



Water Planning News

What to Expect from Your River Basin Planning Process



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The River Basin Planning process was initiated in 1999 to help plan Wyoming's future by providing the tools to make better informed decisions. Available water resources information is currently lacking in many areas, and is crucial to water planning. As part of the planning process the state was divided into seven major river basins, of these seven, plans have been completed in the Green and Bear River Basins. The River Basin Planning process is currently underway in the Powder-Tongue, and Northeast (Little Missouri, Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, and Niobrara basins) River Basins, with completion scheduled for December 2001. The Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basin Plans are just being initiated, and the North Platte Plan will commence in June 2002.

The River Basin Planning process begins in each basin with the formation of a Basin Advisory Group (BAG). The BAGs are made up of individuals living in or representing interests in the basin under study. They are extremely important to the process in providing insight into the local water resources issues and concerns, and they provide a conduit for others in the basin to learn more about the process.

The consultants selected to prepare the plan begins their work in June, and finish in December of the following year. This eighteen-month process includes development of a number of extensive databases, geographic information system coverages, hydrologic models, population and demand projections, and an analysis of potential alternatives to satisfy current and future water demands.

When river basin plans have been completed for the entire state, the process will turn to updating the information contained in those plans. On approximately five year intervals the plans will be revisited to update temporal information, and expand on the groundwork laid in the original plan. This may include more detailed hydrologic modeling, more intensive water rights information, current population/demand projections, or other water related information found useful as a planning tool. It is important to note that much of the information contained in the last State Water Plan, completed in 1973, is still valid. The problem lies in the fact that it was never updated. It is the goal of this planning process to ensure the river basin plans are always current.

Special points of interest:

- Visit the Water Planning Calendar for Events in your area.
- The 2001 Legislature is completed, see the results on page 3.
- Open Houses Held in the Wind-Bighorn and Snake-Salt Basins.

Consultant Selection Begins in the Wind-Bighorn and Snake-Salt Basins

The 2001 Session of the Wyoming Legislature authorized \$1,550,000 to continue the River Basin Planning Process in the Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basins. The consultant selection process was initiated January 17 with the first of four advertisements announcing this work. The advertisements requested letters of interest and statements of qualifications from

interested consultants. Five of the consulting firms who submitted a letter of interest were selected to receive a request for proposal (RFP). Consultants then provide, based on the RFP, a comprehensive description of how they plan to perform the River Basin Planning work, and a detailed cost estimate.

After the selection commit-

tee reviews all proposals, the top three firms are invited to interview. A contract is negotiated with the successful firm after approval of the Water Development Commission and the Select Water Committee, and notice to proceed is issued around June 15. Both of these river basin plans are scheduled to be completed in December 2002.

Progress Report from the Northeast and Powder-Tongue River Basins

Development of river basin plans for the Powder/Tongue and Northeast Basins (Little Missouri, Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, and Niobrara) is in full swing with HKM Engineering actively working on the water use profiles for each of the basins.

Mapping of irrigated lands in the Powder-Tongue and Northeast River Basins is now complete. Digitizing of the irrigated lands in the Powder/Tongue River Basins is roughly 95% complete. Northeast River Basin irrigated lands are now 40% digitized.

Compilation of diversion records for ditches with

headgate capacities greater than or equal to 10 cfs is complete. HKM has also been conducting a series of interviews with the Wyoming State Engineer's Office hydrographer commissioners and individual water users for the compilation of information needed for the creation of operation memorandums. Additionally, a field review of the Northeast Basin was conducted resulting in interviews with the water users in that area. Furthermore, the ditch operation memorandums are now complete and will soon be submitted for review.

The compilation of information relative to Consumptive

Use (CU) and Consumptive Irrigation Requirements (CIR) within the basin is also continuing. This information will be used to make estimates of crop water requirements for dry years, average years and wet years.

