

State Water Forum Meeting
May 1, 2001

Auditorium Hathaway Building

Call to order at 10:00 a.m. Introductions around the room occurred. Lowry noted that the May 1st meeting has become, for the past four years, the opportunity for a round table discussion on water planning activities in the State of Wyoming. Summer hiatus to occur this year again. Stumbough had previously requested that the meeting date be moved to the second Tuesday of each month. Wade pointed out that the second Tuesday of the month is typically the date for water planning basin advisory group meetings.

Sue Lowry (SEO) noted that the SEO will be contacting folks starting in July to request "Special Report topics" for the upcoming fall meetings of the Water Forum.

Lowry outlined that the order of the discussion she envisioned for today's round table discussion would be Water Development Commission first, then WRDS, then SEO, then DEQ, then others.

Jon Wade (WWDC) provided a brief description of the water planning process. The Green and Bear River Basin plans have now been developed. Water Planning started in 1997 with the development of a feasibility study for water planning; that was followed by the authorization of a water planning program and hiring of staff, etc. Currently the WWDC is working on water plans for the Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming (Little Missouri, Belle Fourche and Niobrara) River basins. These two plans are expected to be finished at the end of this year. The WWDC has received authorization to initiate planning in the Snake/Salt and the Wind/Big Horn River Basins, and basin advisory group formation meetings will be held on May 14 and 15th in Thermopolis and Jackson.

Bruce Brinkman (WWDC) provided a brief update on the process for selecting consultants for the WWDC projects that are to be initiated. The Commissioner's meeting will be held on Friday, May 4, 2001, in Room 302 of the Capitol. At this meeting Commissioners will advise the WWDC to enter into contract negotiation for the upcoming projects. Actual consultant selection will be performed at the May 30th meeting of the Commission. Brinkman noted water research projects that are partially funded by USGS grant money. There are four projects underway: impacts of changing irrigation methodology in the Snake River system (conservation of water through irrigation efficiency improvements may be hurting fisheries); impact of coalbed methane discharges; winter measurements for instream flow and dissemination of research results and information. New projects were initiated in February that concern plant community affects due to coalbed methane discharge water. USGS funds may not be available next year. Brinkman noted that currently there are 83 instream flow filings at the State Engineer's Office, three more are in process (Shoshone Project – below Buffalo Bill

Reservoir; Clear Creek No. 1 and Clear Creek No. 2). Wagonhound Creek and Dry Fork of the Little Bighorn River are segments for which studies are to be initiated soon.

Robin Gray of the Water Resources Data Center next reported. She noted that Dennis Feeney resigned recently and the position was advertised for about a month without much success – hence the position is being rethought (addition of State Climatologist to WRDS director position) and will be advertised again – hopefully to have it filled before the end of the summer. WRDS will be moving to Wyoming Hall shortly. WRDS has had 193 requests since the beginning of the year – up about 5 percent over the prior year. WRDS is putting Water Library collection titles (card catalog) on line (several thousand are already on the Website) and abstracts for Water Center and WWRI publications for about 100 publications are on line at this time. Also audio files of old Water Center talks on line on the WRDS website at this time. Dick Stockdale (Deputy State Engineer) noted that WRDS is working on a bibliography of the Herschler Building Information Center (Water Library) and asked Gray to report to him. Gray noted a couple of projects WRDS is involved with:

Powder River interactive database project to be initiated soon. Surficial hydrology and subsurface geology, with particular emphasis on coalbed methane production, SEO water well records are being copied and scanned in, along with well and water quantity and quality information from other sources are headed into an Oracle database.

Landslide project being funded by WEMA and being conducted by WRDS and the WGS. GIS coverage of previous slide areas being assembled. A graphical user interface is being established for the project so that landslides can be overlaid on digital elevation models. About 200 quad maps in total.

