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July 20, 2015 - Wyoming State Board of Control (BOC) issues Draft Revised Hydrographer-Commissioner Manual in advance of consideration of its adoption at the August BOC Meeting.

In Governor Mead's "Leading the Charge, Wyoming Water Strategy" issued in early 2015, under Theme 1 entitled "Water Management Initiatives," is Initiative 2 labeled "Uniform Hydrographers Operations Manual." Specific language relating to this initiative is as follows:

"This initiative is the development of a uniform manual of standards, protocols, and guidance for State Engineer's Office hydrographers statewide. The Wyoming Board of Control, led by the State Engineer, will oversee development with the help of experts and members of the public."

Since late 2014, the State Engineer's Office and Board of Control staff has been revising and updating this manual, and intends to consider its adoption at 1:30 pm on August 18 at their August Board of Control meeting at the Cowboy Village Resort in Jackson, WY. In keeping with the latter part of the initiative language above, we are making this revised document available to the public prior to that meeting so that we may obtain public feedback.

The hydrographer's manual, to be available to water commissioners, or "hydrographer-commissioners," is essentially an employee handbook that will be provided statewide by the SEO to new and experienced field personnel alike. The scope of its content has been selected by the five BOC members. It is not a cookbook that answers every question a hydrographer might face, nor does it purport to catalog every nuance of the various decisions our predecessors have faced. It also does not contain detailed technical instructions, such as how to do a streamflow measurement using a current meter or work a gage record in the offseason. Many of these technical details are handled in ongoing individual or agency-supported specific training (which is often done in concert with USGS professionals).

Instead, this manual provides general guidance as to the role of the agency and its officers, what their position entails, important references to rules and statute, basic tenets of Wyoming Water Law, and answers to the common questions hydrographer/commissioners might receive from appropriators. Importantly, it also notes the many situations when hydrographers may need to seek further guidance from their superintendent, the Attorney General's Office, or from the Cheyenne office for other technical advice (related to groundwater topics, for example). As a foundational document, this manual introduces many aspects of the hydrographer's duties and responsibilities but does not replace the breadth of experience and judgment each of these professionals will gain on the job. It is the current version of the general guidance that has been provided by the agency to its field personnel since Earl Michael, Superintendent of Water Division I, wrote the first one in 1968, and the SEO has updated periodically since. Being an agency employee manual, it may again be updated in the future at any time should the need arise. We look forward to your feedback.

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