Groundwater is an important component of river basin plans and is being addressed through close interaction with the State Engineer's Office (SEO) and the development of a groundwater database for use in the groundwater GIS data themes. The WWDC in conjunction with HKM has developed a methodology for segregating the database into the various groundwater data



Basin Advisory Group meeting in Lusk, Wyoming.

themes. Similarly, the stock water issue is also being addressed through close interaction with the SEO.

Water rights attribution, another important task in the process, is 50% complete for the Tongue River Basin and will be ongoing for the other basins.

Finally, work on the determination of available surface water and groundwater and demand projections is just beginning. For further information contact the WWDC at 777-7626.

Water Planning Calendar

April 11 - Powder/Tongue Basin Advisory Group (BAG) Meeting, Colonel Bozemans, Buffalo, 6 pm. Topics: consultant progress update, Ucross research project, issues identification session

April 12 - Northeast BAG Meeting, Town Hall, Sundance, 6 pm. Topics: consultant progress update, Key-hole operations, issues identification session.

May 1 - Wyoming Water Forum, hosted by the Wyoming State Engineer's Office, Hathaway Bldg, 10 am. Topics: water planning agency roundtable. Participants include: WWDC, SEO, Dept. of Ag, DEQ, NRCS, BLM, USFS, WACD.

May 14 - Wind/Bighorn

BAG Formation Meeting, TBA, Thermopolis, 6 pm. Topics: river basin planning process overview; discussion of basin advisory group models and roles, formation of basin advisory group for the Wind/Bighorn Basin.

May 15 - Snake/Salt BAG Formation Meeting, TBA, Jackson, 6 pm. Topics: river basin planning process overview; discussion of basin advisory group models and roles, formation of basin advisory group for the Snake/Salt Basin.

June 13 - Powder/Tongue BAG Meeting, TBA, Dayton, 6 pm.

June 14 - Northeast BAG Meeting, Niobrara County Fairgrounds, Lusk, 6 pm.

June 25/26 - Wind/Bighorn BAG Meeting, TBA. *Please note that the date for this meeting is still tentative.*

June 25/26 - Snake/Salt BAG Meeting, TBA. *Please note that the date for this meeting is still tentative.*

July 9 - Bear River BAG Meeting, TBA, Kemmerer, 6 pm. Topics: DEQ water quality assessments, SEO and WWDC agency updates, TBA.

July 10 - Green River BAG Meeting, TBA, Baggs/Savery, 10 am. Topics: CBM permitting in the Little Snake River drainage, SEO and WWDC agency updates, TBA. Tour of the High Savery Reservoir project site is also tentatively being planned for attendees.

August 6 - Snake/Salt BAG Meeting, TBA.

August 7 - Wind/Bighorn BAG Meeting, TBA.

August 8 - Powder/Tongue BAG Meeting, TBA.

August 9 - Northeast BAG Meeting, TBA, Wright, 6 pm. Topics: TBA. A coal mine tour is also being arranged for meeting attendees earlier in the day.

August 13-14 - Upper Bear River Tour, TBA, Evanston. Tour is being sponsored by the Bear River Commission and will utilize Evanston as the hub for activities. Contact Jack Barnett, 801-292-4663.

News from Water Resources Data System

WRDS Hires New Data Requester

The Water Resources Data System (WRDS) has recently hired a new data requester. Beverly Sanchez began work on March 26, filling the position that Autumn McEachron relinquished in January. Beverly comes to WRDS from the University of Wyoming Financial Operations. All climate and water resources data requests may be sent to Beverly by phone at (307) 766-6651 or by e-mail to wrds@uwyo.edu. We are very lucky to have Beverly aboard, please join us in welcoming her to WRDS!

WRDS Coordinator Resigns

The WRDS Coordinator, Dennis Feeney, put in his last day of work on March 30. After a much-needed vacation to Ireland, Dennis will assume his new position at the Institute for Environmental and Natural Resources at the University.

