

**Snake/Salt River Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Jackson, Wyoming
December 18, 2002**

Welcome

Facilitator Sherri Gregory-Schreiner opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Teton County Library in Jackson. 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 two Snake/Salt BAG meetings:

Wednesday, January 29, 2003, 6 p.m. – Afton
Wednesday, March 26, 2003, 6 p.m. – Alpine

Basin Planning Update – Barry Lawrence, WWDC

Barry Lawrence distributed handouts from the last BAG meeting held in Alpine. He also discussed the activities in other basins across the State. A BAG meeting for the Wind/Bighorn River basin had been held the previous day in Powell, which included a draft final presentation for their river basin plan. Other Basin Advisory Group meetings were held in November. The Bear River BAG meeting was held in Evanston, and covered topics such as drought, projections for storage restrictions, water quality, Pacificorp issues, and the Smiths Fork storage project. The Green River BAG meeting was held in Green River, where they discussed the whitewater park, drought, and Colorado River issues. The Powder/Tongue BAG meeting was held in Sheridan, where they addressed coalbed methane issues, including using CBM water for aquaculture. The Northeast BAG meeting was held in Moorcroft, where they discussed issues regarding Devils Tower, wetlands reserves, and the Black Hills forest area. Barry reiterated that following the completion of the basin plan, the BAGs meet three times per year. Also, he mentioned the current water planning bill that will be going to the legislature, and had a copy to review for those interested.

Snake/Salt River Basin Plan (Draft Presentation) – Sunrise Engineering

Evan Simpson gave a short introduction of the basin planning process, and discussed the products produced for the plan. The Technical Memoranda produced for the Snake/Salt plan were then passed around for the BAG to browse through. It was noted that many of the documents were still in draft form.

Ryan Erickson presented a PowerPoint slideshow discussing the basin plan, beginning with the basin water use profile. He stated that nearly 100,000 acres of cropland are irrigated in the basin, consisting mainly of alfalfa, pasture grass, native hay, and small grains such as barley. Over 65,000 acres are located in the upper and lower Salt River

sub-basin, which are mostly sprinkler irrigated. Over 25,000 acres are located in the upper and lower Snake River sub-basin, which are mostly flood irrigated. Nearly 5,000 acres are located in the Teton River sub-basin, all of which are sprinkler irrigated. He also stated that agriculture is the largest water use in the basin, and that nearly all water for agriculture is supplied by surface water.

Ryan discussed municipal and domestic water use. Only four incorporated municipalities are located in the basin, however there are many other areas that are served by public water systems. As a result, the plan has included approximately 47 public water systems, as well as the four municipal systems, under the Municipal Use section. Other domestic users that utilize small systems or individual wells are included under the Domestic Use section. All municipal and domestic uses in the basin are supplied by groundwater. He also discussed industrial water use, which is minimal compared to other basins.

Ryan stated that recreation is a major activity in the basin and has a significant impact on the economy. Much of the recreation in the basin is based in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. Outside of the parks, the national forests have many recreational opportunities. Approximately 150,000 people raft through Snake River Canyon each summer. The three ski areas in the basin see over 500,000 skier-days per year. Other forms of water-based recreation include fishing, ice fishing, waterfowl hunting, and snowmobiling. It was noted that the recreational use of water is generally considered non-consumptive.

Mr. Erickson discussed environmental water use, which is also considered non-consumptive. Maintenance flows, instream flows, and wetlands were discussed. Water storage in the basin was reviewed. The three major reservoirs in the basin, Jackson Lake, Grassy Lake, and Palisades Reservoir, are generally utilized for irrigation downstream in Idaho.

Bob King, Sunrise Engineering, presented some of the GIS products that have been produced as part of the basin plan. Background data such as land ownership, public land survey system, and hydrology were shown. Irrigated lands were presented, along with points of diversion. Groundwater wells were also presented. The GIS was used to show the number of wells permitted during each decade. This emphasized the significant increase of wells in the basin over the last 20 years.

A break was held, during which a portion of a fly fishing video produced by BAG member Paul Stauffer was shown.

Ryan Erickson discussed the surface water modeling process, including study period selection and data collection. The spreadsheet model was presented, and various parts of the model were shown. Ryan mentioned that a representative of Boyle Engineering would be present at the final plan presentation to discuss the model and findings in more detail.

Future water demand projections were then presented by Ryan, beginning with discussion of the three scenarios used in the process. Items of discussion were population growth and employment within the basin. Agricultural projections were presented, which show a decrease in agricultural use in all but the high scenario. Past trends in dairy cows, and national park visits were shown. Tourism and recreation job projections were shown, which indicate an increase even in the low scenario. A breakdown of water use by month indicated that the vast majority of water use is during the summer, which is mainly due to agricultural use.

Future water use opportunities were discussed by Ryan, including the Long List and Short List that were produced during previous BAG meetings. The BAG discussed whether particular items should remain on the Short List. It was determined by the BAG to remove “Construct New Dam on Salt River above Narrows” from the Salt River sub-basin short list, and to leave “Construct Cottonwood Creek Reservoir (Gros Ventre)” on the Snake River sub-basin short list.

Other topics covered by the basin plan were briefly presented, such as water law, conservation, salmon issues, interstate compacts, and the Palisades Reservoir Contract.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.