Northeast Wyoming Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Beulah, Wyoming
April 8, 2004

Welcome
Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 1:00 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. The next meeting is scheduled for July 8 in Moorcroft.

Water Development Commission Report
Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and agendas for future meetings. Handouts from the prior meeting were distributed.

John Jackson indicated that 33 new projects were authorized in the Omnibus Water Bill – Planning. The Statewide Water Research program was appropriated an additional budget of $200,000. The Small Water Project Program was amended to include irrigation as a purpose and to increase the monetary size of the project from $50,000 to $200,000. However, WWDC participation is still limited to a maximum of $25,000. Funding for the program was increased by $1,500,000, which is split equally between the Rehabilitation and New Development accounts.

In the Northeast Wyoming Basin, the new projects approved were:

Planning	
Crook County Reservoirs and Water Management	$ 150,000
Canyon Water Supply	$ 600,000
Eight Mile-High Plains Well	$ 60,000
Construction	
Sleepy Hollow, 50% grant	$ 200,000
Sunset Pipeline, 50% grant	$ 212,500
Gillette Madison and Pine Ridge Tanks, 50% grant	$ 550,000

More information can be found at:
http://wwdc.state.wy.us/legreport/2004/approvals.html

Ranch A Foundation Update
Marlene Simons, Ranch A Foundation, indicated that the structures on the ranch were built in 1935. There have been numerous owners over the years. In 1966, the property was sold to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for use as a fish hatchery. In 1997 the land was deeded back to the State of Wyoming. The foundation was established and it manages the 11 acres and structures. The State of Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Forestry Division manage the balance of the property. Extensive

renovations are ongoing and there are full-time caretakers. Marlene then detailed future plans for the facility.

Wyoming's Drought Status

Jan Curtis, State Climatologist, presented an overview of the revised Climate Atlas, which is available at: http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/climateatlas/title_page.html, particularly referencing the Drought chapter (http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/climateatlas/drought.html). The current drought started in 1999, with 2000 and 2001 being the driest back-to-back years since 1895.

The greatest months for precipitation are May and June. The effectiveness of the moisture falling during this time is critical to emerging plants. Jan went on to say that precipitation in this state is a function of elevation; the lower elevations experience four times more evaporation than precipitation. Without the mountains to capture the moisture in the form of snow, Wyoming would be a virtual desert. Until March 1, this year looked favorable for improving water supplies. However, higher than usual temperatures coupled with below normal precipitation have eliminated any gain and this year's drought is expected to be extreme to exceptional across much of the state. The current forecast products are available at http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/dtf/drought.html .

Jan distributed flyers on the Community Collaborative Rain and Hail Study (CoCoRaHS) and discussed the importance of the data and how it would be used in Wyoming. Funding for this program comes from the Colorado State Climate Office. Further information on this program can be found at http://www.cocorahs.com/ .

Proposed Amendment to the State Engineer's Office (SEO) Coalbed Methane (CBM) Policy

John Barnes, SEO, indicated that the first applications for storage of CBM water were received in 1999. The first applications were received from those in the eastern portion of the basin where the landowner was the applicant and owner of the reservoir. As the growth has gone west and north in the basin the operator has become the permittee and owner of the reservoir. Due to water quality concerns, the landowners want the reservoirs removed when the CBM wells are plugged and abandoned. The draft amended policy recognizes the storage of CBM produced water as a beneficial use, with the reservoirs having a 15-year permit with a mandatory breach and reclamation limitation. Extensive discussion followed.

Dynamic Watershed Characterization

Mickey Steward, Coalbed Methane Coordination Coalition, is working with the Lake DeSmet Conservation District on a multiple resource management tool. The tool will help the individual landowner and conservation district deal with resource management issues. This tool is being provided electronically to the conservation district and in hardcopy to the landowner. The test watershed was the Dead Horse Creek Basin, which covers 98,000 acres. There are three climate stations within the test area, and the time frame utilized was 1971-2000.

Watershed baseline conditions include:

- Climate
- Substrate, i.e. geology, geomorphology
- Surface hydrology, i.e. stream channels, peak flows
- Soils, i.e. percent clay, road suitability, road rutting, and reclamation characteristics
- Aerial photography, i.e. color infrared
- Vegetation, hazards, i.e. earthquakes and tornadoes
- Man-made environment, i.e. roads, pipeline routes, land ownership, existing oil and gas wells, CBM (active, inactive, planned) wells, and permitted facilities, (SEO water wells, NPDES discharge points, DEQ compressor sites)
- Cultural resources, which includes historical data for area.

It was noted that the purpose of the project was to build a usable tool for the landowners. Discussion followed.

Vore Buffalo Jump Update

Gene Gade, Extension Educator for the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, indicated that the Vore Buffalo Jump is a natural sinkhole located near Beulah, Wy. This is a significant archeological site as it provides some the best preserved historical activities of Northern Plains Indians. For a period between 1500 and 1800 AD, this site was used extensively by at least five different Plains Indian tribes. Tens of thousands of bison were forced into this site, killed and butchered using tools made from stone from the Lusk area, the Powder/Tongue area and as far away as North Dakota. Today, bison skeletal remains and tools used at this site provide a glimpse into Plains Indian life, lifestyle and climate regimes that spans a period that nearly connects to the accounts of the first area settlers and further to present day. The Vore Buffalo Jump Foundation and the University of Wyoming envisions the creation of a visitor interpretative and education center at the site where scientific excavation, research and education can continue.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.