



Big Hole Watershed Committee
Monthly Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2009 – 7:00 pm
Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance:

Amy Chadwick, Watershed Consulting; Art Christenson, BCD; Bill Cain, BHWC; Brad Borst, MWA; Clayton Huntley, rancher; Darren Olsen, USFS; Emma MacKenzie, BHWC; Erik Kalsta, rancher; Garth Haugland, Beaverhead Country Commissioner; Harold Peterson, rancher; Jeanne Caddy, BHWWC; Jim Hagenbarth, rancher; Jim Magee, FWP; Linda Lennon, AGRP, FWP; Mark Kambich, rancher; Mike Roberts, DNRC; Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC; Peter Kamperschroer, rancher; Randy Smith, Chair, rancher; Ray Weaver; rancher; Russ Riebe, USFS; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Steve Luebeck; sportsman;

Introductions/Review of Minutes

Introductions were made and the June minutes were reviewed and approved with no changes.

Precipitation and Stream Flow Report

Mike Roberts handed out the most recent report (attached to minutes). This year the snowpack, temperatures and rainfall have all been good and it has also been the second good snowpack year. The flows have been above average all year. The flow targets have all been met in the upper Big Hole this year.

Mike reported that there are four new real-time gages that were installed by DNRC a few weeks ago which brings the total to six real-time stations in the upper basin in addition to the five in the lower Big Hole. The gages were installed for compliance with the CCAA flow targets. The gages will help in tracking data and knowing when to take action. The gages are located above the Saginaw Bridge, at Miners Lake Road, Minor Creek mouth, and Dickie Bridge.

There are two years of funding to pay the USGS. Mike will pursue more funding, which should be easier to get with a working system.

PRESENTATION

Amy Chadwick, Watershed Consulting LLC, presented a PowerPoint about her research on the Big Hole River Thermal Infrared (TRI) Temperature Analysis. The funding from BHWC allowed her study to extend into the prime grayling habitat on the Big Hole. The PowerPoint is available to anyone interested as a pdf file. Please contact Emma (info@bhwc.org) to get a copy.

Discussion centered on how this information can best be used. Amy explained that this data is combined with the data of other researchers such as Shane Vatland and Jeff Everett to develop better understanding of the river as a system and how to best manage

it. She also suggested that irrigation returns offer opportunities for study. Noorjahan also reported that this data will be important for upcoming 319 grants as well as an important part of the BHWC future prioritization.

Amy will send her final report to BHWC and it will be posted on our website (www.bhwc.org).

Committee reports

- Steering Committee

Bill Cain reported on the search for the new Executive Director. Two candidates were interviewed and the search committee hopes to select the candidate by the end of the month. The search committee is looking for a candidate that will broaden both the vision and the funding sources and income for BHWC.

- Weed Working Group

Jeanne Caddy reported on:

Weed Whacker Ball: work is ongoing for the Weed Whacker Ball (September 12, 2009). She is looking for help with getting donations of auction items as well as financial donations and is concerned about sustainability. They need to raise \$20,000. Jeanne is looking at chartering buses from both Butte and Dillon as “designated drivers”.

Private Applicator Training: The weed committee, along with the weed coordinators from Beaverhead, Butte-Silver Bow and Madison Counties, is coordinating a private applicator training in October. The training and recertification session will be at the Grange in Divide and will cover the basics as well as site restoration. Restoration is a high priority for the weed committee. There will also be an aquatic session.

Contractor update: The lower Big Hole has been sprayed for this year, and Ray Tilman is almost done in the upper basin. There was much more leafy spurge this year in the lower basin, and Jeanne will be receiving more funds next year to hit that harder. She is also looking at grazing and biological controls.

Mark Kambich reported that the spray days have had great turn-outs and also thanked the people from the various agencies who come out to help. Jim Hagenbarth suggested that the weed committee work with state and federal agencies regarding revenue to replace lost opportunities.

Jeanne mentioned that the group will continue with its proactive measures to address the invasive weed situation.

- Wildlife Working Group

Jim Hagenbarth reported that the next meeting will be held on September 22 at the Jackson School. Vanna Boccadori is putting together a proposal regarding a change of elk hunting districts to take to the commission. Jim has been in touch with Vanna to be sure that she is aware of the group’s point of view.

Mark Kambich mentioned that there has been good participation; however some ranchers have expressed dissatisfaction with the plan. He encouraged people who want changes to attend the meetings and feel free to speak up.

- Land Use Planning

Noorjahan reported that the land use group will be meeting later on in the fall to consider the two educational forums and to clarify their direction.

New Business

- Forest Jobs and Recreation Act

Scott Reynolds requested that we bring in a speaker to educate the Committee regarding Senator Tester's bill which could have far-reaching effects on the Big Hole. The committee agreed that Sen. Tester's staff would be the best place to find a presenter. Noorjahan will contact his office about bringing a speaker to the Committee in October. The topics would include an overview of the bill, how it would impact the Big Hole now and into the future, the economic impact of private logging vs. government programs, and how it affects jobs in the country.

- Dick Marshall

Dick has resigned from the Committee due to health reasons. Emma will write a letter of appreciation for the group, as a whole, to sign. In the future we will prepare a plaque and invite Dick to join us for its presentation. The group will need to appoint a new chair for the land use planning work group as well as a representative to the the Missouri Headwaters Partnership.

Dick suggested that we consider Cindy Ashcraft as his replacement. Randy has spoken with her and invited her to attend future meetings. The steering committee will be in touch with Cindy to discuss and Noorjahan will prepare a packet for her.

- Fall Tour

Noorjahan reported that Ray Weaver and Harold Peterson will work with the BHWC staff for a tour of the upper Big Hole at the end of September or early October. Emma Rens has offered to do a fish survey with the group so that there is more 'hands on' participation. There are funds available to support this tour.

Determine September Agenda

Dr. Steve Running will be the presenter at the September meeting and will discuss the topic of climate change and its impact on Montana. The Missouri Headwaters Partnership was invited and we will be joined by the Ruby Watershed Council for a potluck at 6:00 pm.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

August 2009 - Big Hole Precipitation and Streamflow Report

Mike Roberts

Precipitation

Lower Basin (Dillon) – water year (107%) calendar year (113%), August (133%)

Upper Basin (Wisdom) - water year (109%) calendar year (112%), August (174%)

Temperature

Lower Basin and Upper Basin - Near normal temperatures for spring and cooler than normal for summer. August showing 3-4 degrees below normal for both lows and highs.

Flows

Above average flows have been observed most of spring and summer.

Lower Basin

Big Hole River at Melrose -- August 18 = 532 cfs (75th %ile)

Upper basin

Big Hole River at Wisdom -- August 18 = 64 cfs (70th %ile)

CCAA flow targets met at all five gages 100% of time with the exception of a few days at Wisdom that dropped below 60 cfs. One set of diversions adjustments made this year.

Four new Real-Time Gages installed in early August

- Big Hole River abv Jackson (06023500)
- Big Hole River abv Spring Cr nr Jackson (06023800)
- Big Hole River at Miner Cr mouth (06024020)
- Big Hole River nr Wise River (06024580)

These sites can be observed on USGS website:

<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mt/nwis/current/?type=flow>