Snake/Salt Basin Advisory Group
Meeting Record
Alpine, WY
March 26, 2003

Welcome
Facilitator Joel Whalen welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. All attendees introduced themselves. A sign-in sheet was passed around to record attendance. The next meeting is scheduled for July 9 in Jackson at 6 p.m.

Water Development Commission Report
Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAGs for the Wind/Bighorn, Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting April 1 in Cody, April 2 in Buffalo and April 3 in Newcastle. The Bear and Green River Basin met March 24 in Cokeville and March 25 in Rock Springs. Open houses for the Platte River Basin will be held this spring. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and agendas for future meetings

John Jackson indicated that four new commissioners had been appointed, including Dick Geving in Division III and Dan Budd in Division IV. Nineteen new projects were authorized in the Omnibus Water Bill – Planning, including studies for Kennington Springs, North Canal-Grover, and Alta Groundwater projects. Twenty-seven projects were authorized in the Omnibus Water Bill – Construction, including the North Alpine Rehabilitation project, which will provide a new well, storage tank and pipelines, and the Rafter J project, which includes the rehabilitation of the existing system, and the development of a new well, storage and pipelines. The Groundwater Exploration Grant Program, which was amended in 2002, was appropriated an additional budget of $1,500,000. Eligibility for the Small Water Project Program was amended to include the entire state.

It was announced by Traci Stephens, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, that public meetings would be held March 31 and April 1, 2003 in Jackson and Afton respectively to discuss the final report and future management plans for the Salt River.

Wyoming's Drought
Jan Curtis, State Climatologist, introduced the drought website and drought related links, which included the palmer index, soil moisture and Snotel maps. Most of the state is in an exceptional drought, but due to recent snowstorms, most of the state has been upgraded to an extreme drought. He emphasized the importance of precipitation in April for the basin. A brief discussion followed.

Snake River Water Supply Outlook
Mike Beus, USBR, detailed April through July volumes (30-yr averages) for the Henry's Fork streamflow, Heise streamflow, and the Blackfoot to American Falls gain. He discussed Upper Snake River storage amounts with the average storage carryover at 1.6M AF. With regard to the 2003 refill, Mike summarized the anticipated filling of the American Falls, Palisades and Jackson Lake Reservoirs. Total storage for the system is anticipated to be up from 2002. As of March 2003, the system is 55% of capacity, with the American Falls Reservoir 78% full, and Palisades and Jackson Lake Reservoirs 34% full. Mike then detailed snowpack conditions across the basin. In summary, the reservoir storage is higher than 2002, the snowpack is wetter than 2002, surrounding basins are in worse shape, and there is still an opportunity for more moisture in April.

Water Resource Issues in Grand Teton National Park
Sue O'Ney, National Park Service, defined the mission statement, legislative directive and goals relating to the water resources of the Grand Teton National Park (GTNP). Some of the issues within the park include quarry operations, hydrologic modifications and associated floodplain management, bacteriological contamination, grazing impacts, water rights and regulation, and minimum flows relating to a native cutthroat trout fishery. Another key component to resources within the GTNP is water related research. Key research projects were listed and summarized. The National Park Service research and reporting system can be accessed at http://science.nature.nps.gov/permits/servlet/PubIndexServlet Various types of water resource monitoring is conducted within the park, which include groundwater (quality and quantity), national water quality assessment (NAWQA) network monitoring, snow telemetry sites, and backcountry water quality sampling. Sue discussed the Greater Yellowstone Network she performs duties for, including the Bighorn basin.

Water Resource Issues in the National Elk Refuge
Steve Brock, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), indicated the refuge was established in 1912 to provide elk winter range and to preserve the Jackson Hole elk herd. The refuge includes 24,700 acres, with 2,000 acres irrigated annually for grasslands. Over the past 2 years, the refuge has wintered 6000-7000 elk and 650 bison. The elk graze over 1.5M acres, with one-third of the herd migrating from surrounding federals lands and the other two-thirds trekking from Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. Alfalfa pellets, which are supplemental feed, cost $3000/day. The cost is split between the USFWS and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

In an effort to improve irrigation efficiencies on the refuge, the USFWS, in conjunction with the National Resource Conservation Service, is experimenting with center pivot and side roll irrigation systems in a 200-acre area. The study is scheduled to last five years.

Steve went on to discuss the refuge's various water rights, the Flat Creek habitat improvement project, grasshopper problems encountered last year in the park, and the annual antler auction. He also discussed the water quality study being conducted with the Teton County Conservation District on Flat Creek. To date, the study indicates the refuge is fairly clean. It was noted that a street sanding program in Jackson helps create a turbidity problem below town.

A final Environmental Impact Statement, which addresses various strategy levels for the management of elk and bison on the refuge is due in 2005.

Discussion followed, including the issue of wolf management on the refuge.

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.