Water Plan website: Most of the Green River Water Plan on line in both .pdf and .html at this time. The Executive Summary and Completion Report is online with the technical memoranda to be done yet. The GIS information will be loaded up and the model will be put on line soon. A CD-ROM will be prepared containing these materials as well.

Tavelli was called upon to report on the SEO's involvement in water planning. Tavelli noted the involvement of both Cheyenne and field office personnel at the basin advisory group meetings. SEO is also working with WWDC in meetings and product reviews. Tavelli stated that the SEO field personnel are drawn upon as an important resource by the consultants. Proofing of irrigated lands mapping, providing data, answering questions, etc., are some of the duties that are performed by SEO field personnel. The SEO is also participating in the review of draft products for the Powder/Tongue and Northeast Wyoming planning efforts and reviewing the Website for water planning. The SEO is considering a vision for water planning at this time. This vision should educate Tavelli on the mapping and data standards, and needs, that will help him better represent the SEO as liaison to the WWDC and Basin Advisory Groups. The SEO will continue to keep open lines of communication with the WWDC, basin

advisory groups and the consultants and maintain a constant support for the water planning process.

Pat Tyrrell (State Engineer) noted the importance of staying involved in the planning efforts – with examples being tribal negotiations and the assessment of irrigated acreage – important for field water administration.

Lowry next called upon Ron Vore to provide an update on his activities. Vore discussed the water conservation symposium held last July in Casper, Wyoming. Vore provided a rundown of the symposium's itinerary last year. Vore noted highlights of other states' presentations at the symposium. Vore also noted that an outcome of water planning has been the identification of deficit areas within specific basins. This resulted in the development of conveyance loss mitigation and criteria.

Chuck Harnish (DEQ) noted that DEQ is in the process of initiating its CWA Section 303(d) impaired stream designation list and is seeking input from the public and others. The TMDL Workgroup is to meet in the late summer or early fall. DEQ is looking ahead to development of its 305(b) and 303(d) reports. Harnish provided a handout entitled "Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality TMDL Status 2000." He noted that progress has moved ahead the best with regard to developing watershed plans and in the re-issuance of NPDES permits. It was noted that the EPA is "nervous" about the progress that the WYDEQ is making. Harnish stated that the formal watershed groups that are functioning are moving ahead.

Leah Kraft provided an update on the issuance of coalbed methane permits. She noted that a hearing was held in January concerning the issuance of coalbed methane permits. An SAR limit of ten and a specific conductance limit of 2000 has been established. About 20 permits per month are being issued in the Cheyenne and Belle Fourche River Basins. In the Powder and Tongue River Basins, DEQ has not been issuing permits unless there is total containment of the water. DEQ is meeting with Montana about once every 45 days trying to determine how to interpret the data and to come up with a water quality baseline (hopes of developing a list of key constituents by the end of this month). Permitting will be slow in the Powder and Tongue River Basin Kraft feels. Kraft discussed the federal regulations' requirement of the demonstration of beneficial use for discharge water versus how it will be used for irrigation or wildlife enhancement. DEQ has several open positions and they are trying to get them filled.

SARs of water in the Little Snake River Basin are in the 50s. So the DEQ will be going slow in the Little Snake River Basin. Tyrrell noted the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program and the Forum's policies. Double Eagle has recently submitted an application in the Little Snake River Basin. The SAR of the Little Snake River is below 1, which is the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum's NPDES policy. Dudley and Moore recently filed an application to discharge into Seminoe Reservoir (believe this application was initially started by Barrett Resources).

Jeremy Lyon (DEQ) provided an update on the modification of water quality rules. Revisions on other rules are slated for the future.

Grant Stumbaugh (Dept of AG).....

Matt Bilodeau (US Army Corp of Engineers) noted that he recently attended a meeting in Idaho concerning what/how things may change under the new Administration. USACOE will still be looking to permitting as being the driver for its planning efforts. USACOE is being more affected by court decisions and court cases. EPA and USACOE have been unable to reach agreement on court case settlement provisions.