

**Platte River Basin Advisory Group (BAG)  
Meeting Record  
Torrington, WY  
April 13, 2004**

**Welcome**

Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and called the meeting to order. Sherri asked the people in attendance to introduce themselves, and she reviewed the meeting agenda, a copy of which is attached. A sign-in sheet was passed around to record attendance.

**Planning Team Issues**

**River Basin Planning Update:** Barry Lawrence, WWDC, provided an update regarding the other six BAGs, all of which had met within a short time prior to this meeting. He noted that Jan Curtis, Wyoming State Climatologist, and Dave Taylor, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, had attended other BAG meetings to provide, respectively, information regarding the ongoing drought and the snow gauging program in Wyoming. Other topics discussed at other BAG meetings included:

**Bear River BAG:**

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- low water levels in Bear Lake
- basin water quality issues

**Green River BAG:**

- Colorado River issues
- SEO issues
- BLM issues

**Snake/Salt River BAG:**

- USBR reservoir operations
- Jackson Lake operations (National Park Service)

**Wind/Big Horn River BAG:**

- in-stream flow issues
- Economic development issues in the basin
- modeling of mountain stream flows

**Powder/Tongue River BAG:**

- coalbed methane development
- a U.S. Forest Service presentation

**NE Basin BAG:**

- coalbed methane development
- Vore Buffalo Jump

**Legislative Update:** John Jackson, WWDC, provided a legislative update. He stated that, during the 2004 legislative session, 33 WWDC planning projects were approved. He then noted that 9 of the 33 new planning projects as well as 7 pending WWDC construction projects are located in the Platte River Basin, including:

**Platte River Basin WWDC planning projects:**

State water research	\$ 200,000
Albin well and water supply	\$ 140,000
Cheyenne Belvoir Ranch	\$ 350,000
Encampment Sierra Madre well	\$ 250,000

Glenrock well and tank	\$ 600,000
Pine Bluffs Lance/Fox Hills well	\$ 475,000
Saratoga test well	\$ 160,000
Wagoner/Cherokee ID Phase 2	\$ 35,000
Weather modification (upper North Platte Basin)	\$ 100,000
<b>Total planning amount:</b>	<b>\$2,310,000</b>

Platte River Basin WWDC construction projects:	
Albin pipeline and well rehabilitation (50% grant only)	\$ 215,000
Casper raw water project (50% grant only)	\$ 452,500
Casper Alcova rehabilitation (50% grant only)	\$ 595,000
Glenrock Sunup Ridge tank and well (50% grant only)	\$ 132,750
Guernsey tank and pipeline (50% grant only)	\$ 615,000
Lake Hattie dam rehabilitation	\$ 163,000
Saratoga standpipe rehabilitation (50% grant only)	\$ 200,000
<b>Total construction amount:</b>	<b>\$2,373,250</b>

Mr. Jackson also noted that the legislature amended the Small Water Development Projects Program to allow inclusion of irrigation projects and to raise the previous \$50,000 maximum project cost to \$100,000. Overall program funding was increased from \$1,000,000 to \$2,500,000, with funding divided evenly between development and rehabilitation projects. The WWDC's maximum contribution to any one Small Water Development Project will remain at \$25,000.

### **Consultant Update**

Joel Farber of TriHydro Corporation provided an overview of and projected draft example pages from the project Educational Tool. He stated that the draft web-based Educational Tool had been prepared on the basis of two goals:

- providing tabs at the top of the Educational Tool home page to access the various parts of the tool, and
- relying heavily on graphics throughout the Educational Tool.

Following a brief demonstration of draft Educational Tool pages, Mr. Farber stated that his goal during this BAG meeting was to develop a BAG consensus regarding basic Educational Tool organization. He noted that the Platte River Basin Plan Educational Tool would be the first basin plan product of its type since previous basin plans did not include an Educational Tool.

Discussion regarding inclusion and organization of Educational Tool links to other web sites ensued. Mr. Farber noted that the intent was to provide an Educational Tool that would require relatively little modification over time while including in the Educational Tool links to other sites that will be updated continuously over time. He also noted the importance of including a manageable number of links in the Educational Tool.

BAG members asked and Mr. Farber responded to several questions regarding the proposed Educational Tool. Questions related to a variety of topics, including:

- methods of navigating within the Educational Tool,
- organization of the Educational Tool on the basis of subbasins rather than on the basis of types of water use,
- the nature and detail of information regarding municipal water supplies to be included in the Educational Tool,
- Educational Tool links to:
  - past and future WWDC projects,

- county, city, chamber of commerce, and conservation district web sites, all of which will change over time,
- anyone who is a stakeholder and who maintains a web site,
- SEO information, and
- USGS information.

Mr. Farber noted that the Educational Tool will be designed to strike a reasonable balance regarding the amount and detail of information that will be included in the tool. Following expressions of concern by some BAG members regarding accessing the Educational Tool via slow speed internet connection, Mr. Farber proposed that preparing and posting a pilot Educational Tool, accessible to BAG members before completing and posting the final Educational Tool, may be a reasonable approach to assessing future public access to the Educational Tool.

Mr. Farber then presented an Educational Tool schematic and obtained general BAG consensus regarding:

- organizing the Educational Tool on the basis of Platte River Basin subbasins,
- including a maximum of six to eight major headings under each subbasin tab in the Educational Tool, and
- not including Platte River Basin Plan technical memoranda in the Educational Tool.

Following Mr. Farber's presentation, the BAG took a short break.

