

**Snake/Salt Basin Advisory Group  
Meeting Record  
Afton, WY  
November 5, 2003**

**Welcome**

Facilitator Sherri Gregory welcomed the group and the meeting was called to order at 6:03p.m. 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 for March 24 in Alpine.

**Water Development Commission Report**

Barry Lawrence updated the BAG on the status of the plans for the other basins. The BAG meetings for the Wind/Bighorn, Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming Basins will be meeting November 18 in Cody, November 19 in Story, and November 20 in Newcastle. Barry discussed the status of all basin studies, and agendas for future meetings. Handouts from the prior meeting were distributed.

**Wyoming's Water Development Program**

Mike Besson, Director of the Water Development Commission (WWDC), discussed the responsibilities of the WWDC and presented an overview of each division: planning, construction, and river basin planning. The agency consists of 19 full time staff and one full-time contract person. In 1998, additional personnel were added to staff the basin planning efforts, including watersheds. The additional staff gives the WWDC the ability to share information and the opportunity to talk about issues that are pertinent to individual basins.

Other topics of discussion included the Small Water Project Program, Buffalo Bill Dam, the Cooperative Agreement, the current drought in Wyoming, and the upcoming 2004 legislative session. For more information about the WWDC, visit the website at <http://wwdc.state.wy.us>

**An Overview of the State Engineer's Office (SEO)**

Harry LaBonde, Deputy State Engineer, presented an organization chart of the office and discussed the responsibilities of the six divisions. The Surface Water and Engineering Division is responsible for reviewing permit applications for any request to put surface water to beneficial use as well as operating the Safety of Dams program. The Ground Water Division is responsible for reviewing and approving water well permits and managing a statewide cooperative stream gaging program. The Board of Control is responsible for the adjudication process on each water right and any changes to the adjudicated rights. The Interstate Streams Division participates in a number of interstate river compact commissions and organizations and regional water programs. Two additional divisions include the Administrative Division, which handles the general agency administration and the Support Services Division, which manages all information

technology functions for the agency. The State Engineer serves by statute as the secretary/treasurer for the Board of Registration for Engineers and Land Surveyors. The Water Well Drilling Contractors and Water Well Pump Installation Contractors Certification Board will be fully operational in 2005.

Current issues include permitting challenges in both the surface and groundwater divisions as related to coal bed methane development, the North Platte Decree Committee and Modified North Platte activities, and weather modification permitting activities. To obtain more information on the SEO, visit the website at <http://seo.state.wy.us>

### **Jackson Lake Hydroelectric Project**

Dr. Vince Lamarra, Ecosystems Research Inc., provides technical support and services to Symbiotics LLC. Symbiotics, which was formed 3 years ago, is a joint venture between Ecosystems Research Inc. and Northwest Power Services, Inc. Currently, Symbiotics operates six hydroelectric projects. Since January 2001, the company has applied for over 250 FERC preliminary permits. These sites are located in 17 states with 99% on existing dam facilities, with 670mW capacity. Preliminary permits have been received on 152 projects; 50 projects are pending and 97 are active. A preliminary permit is issued for up to three years and does not authorize construction. Dr. Lamarra discussed the environmental and water resources qualifications for a potential hydropower facility.

Jackson Lake Dam, which is a US Bureau of Reclamation facility, had a FERC permit filed on June 19, 2002. The dam is currently used for in-reservoir use, instream flow, and irrigation. An overview of the proposed hydropower addition and related operation was provided.

Issues to be dealt with during construction, i.e. human presence, displacement of small animals, reptiles, birds and amphibians; disruption to recreational and aesthetic activities and those during operation, i.e. impacts to threatened/endangered species and turbine-related mortality, were discussed.

### **Overview of Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Subdivision Reviews**

John Passehl indicated that the subdivision review statutes went into effect on July 1, 1997. A subdivision is defined as "...the creation or division of a lot, tract, parcel or other unit of land for the immediate or future purpose of sale...for residential, recreational, industrial, commercial or public uses..." The reviews are intended to ensure a safe and adequate potable water supply and provide wastewater disposal for the lot owners, protect groundwater and surface waters from effluent pollution, and avoid costly taxpayer financed retrofitting of improperly installed systems.

There is a 60-day timeframe for DEQ to review the application and make a recommendation to the appropriate Board of County Commissioners and developer. Exempt from DEQ review are lots larger than 35 acres; easements, rights-of-way, cemetery lots; and subdivisions which are within city limits. John discussed the parameters regarding on-site water supply and wastewater systems. He explained the functionality of a two-compartment septic system, a bed system, and a mound system. Enhanced wastewater systems are utilized on larger lots where the nitrate concentration exceeds 10 mg per liter or in wellhead protection areas. Examples of enhanced systems are disinfections, sand or synthetic filters, or wetland treatment. Intermittent sand filters have low energy consumption, but require regular maintenance and may require special design in very cold areas.

More information can be found at <http://deg.state.wy.us/wqd/pollution.asp>

### **The National Weather Service in the Snake/Salt Basin**

Tom Frieders of the National Weather Service (NWS) presented an overview of their agency. The NWS, which is affiliated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has 123 offices nationwide with 13 river basin centers. The Riverton office serves this basin. NWS information can be accessed through the NOAA weather radio, the national website <http://www.nws.noaa.gov> or <http://weather.gov>, the local website <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/riw>, or by telephone (800)211-1448 or locally (307)857-3898. Of particular interest on the national website are the Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS), Hazardous Weather Outlooks, 7 day advance forecasts, radar images, and climatological data. The Riverton office website includes local and regional weather information as well as satellite imagery and warnings.

### **Snake/Salt Basin Instream Flow Issues & Filings**

Paul Dey, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), indicated that instream flow is beneficial in that it maintains a quality of life, is an important economic factor in tourism and is a legal tool for the State of Wyoming to protect a beneficial use of water. The goals are to either maintain existing flow patterns and habitat on public lands or to restore or improve flow patterns and fishery habitat on private property. The process to obtain an instream flow right has science, public involvement and legal/institutional components. These involve various state agencies, the public, and various state and federal laws.

Paul pointed out that of the 89 statewide instream flow segments filings, 4 segments were located in this basin on the Salt River, Greys River and Fish Creek #1 and #2. Paul briefly described each segment's habitat. Discussion followed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.