

**Northeast Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Community Center – Upton, WY
January 17, 2002**

Welcome

The facilitators opened the meeting at approximately 1:00 pm and explained that the agenda for the meeting was the presentation of the final results of the planning study by HKM Engineering. Participants then introduced themselves by stating their name, affiliation, and place of residence. The facilitators sent a sign-in sheet around the room. Jon Wade, WWDC Administrator for River Basin Planning, thanked everyone for their attendance and involvement over the past 18 months. He then thanked the facilitators and the consulting team and introduced Wade Irion of HKM Engineering, to direct the presentation of the basin plan.

Presentation of the Basin Plan

Wade Irion stated that the presentation would: 1) describe the studies completed by the consulting team; 2) summarize the findings of the plan; and, 3) demonstrate the tools developed through the planning effort. He explained a general discussion and question and answer period would follow the presentation of each major topic.

Following a brief description of river basin planning Wade proceeded with the presentation of the **Basin Water Use Profile**. This presentation described and summarized basin water uses under the categories of agricultural, municipal, domestic, industrial, recreational, and environmental. The water quality characteristics of the planning area were also included in the presentation. Demonstrations of the GIS (Geographic Information System) tools developed to define basin water use profiles were presented as well.

Question: What version of the TMDL 303d list will be included in the plan?

Response: The year 2000 version of the list has been adopted by the EPA.

Question: Do industrial uses provide return flows?

Response: No.

Question: Why do “local concerns” address only CBM wells and not stock and domestic wells?

Response: Groups interviewed to determine local issues did not identify stock and domestic wells as a concern. CBM concerns related to stock and domestic wells will be presented during the Available Ground Water Determination section of the presentation.

Question: How was water consumption for municipal and domestic uses determined?

Response: Municipal consumption was determined from records provided by the municipal water systems. Domestic consumption was quantified based on estimated general values applied to estimates of the population not served by municipal water systems.

Question: Don't instream flow water rights constitute a consumptive use?

Response: Instream flow water rights do not consume water.

Comment: Instream flow water rights restrict water uses above the instream flow water right segment. The impact of instream flows on the amount of surface water available for future use is addressed in the Available Surface Water Determination section of the presentation.

Question: What is the source of data for irrigated lands?

Response: Aerial mapping and field verification.

Question: What is the source of information for the list of thirty-five fishing streams?

Response: The Wyoming Game & Fish Department.

Comment: A BAG member stated a concern that the G&F Department classification of fishing streams exaggerates the number of streams and is greater than the number resulting from the DEQ classification used in the TMDL program.

The next topic addressed in the presentation was **Available Surface Water and Ground Water Determination**. Topics included in this portion of the presentation were surface water hydrology, spreadsheet modeling, surface water availability, and ground water availability. The spreadsheet model developed for the plan was also demonstrated.

Question: Will all information on a stream be presented in one GIS layer?

Response: No, information and data will be presented in different GIS layers by main topics.

Question: Does the hydrologic estimate of the flow available on the Belle Fourche River at the stateline include releases from Keyhole Reservoir?

Response: Yes.

Question: Did the research conducted for the planning study provide any information on reinjection of CBM water, and what aquifers are being considered for reinjection?

Response: Reinjection studies are in their infancy. The WWDC and the City of Gillette are beginning a study concerning the Fox Hills Formation below the coal seam.

Water Demand Projections were then presented for agricultural, municipal, domestic, industrial, recreational, and environmental uses.

Question: Is the conclusion of the plan that the basins have adequate water supply to meet current needs?

Response: No, there are significant demands that are not currently being met.

Question: Have projections been made of the impacts that could result from developing water to meet future demands?

Response: No, these impacts will be evaluated by federal and state agencies at the time the proposal is made.

Question: Does the plan project any movement of agricultural water to municipal use?

Response: No transfers have been projected.

Question: Are future power plants or coal slurry pipelines considering the use of CBM water?

Response: Yes, utility companies are considering the use of CBM water. However, there are two significant deterrents: 1) CBM water is produced by a large number of companies spread over a broad geographic area; and, 2) the life expectancy of CBM production is not long enough to support the investment in one of these projects.

The final portion of the presentation addressed the topics of **Institutional Constraints, Future Water Use Opportunities, and Plan Uses.**

Question: Are the projects listed on the short list currently being developed?

Response: No, there has been little to no activity on these projects for many years.

Question: Why do the projects on the short-list need to be ranked? The Crook County Irrigation District does not believe there is a need to rank the projects, as stated in a letter to the WWDC.

Response: The projects are ranked to provide the future users of the plan with an indication of which of the projects have a better chance of being developed.

There was additional discussion relative to the need to rank the projects on the short-list. Suggestions were made to describe the ranked short-list as “an example” of how projects can be ranked, rather than as an actual ranking.

Question: Will BAG members comment on the draft report?

Response: The intention of providing presentations of preliminary findings at the BAG meetings was to receive comments throughout the process for incorporation into the plan. Copies of the draft report can, however, be obtained from the WWDC by individual request.

Question: How will the report be available?

Response: On the water plan website, by compact disc, or by paper copies.

Following the question and answer period, the BAG entered into a brief discussion of the Belle Fourche Compact and whether the plan adequately addresses issues surrounding the Compact. Since there were several unanswered questions relative to the Compact, it was decided that time would be allotted at the next meeting of the group to include discussion with representatives of the State Engineer’s Office regarding the topic.

Closing Remarks

Jon Wade again thanked the members of the BAG for their participation. He reminded the group that river basin planning is a process, not a product, and that it begins to become outdated as soon as it is published. The WWDC’s intent is to update the plan on a five-year frequency and to keep the BAG involved through interim BAG meetings held three times a year. These meetings will include presentations and discussions on contemporary water issues, and proposals for water development. The first interim BAG meetings are scheduled for March 21st in Newcastle and July 18th in Lusk.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:40 pm.