

**Snake/Salt Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Alta, Wyoming
June 12, 2002**

Welcome

Facilitators Cathy Lujan and Sherri Gregory-Schreiner opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Grand Targhee Resort near Alta. Each person in attendance was given the chance to introduce himself or herself. Following the introductions, the agenda for the meeting was reviewed. There were approximately 30 people in attendance.

The following schedule was agreed upon for the next three Snake/Salt BAG meetings:

Wednesday, August 14, 2002, 6 p.m. – Moran (Jackson Lake Lodge)
Wednesday, October 9, 2002, 6 p.m. – Alpine
Wednesday, December 18, 2002, 6 p.m. – Jackson

Basin Planning Update – Barry Lawrence, WWDC

Barry Lawrence, WWDC River Basin Planner, distributed copies of past presentations to be added to the basin advisory group reference notebook. Barry then updated the group on the status of the planning processes for the Wind/Bighorn, Powder/Tongue, Northeast, Bear and Green River Basins. He detailed the 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. It was noted that the Wind-Bighorn BAG met the day before, and had a tour of Sinks Canyon.

Water Rights Update – Chace Tavelli, State Engineer's Office

Chace Tavelli, with the Wyoming State Engineer's Office, discussed changes in water right search procedures at his agency. Chace noted that requests for searches have increased dramatically in the past few years, as have requests for new permits. SEO has determined that their priority should be permitting, as others can conduct water right searches. As a result, the State Engineer's Office will dramatically reduce the manpower assigned to water right searches as of September 1, and anticipate that most searches will be conducted by individuals or by paid contractors. Computer terminals will be set up at the State Engineer's Office to facilitate searches by the public, and training will be offered on how to conduct searches. Surface water right information will likely be available online at some point, however the complexity of the data indicates it will be in the distant future.

Consultant Update / Future Water Use Investigation - Sunrise Engineering

Evan Simpson, with Sunrise Engineering, presented information regarding future water use opportunities in the basin. He discussed the role of the basin advisory group in

providing input in the establishment of a list of future water use opportunities. These future uses could serve many purposes, such as rehabilitation of existing facilities, storage, expansion for future demands, or enhancements to quality of life or the environment. Examples of future water uses were given from other completed basin plans in Wyoming. Hypothetical ideas for the Snake/Salt Basin were also presented to help promote the thought process among the BAG members. Evan explained that the list of possible projects would be evaluated to determine the feasibility of each project. This evaluation would include constraints due to legal, environmental, social, political, and financial reasons. The BAG members were urged to think about future water use possibilities in the coming months.

Surface Water Modeling – Linda Williams, Boyle Engineering

Linda Williams discussed the progress of the surface water model for the Snake/Salt Basin. The model is part of the determination of available surface and ground water. She stated that a model was a tool for simulating events that have already occurred, and that there were various types of models that could be used. As part of the basin planning process, it was determined that a spreadsheet model analyzing mean, wet, and dry years would be used, similar to the other basin plans in the State.

Linda indicated that a model serves many purposes. The results can validate the basin water use profile that has been compiled for the plan. It also helps develop an understanding of the system, and serves as a tool to estimate available water and potential uses. It was noted that the model would also serve as a stepping stone to future, more sophisticated models that could be used to assess alternatives. Currently, data have been collected regarding current and past water uses and cover topics such as agricultural, municipal, industrial, and reservoir uses. A study period has been selected based upon available records, and indicator gages have been identified to determine the years to be considered wet, dry, and average for the basin plan. Estimation methods have been used to fill in missing data. Linda stated that they are currently working to estimate flows in tributaries and diversions that have not been gaged. Node diagrams were presented, showing a schematic of the Snake and Salt River Basins. The model uses these diagrams to account for the water by having inflows and diversions according to the layout on the ground. Input from the BAG members was requested on the node diagrams, as well as the model in general.

Ground Water Resources of the Basin – Bern Hinckley, Hinckley Consulting

Bern Hinckley discussed the hydrogeology of the basin, as well as the hydrologic cycle. He stated that annual precipitation in the basin ranges from 16 to 60 inches per year. Previous studies were discussed, and various maps were shown indicating geology in the basin and how that affects water availability. Visuals were used to present data regarding wells in the basin, covering topics such as well permits, density, depths, yields, and trends in the number of wells. The trends showed a significant increase in the number of wells in the last ten to twenty years. Bern indicated that wells were being drilled deeper, which he attributed to an increased margin of safety, not a drop in the water table.

Recharge rates and depths to ground water were also discussed. Past WWDC projects in the basin were reviewed, as was information from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality regarding water quality. Bern noted that the data indicated that there have been few spills in the basin. Possible sources of groundwater contamination include septic systems, agricultural pollutants, as well as industrial spills.

Roxanna Decree & Local Issues – Jim Wilson, Wyoming State Engineer’s Office

Jim Wilson serves as the Hydrographer/Commissioner in Alta for the State Engineer’s Office. He discussed issues regarding surface water on the west side of the Tetons, which flows into Idaho toward the Teton River. The Roxanna Decree was issued in 1941 regarding flows on Teton Creek and South Leigh Creek. According to the decree, Wyoming can have unlimited use of the water until the flow is down to 100 cfs. At that point, the water is shared with Idaho. Jim measures Teton Creek in the administration of the decree. Jim noted that this year, flow rates have ranged from a high of over 900 cfs to a low of 9.4 cfs. He indicated that last year the gage reported a short-term flow of 1600 cfs, however he believed that unusual circumstances created that high flow. There was also a brief discussion of a situation where a Wyoming water right exists for a diversion in Wyoming, yet the land irrigated by this water is actually in Idaho.

Teton County, Idaho Growth – Allen Wilder, City of Driggs, Idaho

Allen Wilder discussed growth issues that were currently affecting the Teton Valley. He indicated that the City of Driggs has seen a 52% increase in water service connections since 1996, and that the population of the city is approximately 2,000 people. In order to have adequate supply for future needs, Driggs is currently working on a spring redevelopment project to increase the capacity of one of their water sources. This spring is actually located in Wyoming. They anticipate the capacity of this spring to double from approximately 350 gpm to over 700 gpm. Current peak demands on the city water supply are approximately 1,600 gpm, however the city has potential sources that could supply approximately 3,900 gpm. Allen stated that expectations are for 14 new subdivisions this year in the Driggs and Victor, Idaho area, which represents about 700 new lots. He also stated that some wells in the area have been going dry, although the municipal wells have not been affected.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.