

**Northeast Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Community Center – Moorcroft, WY
December 13, 2001**

Welcome

The facilitators opened the meeting at approximately 1:00 pm and reviewed the agenda to set the expectations for the meeting. Participants introduced themselves by stating their name, affiliation, and place of residence. The facilitators then sent a sign-in sheet around the room.

The facilitators stated that the next BAG meeting, as selected by the BAG members, would be held January 17th in Upton. The facilitators explained that following the January BAG meeting, interim BAG meetings would be held every four months. The first such meeting was scheduled for March 21st in Newcastle, from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The BAG members then selected July 18th in Lusk as the date and location for the next subsequent meeting.

Planning Team Issues

Barry Lawrence spoke to the group on the role of the BAG following plan completion. He indicated that it was critical that the group continue to meet, albeit not as frequent, to continue to discuss the current issues affecting the basin and to provide a two-way street of communication between the residents of the basin and the resource management agencies. Barry then updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the Snake/Salt, Wind/Bighorn, Powder/Tongue, Bear, and Green River Basins. He detailed the current activities in each, as well as the invited BAG speakers, and consultant work in progress (if applicable). He then invited interested individuals to attend any or all of the BAG meetings in the other basins.

Status of the Current Drought and Related Issues, Jan Curtis - State Climatologist

Jan explained that the drought that began in Wyoming in the Spring of 2000 has affected the Powder-Tongue, Belle Fourche, and Cheyenne-Niobrara basins to differing degrees. The forecast through the end of May 2002 indicates: 1) a greater than 22 percent chance for above normal precipitation, thus ending the drought for the Powder-Tongue basins; 2) no chance for the drought to end for the Belle Fourche basin; and, 3) a 74 percent chance for no drought conditions to exist for Cheyenne-Niobrara basins. It was noted that the regional forecast is for winter to have a 50-50 percent chance for above-below normal precipitation and temperatures.

In an attempt to quantify drought, Jan indicated that he was developing a drought trigger mechanism that will provide ample lead-time to prepare for drought (i.e., declare emergency, implement water priority access, etc.). The triggers are based on 1 Oct historical reservoir level departures, actual winter snowpack by 1 April, and soil moisture. Using winter and summer precipitation forecasts (6 months in advance) and April's forecast (one month in advance) for prairie grassland growth potential, a template is expected to assist State of Wyoming departments on being more proactive in reacting to a developing drought. If the drought is more than one

year long, additional factors are added in order to determine just what amount of precipitation is required to end the drought.

Jan indicated that the Water Resources Data System (WRDS) website at: <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu> has important real-time and forecast links pertaining to water/snow, soil moisture, reservoir levels, fire potential, and precipitation. The one-stop shopping link is: http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/wy_drought_2001/wy_drought.html

Question: How can projections and drought designations be made for areas where there are no weather stations?

Response: Statistical methods are used on data from long-term weather stations to project conditions for areas without stations.

Question: Is there a program available to develop more reporting stations?

Response: There are currently 175 cooperative stations in Wyoming and developing additional stations is limited by available funding. There is a program where volunteers operate weather stations.

Question: Does current electronic technology reduce the cost to operate a station?

Response: No, the technology actually increases the cost.

Consultant Update – Joe Lord, Lord Consulting, LLC

Joe reported that the consulting team was finalizing technical memoranda and would be making a summary presentation of the final results to the BAG in January. Following that presentation, the final report will be submitted to the WWDC.

Water Quality Issues – Chris Ewers, HKM Engineering, Inc.

Chris presented a summary of the contents of the Water Quality memorandum from Task 5. He noted that the memorandum provides information on ongoing water quality projects, indicates any cooperation or collaboration that might be possible between groups interested in water quality, and points out the locations of water quality work in the basin. Chris highlighted the efforts of the Department of Environmental Quality's Water Quality Division, the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, and the U.S. Geological Survey as ongoing water-quality programs. He noted that much more data would soon be available from a number of groups interested in coalbed methane produced water.

Legal and Institutional Constraints – Joe Lord, Lord Consulting, LLC

Joe explained that the purpose of the legal and institutional constraints memorandum was to identify and discuss federal and state laws, rules, regulations, and policies that affect water development and management. The presentation addressed the following topics:

- ◆ Federal environmental laws including the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Clean Water Act (CWA);
- ◆ Federal lands and the requirement for Special Use Permits;

- ◆ Wyoming environmental laws including Section 401 (CWA) state certification, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), non-storm water discharges, and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) plans;
- ◆ Wyoming water law;
- ◆ Belle Fourche River Basin Compact;
- ◆ Upper Niobrara River Basin Compact; and,
- ◆ Wyoming Water Development Program.

Question: Does the Belle Fourche River Compact address water quality?

Response: No, the compact only deals with water quantity.

Future Water Use Opportunities – Joe Lord, Lord Consulting, LLC

As a review for BAG members, Joe explained the purpose of Task 5 was to identify future water use opportunities that will satisfy present and projected demands, and to rank these opportunities according to the likelihood the project is desirable, functional, and can receive the support required for implementation. He explained that individuals and organizations that need to develop a water supply would use the ranked short-list of future water use opportunities to satisfy their specific needs. It was emphasized the ranked short-list will not be used by WWDC to establish funding priorities.

Joe then explained the process followed to develop and rank the short-list of future water use opportunities. He indicated that the long-list and short-list were distributed to BAG members following the October BAG meeting and comments and suggestions were solicited and received. Assigning weights to the evaluation criteria and scores to each of the projects yielded the ranked short-list. This list was then distributed to BAG members for review. Joe again asked for questions and comments on the ranked short-list.

Question: Where are the proposed reservoirs on Beaver Creek and Stockade-Beaver Creek located?

Response: Maps will be provided to indicate the location of these projects.

Question: Why is the Antelope Creek CBM Water System project listed as a Type 3 when it is a water disposal project?

Response: Antelope Creek was considered to be water supply development for the Cheyenne River. *(After further discussion, the BAG agreed to drop the Antelope Creek project from the list since it is considered a water disposal project and not a water supply project).*

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:00 pm.