

Powder/Tongue River Basin Advisory Group Meeting Record
Dayton, WY
July 17, 2002

Welcome

River Basin Planner Barry Lawrence welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 5:58 p.m. Facilitators Cathy Lujan and Sherri Gregory-Schreiner of Counterpoise were re-introduced to the group. 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 November 20 in Sheridan.

Water Development Commission Report

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAGs for the Northeast Wyoming Basin will be meeting July 18 in Lusk, the Wind/Bighorn Basin will be meeting August 13 in Worland and the Snake/Salt Basin will be meeting August 14 in Moran. The Bear and Green River Basins BAGs met July 15 and July 16 in Kemmerer. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and schedule for future meetings.

Water Resources Data System Report

Robin Gray discussed the current drought situation. She indicated that weekly drought e-mail updates are available, and can be requested via jcurtis@uwyo.edu. The Wyoming climate atlas is being updated and will be available spring 2004. The 2002 Municipal Water Supply Survey has recently been placed on-line. September 1, 2002 is the target date for the State Engineer's Office (SEO) groundwater rights database in queryable format to be online.

Goose Creek Watershed Awareness Project

Milar Stender explained that the project is an interactive information and educational program, focused initially on youth, which utilizes informal field settings combined with hands-on activities to investigate sources, impacts and mitigation of non-point source pollution. For more information, a website is available at www.gcwc.org

Aquatic Wildlife Resources in Northeast Wyoming

Bob McDowell, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, discussed the watershed management plans in the Little Missouri, Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, and Niobrara basins. Sport fishing contributes \$11.7 million annually to the area's economy.

Bob indicated that fish management concepts include basic yield, trophy, catchables, wild, and unique categories. 3,000 miles and 235 streams are managed in the Sheridan region, of which 737 stream miles are located in northeast Wyoming. He discussed the various non-game and game fish in the 4

basin drainages. The Yellowstone Cutthroat trout is the only species native to the region. He discussed problems associated with nuisance fish introductions. Other topics of discussion included habitat enhancement, access development, amphibians, and aquatic habitat challenges.

Ranchester Level I Study/Dayton Water System Improvements

Dave Engels of EnTech, Inc. presented water supply project updates for Ranchester and Dayton. He indicated problem areas with the current water system for Dayton include low pressure, undersized town mains, raw water quality from the Tongue River, a manually operated and monitored system, and an existing 10" pipeline from the water treatment plant to town is located under the /XL Ranch reservoir. A Level I study, which was completed in 2000, recommended the construction of new transmission pipelines, a new pump station, and miscellaneous town mains to improve fire flows. The Level II study, which was completed in 2001, recommended construction of a new infiltration gallery beneath Tongue River, installation of variable speed drives on raw water pumps through the water treatment plant, and installation of a SCADA system. In 2002, the WWDC recommended the drilling of a Madison Formation well as an alternative water supply and a feasibility study of a regional water system for Ranchester and Dayton be conducted. The recommendations from the Level II study are on hold pending the deep well study results.

Potential problems with the current system in Ranchester include raw water quality from Tongue River, additional distribution storage needs, and emergency power generation needs. A Level I study is currently underway, which should be completed in the fall of 2002.

State Engineer's Office Report

Pat Tyrrell, State Engineer, discussed the agency's change in public water right search policy and related training available during the summer and early fall. He discussed the June 2002 Yellowstone River Compact tour. Additional discussion topics included coal bed methane, drought issues, and instream flow.

Coal Bed Methane (CBM) Update

Mickey Steward, Coalbed Methane Coordination Coalition, discussed dust abatement on roads impacted by CBM development in the five county area. The Coalition has been assisting with an application to the Wyoming Department of Transportation for funding of \$1.5M to resurface critical stretches of county roads, primarily in Campbell County, with gravel producing less dust.

The finalization of an Environmental Impact Statement for CBM development has been delayed by 2-3 months due to public comment.

Modeling CBM Surface Water Impacts Using the Erosion Potential Modeler

Greg Wilkerson, University of Wyoming, described the research project. He stated the objectives were to establish an erosion index for drainages in

Northeast Wyoming and produce an erosion index map compatible with ArcView GIS. An equation was developed to estimate the change in the channel due to the addition of coal bed methane discharge water. Study reaches included Deadhorse Creek and Burger Draw in the Powder River basin. Greg stepped through an EP Modeler demonstration. The results indicated the potential for accelerated erosion in the Powder River basin.

Oil and Gas Commission Report

Don Likwartz, Director, indicated water production from coal bed methane wells has gone from 8 million barrels of water/year in 1993 to 516 million barrels of water/year in 2001. However, the total number of active drilling rigs has declined 30% in the last year. There are four agencies involved in CBM development: State Engineer's Office, Department of Environmental Quality, Oil and Gas Commission, and the Bureau of Land Management. He went on to indicate that types of discharge within the basin vary due to topography and water quality. Coordination and education issues were also discussed. To date, 14,700 CBM wells have been drilled. It is anticipated that the well development will be last 10-15 years, utilize 250-325 drilling employees, and create a total of 1000-1300 jobs.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.