalo, Sheridan, Kaycee, Ranchester, Big Horn, Parkman, Story and Gillette. Meetings will be held once every other month with meeting sites being rotated around the basin. The next three meetings have already been set: October 11<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, Gillette; and December 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, Kaycee.

As mentioned, the newly formed group was charged with creating a mission statement for itself. With the assistance of the facilitator, the group hammered out the following mission statement from which to operate:

### **Powder/Tongue River Basin Mission Statement**

*Assist in the planning process for the Little Bighorn, Tongue and Powder River Basins by addressing the present and future use and conservation of our water resources.*

### Northeast River Basin

Formation of this second Basin Advisory Group transpired in a similar manner, but with emphasis on different aspects of the composition. Discussions centered not only on sector representation, but in making sure that the various interests within a sector, such as industry, were represented as well. In particular, the group felt that timber, oil & gas, hard rock, coal, and coal-bed methane should all be represented. As for geographic representation, the group felt, much like the

### Inside this issue:

<b>News From WRDS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Consultant Selected for NE and PT Basins</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Updates from the Green and the Bear River Basins</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Water Planning Calendar</b>	<b>4</b>

(Continued from page 1)

Powder/Tongue that the various sub-basins (Little Missouri, Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, Niobrara) should all have representation and be balanced. Moreover, it was felt that each of the conservation districts in the area should be afforded a slot on the BAG. Additionally, the need for county and municipal government was equally expressed. There was also the discussion on the possible need to establish alternates should the individual BAG members be unable to attend and adequately represent their viewpoint.

Through such discussions, coupled with individuals stating their desire to serve on the BAG, as well as others nomi-

nating individuals not in attendance (but later followed up on by state staff), the basin advisory group for the Northeast River Basin was formed with approximately 20 members. Sectors which are, or will be, represented on the BAG include: agriculture, industry, recreation, environmental, county and municipal government, conservation districts, the Powder River Basin Resource Council and the Bear Lodge Multiple Use Group. As with the Powder/Tongue BAG, membership on this group is still evolving. In particular, the Northeast BAG is still in the process of finding individuals to fill some of the slots desired by the group. The group maintains a geo-

graphical balance with members hailing from Sundance, Gillette, Hulett, Lusk, Newcastle, Lance Creek, Moorcroft, Beulah, and Douglas. Meetings will be held once every other month with meeting sites being rotated around the basin. The next three meetings have already been set: October 12<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, Gillette; and December 14<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, Newcastle.

This group has also derived a mission statement from which to operate:

#### **Northeast River Basin Mission Statement**

*Recognizing the diversity of the Northeast River Basin, identify existing and future water related issues in the Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, Little Missouri, and Niobrara River Ba-*

*sins, to assist in the planning process for the mutual benefit of all.*

As both groups reconvene later this month, they will continue to work on issues identification for their respective basins. Also, the consulting team of MSE/HKM from Sheridan, Wyoming which has been selected to produce the two basin plans, will be presenting an overview of their scope of work to each of the BAGs at their next meeting. All meetings are open to the public and persons interested in the river basin planning process being undertaken by the Wyoming Water Development Commission are encouraged to attend the meeting of their choice.

## News from WRDS...

### **WRDS Hires New Assistant Information Specialist**

When you call the Water Resources Data System (WRDS) in search of water resources or climate data, a new voice will greet you. Autumn McEachron began work on June 5 as WRDS' new Information Specialist, Assistant. She comes to WRDS from the City of Laramie Police Department where she worked as a Records Specialist. Prior to that, Autumn worked for the Wyoming Water Resources Center as a Data Assistant. Autumn is a very talented individual, and WRDS is lucky to have her on board. Please contact Autumn at (307) 766-6651 for all of your water resources and climate data needs!

### **WRDS and the Wyoming State Water Plan**

As the consultants for the

Bear and Green River Basins finalize their plans and the Northeast and Powder/Tongue Basin plans get underway, the water planning website will become instrumental in distributing information and data. The primary goal of the website is to distribute information including technical memos, geographic information system (GIS) coverages, water models and Basin Advisory Group documents through the Internet. The WRDS staff is currently developing this site. Our goal is to create a user-friendly, updateable and reliable resource that will allow the user to examine how we, the citizens of Wyoming, interact with one of our most precious resources, water. Please visit the website at <http://waterplan.state.wy.us/> Any comments or sugges-

tions will be helpful, and can be sent via e-mail to [waterplan@state.wy.us](mailto:waterplan@state.wy.us)

### **WRDS Initiates Records Preservation Effort**

WRDS has initiated a records preservation effort to ensure the proper storage, maintenance, and protection of our records. Many of the reports and publications housed in WRDS are unique, one-of-a-kind documents. To preserve these, we are digitally scanning the records into computer files that will be offered over our web site. The original documents will then be stored off-site in an archival facility. The University of Wyoming Libraries and American Heritage Center are helping WRDS with archiving the materials. Our goal is to ensure the availability of these records for the next millennium!