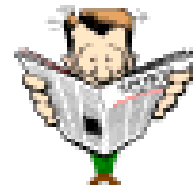
While Dennis was coordinator, great strides were taken in promoting WRDS as a climatological and hydrological clearinghouse. Under Dennis' supervision WRDS succeeded in placing the Water Library online, completed several grants with the Wyoming State Geological Survey, including completion of a project to generate digital landslide maps for Lincoln and Teton Counties, continued to develop the water planning website and created a records preservation document for the library. Dennis, on the behalf of the staff at WRDS, we would like to thank you for all of your hardwork and dedication. We wish you the best in your new job and all of your future endeavors!

WRDS Commences Project in the Powder River Basin

Water Resources Data System (WRDS) in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, the

Wyoming State Geological Survey, Spatial Data and Visualization Center and the State Engineer's Office is preparing to start work on the Interactive Database for the Powder River Basin. The purpose of this project is to generate an interactive database that will provide information on the surficial and subsurface geology, groundwater hydrology, and surface and subsurface water quality for part of the Powder River Basin. In addition, the project will include available information on water well completion reports. Since the emphasis will be on the coalbed methane producing formations and beds in the area, links to information on coalbed methane production and produced water will also be available. The interactive database will allow resource managers, planners, and resource developers to quickly access data and information vital to decision

making. This project is scheduled to be completed by December 2002 and will be available online at <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/>. For more information on this project please contact Tony Bergantino at (307) 766-6651.



Legislative news from Cheyenne

The 2001 Legislative Session saw passage of several pieces of legislation that are important to water resources planning and development. The following are brief summaries of each bill. For a more in-depth review, use the web site: legisweb.state.wy.us

S.F. No. 0009 De-earmarking modifications

The bill amends legislation passed last year which de-earmarked funds or revenue streams that have historically been designated for specific purposes within state government, such as the state's planning and construction programs within the Wyoming Water Development Commis-

sion. In its final form, SF0009 provides some additional funds for state construction programs over last year's legislation, but still places limits on the amount of money that flows into the accounts. (See CH0209)

S.F. No. 0047 Omnibus water bill-construction

This bill provides the Wyoming Water Development Commission its funding for 16 new projects and increased funding for 4 existing projects. (See CH0002)

S.F. No. 0127 Green River/Wind River water storage

The legislation appropriates \$55M of the \$75M special ap-

propriation, provided this session, for the purpose of constructing dams in the Green and Wind River Basins. Before a project can proceed and funds may be expended, each project must receive individual authorization. (See CH0100)

H.B. No. 0081 Omnibus water bill-planning

The bill provides the WWDC its funding for Level I and Level II studies and transfers the state conservation position, funded in part from a grant from the US Bureau of Reclamation to the WWDC, from the State Engineer's Office to the WWDC. (See CH0086)



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*The first basin plans should
be online soon. Keep your
Eyes open for products!!!*

Open Houses Held in the Wind-Bighorn and Snake-Salt Basins, BAG Formation Meetings Set



A “full house” turned out in Thermopolis to hear about river basin planning.

The Wyoming Water Development Commission recently hosted two open houses in the Wind/Bighorn and Snake/Salt River Basins to introduce residents to the River Basin Planning process to be conducted in each of the basins later this year. Meetings were held in Thermopolis on January 29th and in Alpine on January 30th, and consisted of a series of brief presentations, displays and the distribution of a wealth of materials related to Wyoming’s water resources.

Agencies participating in the open houses included

the Wyoming Water Development Commission, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, the Wyoming State Engineer’s Office, the Water Resources Data System, the US Forest Service, the US Bureau of Reclamation, and the US Geological Survey.

Attendees were given an overview of the River Basin Planning process, as well as an update on the request to the 2001 legislature for authorization of the next two river basin plans. [*\$1.55 million has since been appropriated for this effort.*]

Within the next few

months following the open houses, Basin Advisory Groups (BAGs) will be formed in each of the basins. The Wind/Bighorn BAG formation meeting has been set for May 14th in Thermopolis, while the Snake/Salt BAG formation meeting will be held May 15th in Jackson.

Once formed, the BAGs will begin the issues identification phase of the process. Meetings will continue to occur every two months during plan development, with meeting locations rotating within each basin.