### **Issues Identification**

Cards listing 14 basic topics pertaining to Platte River Basin water issues that BAG members had identified previously were posted by the Facilitator on the meeting room wall. BAG members were asked to provide additional cards identifying specific issues under the topic cards that they believed to be important and worthy of further consideration. Following posting of BAG-generated issue cards, the BAG reviewed all of the cards, clarifying some and eliminating repetitive cards. A list of the 14 topic cards and individual issue card topics is attached to this meeting record. Fundamental basin water plan issues were identified during BAG discussion, including:

- understanding Wyoming water rights and how they are applied,
- desiring to better understand similarities and differences between Wyoming water law and water laws of neighboring states, and
- considering new legislation that would enhance Wyoming use of Platte River Basin water resources.

Issues identified were:

### **Agriculture**

- Loss of open spaces / urban / suburban development.
- 1904 call effect on acreage that can be irrigated – percent of acreage removed from irrigation due to 1904 call
- Educating the public as to the importance of irrigation to maximizing agricultural production
- Loss of agricultural land; effect on water and other resources
- Irrigation return flow considerations
- Fed and state regulations regarding water quality, etc.
- Modified North Platte River decree effects on water rights
- Endangered species concerns – effects on water use & availability
- Prior appropriation doctrine – property issues
- Effects of prolonged drought.

- Irrigation distribution systems inefficiency
- Enhanced education regarding natural flow
- Continue silt run by dredging or other means

#### **Federal involvement / regulations / lawsuits**

- Impacts on the Upper Platte due to Pathfinder/Inland Lakes issues
- ESA (Endangered Species Act) issues
- Additional costs associated with federal involvement
- Additional restrictions on use related to federal programs.

#### **Downstream claims / compacts / decrees**

- Wyoming water - first used in Wyoming
- Change of use from irrigation to ESA / municipal use
- Sale of water rights to other users or entities (consequences of law)
- Water quantity to satisfy all users
- Leasing or sale of water rights (law)

#### **Disaster & emergency response contingency (drought mitigation, flood control)**

- Should emergency uses (for example, fighting forest fires) take priority over ESA, priority decree, etc?
- Does global warming have anything to do with or current weather patterns (drought)

#### **Economic development**

- Funding projects - rural vs. urban
- Industrial growth (lack of water resources)
- Economic opportunities of water storage projects - jobs, hydroelectric power, construction, maintenance, etc.
- Modified North Platte decree – availability of water
- Water quality

#### **Groundwater**

- Geological constraints
- Surface / groundwater interactions
- Aquifer contamination
- Water quality
- Aquifer depletions, over-appropriation
- Effects of prolonged drought

#### **Industrial/manufacturing / minerals extraction**

- Adequate rights (priority & quantity) for future industrial expansion, new venture opportunities
- Conservation incentives

#### **Municipal / domestic**

- Lack of planning (rural subdivisions)
- Water quality regulations.
- Surface water/groundwater
- Restrictions on use
- Water storage regulations
- Growth
- Return flow
- Metered systems
- Regionalization
- Conservation water rates
- Prolonged drought – water availability

#### **Non-consumptive issues (instream flows, wetlands, ecosystem integrity, habitat, etc.)**

- In - bank storage to enhance instream flow
- Use Wyoming water in Wyoming
- Change laws to allow alternate instream uses

- Wyoming Game and Fish Department - instream filings – use of Public Trust Doctrine
- Water origin when demand exceeds supply
- Effects of prolonged drought - which water use is affected first?

#### **Recreation**

- Low Priority
- Effects of prolonged drought – water availability for recreational programs.
- Federal facilities impact – water designated for other uses

#### **Water conservation and reuse**

- Cause and effect
- Achieve full storage capacity as per North Platte Decree
- Limit landscape water use for new construction
- Ability to store direct-flow rights for later/longer irrigation by more conservative irrigation practices

#### **Water development**

- Inter basin water transfers for agricultural, municipal, domestic use
- Forest management for water yield
- Management of water resources (are we doing everything we can?)
- Poor geography for dam sites

#### **Water quality**

- CWA (Clean Water Act) renewal impacts
- Natural impairment - stream classification based on water quality
- Contamination through industrial, agriculture or municipal discharge
- Federal and/or state regulations

#### **Water rights, water law, prior appropriation doctrine**

- Potential challenges to prior appropriation doctrine
- Property rights
- Effects of modified North Platte Decree
- Effects of Pathfinder modifications

The BAG adjourned shortly before 1:00 pm following discussion regarding issues identification.

**The next Platte River Basin Advisory Group Meeting is scheduled for 10:00 am on June 8, 2004 at the public library in Laramie. A pig roast for BAG members at TriHydro's new West Laramie headquarters will follow the meeting.**

## AGENDA

### Platte River Basin Advisory Group Meeting

April 13, 2004 – 10:00 am – 1:00 pm  
Torrington, Wyoming

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|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>I. Welcome</b>   | Facilitator                     |
| ▪ Facilitator Introductions                                   |                                 |
| ▪ Expectations for Meeting                                    |                                 |
| ▪ Pass Around Sign-in Sheet                                   |                                 |
| <b>II. Planning Team Issues</b>                               |                                 |
| ▪ River basin planning update in Wyoming's other river basins | Barry Lawrence                  |
| ▪ Legislative session update                                  | John Jackson                    |
| <b>III. Educational Tool Concept Presentation</b>             | Joel Farber                     |
| <b>Break</b>  |                                 |
| <b>IV. Issues Identification Process</b>                      | Facilitator/group participation |
| <b>Adjourn</b>  |                                 |