## Consultants Selected for the Powder/Tongue and NE Planning Basins



The Water Development Commission has completed the statutory consultant selection process for the two Northeastern Wyoming River Basin Plans and for facilitation services. The selection process involves an initial advertisement period, submitted by consultants of a letter of interest and statement of

qualifications, and an initial shortlisting of pre-qualified firms. Proposals are requested from the shortlisted firms, along with a separate price proposal. Three firms are selected for an interview, based on the proposal, price, etc. Following the interviews contract negotiations are initiated with the top ranked firms. Once the contracts are approved by the Water Development Commission, the Legislative Select Water Committee, and the Department of Administration and Information the consultants are given notice to proceed with work on the project. This process is mandated by statute, and takes approxi-

mately 5 months to complete.

MSE-HKM, Inc. from Sheridan was selected to conduct the basin planning process for both the Powder-Tongue and Northeast River Basin Plans. The total contract amount is \$668,025, and the Plans will be completed in December 2001.

Counterpoise Consulting from Cheyenne was selected to provide facilitation services at the Basin Advisory Group meetings for both Plans. The total contract amount is \$15,500, and the contract will run through December 2001.

## Updates from the Green and Bear River Basins

With completion of the Bear River Basin Plan set for the end of October, and the Green River Basin Plan set for the end of the year, the consulting teams of Forsgren & Associates and States West Water Resources Corporation are busy completing technical memos, as well as final mapping and modeling tasks.

In the Bear River Basin the irrigated lands mapping, structure inventories, water rights attribution, diversion record compilation and modeling have all been completed. Current activities have been focused on groundwater investigation and analyses, and economic issues. The latter involves analyzing key economic sectors relative to wa-

ter consumption and use projections.

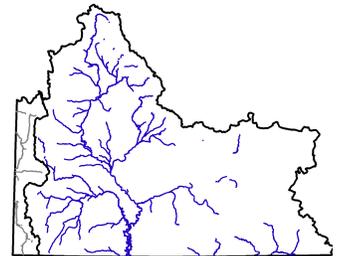
The final Bear River Basin Plan will be presented to the public at the regularly scheduled Bear River Basin Advisory Group meeting to be held November 6<sup>th</sup> in Evanston.

In the Green River Basin the modeling activities are continuing, with the irrigated lands mapping, structure inventories, water rights attribution, and diversion record compilation nearly complete. Numerous technical memos have been submitted for review and include topics such as Wyoming water law, interstate compacts, population projections, reservoirs, salinity control, cropping patterns,

irrigation diversions, surface water quality, municipal and recreational use, instream flows, etc.

Similar to the work being conducted in the Bear, an economic analysis is being conducted in the Green which addresses water consumption and use projections. Regular meetings between the economists working on each of the basin plans ensures a consistent approach between basins.

At the September 12<sup>th</sup> Green River Basin Advisory Group meeting in Kemmerer the entire draft Basin Plan will be presented, and there will be a discussion of future water use opportunities in the basin.





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**[HTTP://WATERPLAN.STATE.WY.US/](http://waterplan.state.wy.us/)**

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## Water Planning Calendar

September 5, 2000 - Water Forum – “The Water Resources Data System” – Wyoming State Engineer’s Office, Herschler Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor East. 10 am.

September 11, 2000— Bear River Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Cokeville High School Library, 6 pm. Topics: Consultant update, TBA.

September 12, 2000— Green River Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Kemmerer, TBA, 5 pm. Topics: Consultant Review of Project, Future Water Use Opportunities Discus-

sion. Date subject to change.

October 10, 2000— Green River Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Green River, TBA, 5 pm.

October 11, 2000— Powder/Tongue Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Gillette, TBA, 6 pm.

October 12, 2000— Northeast Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Gillette, TBA, 6 pm.

November 6, 2000— Bear River Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Evans-

ton, TBA, 6 pm. Topics: Bear River Basin Plan Results Presentation.

November 7, 2000— Green River Basin Advisory Group Meeting – Farson, TBA, 5 pm.

December 13, 2000— Powder/Tongue Basin Advisory Group Meeting - Kaycee, TBA, 6 pm.

December 14, 2000— Northeast Basin Advisory Group Meeting - Newcastle, TBA, 6 pm.

