



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2009 ~ 7:00 p.m.

Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance:

Art Christenson, BCD; Bill Cain, BHWC; Cindy Ashcraft, rancher/outfitter; Corey Meier, BLM; Dick Talley, DOWL HKM; Emma MacKenzie, BHWC; Erik Kalsta, rancher; Garth Haugland, Beaverhead Country Commissioner; George Trischman, rancher; Jami Murdock, rancher; Jeanne Caddy, BHWWC; Kevin Brown, BHWC; Liz Jones, rancher; Marty Hovan, BSB Water; Mike Bias, BHRF; Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC; Peter Kamperschroer, rancher; Ray Weaver, rancher; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Steve Luebeck, sportsman; Steve Parker, BHRF.

Introductions/Review of Minutes

The meeting was facilitated by the new Executive Director, Kevin Brown. Introductions were made and the September minutes were reviewed and approved with no changes.

Precipitation and Stream Flow Report

Neither Dave Amman nor Mike Roberts were available for this meeting. The information for the October report is appended to the minutes.

Big Hole River Diversion Dam

Dick Talley, Project Manager at DOWL HKM, presented a PowerPoint about the design process for the Big Hole River Diversion Dam. The PowerPoint is available to anyone interested as a pdf file. Please contact Emma (info@bhwc.org) to get a copy.

Dick discussed the need for the project, the budget, its history and progress, five different design alternatives, and the project timeline.

Questions centered on:

- Effects of turbidity on the fish as well as the current system: They plan to use special construction techniques so that the construction turbidity won't match the normal spring turbidity. The initial design was built for a system that handles large amounts of sediment.
- Implications of not getting project done by next summer: the undercutting due to timber failure will continue to develop. There is a significant hole developing which could become a serious problem if the project is delayed a year.
- Impact of some designs on the current island at the site: the different designs take the impact on the island as well as the banks into consideration.
- New pump station: will have small physical footprint and create no more noise than the current pump station.
- Change in "point of diversion": they are asking the DNRC for a clear definition of what constitutes a change in the point of diversion so that a design is not chosen that will hinder the timeline.

The next inter-agency meeting is scheduled for November 3rd, and the Advisory Committee meeting's the following week. (BHWC members Jim Hagenbarth, Steve Parker, and Steve Luebeck are on the 8 member Committee).

If the timeline can be accomplished, they will have the FONSI (finding of no significant impact) by early December, the bid documents by March, and work will begin in June and finish within a year.

Dick handed out an informative newsletter at the meeting. Anyone interested in receiving a copy can contact him at (406) 723-8213 x409 or dick.talley@hkminc.com.

Committee reports

- Steering Committee

Bill Cain reported that there was no report from the Steering Committee this month. Their next meeting will be in early November.

- Weed Working Group

Jeanne Caddy reported that there was a weed applicator re-certification earlier today which included credits for aquatic application. There was discussion about changes to the entire classification system for invasive weeds, and that both cheat grass and Russian olive (only in riparian areas) are likely to be listed.

The next Weed meeting will be in Melrose on November 10th with presentations on the 2009 season projects by the contractors. Please contact Jeanne at jcaddy@bhwc.org or (406) 267-3354 for the location.

- Wildlife Working Group

Emma MacKenzie reported on the last Wildlife group meeting which was held on September 22nd in which new hunting regulations were presented for elk, moose, and antelope. Also discussed was the new wolf hunting season. The minutes and agenda will be up on the website (www.bhwc.org/bhwc_wildlife.html) or you can email Emma for a copy (emackenzie@bhwc.org).

- Land Use Planning

Noorjahan Parwana asked the committee to nominate a member to chair this group now that Dick Marshall has retired from BHWC.

- Director's Report

Kevin Brown reported that the annual membership drive letter was mailed earlier this month. We have received \$2,300 in memberships so far from 1,100 letters. The goal is an additional \$8,000. If you know of anyone who should received a membership letter, please contact Kevin at kbrown@bhwc.org or (406) 370-7230.

Jami Murdoch reported on the Youth Field Day which was held earlier today at the Kalsta Ranch and held in conjunction with BHWC, BHRF, and CFWEP. The goal was to introduce 4th - 8th graders and their teachers to hands-on river education. There were

80 students from every community in the Big Hole from Jackson to Twin Bridges. Erik Kalsta mentioned that the students are already very well educated about invasive weeds.

Noorjahan reported on the recent luncheon held at Kristin Manas' home for the women along the Big Hole. There were 14 attendees, with a nice balance of full-time and part-time residents. This was a good opportunity for education and expanding community connections. These socials are popular and will continue each year. A river float and luncheon at the Notch is planned for next year.

Noorjahan also reported on two projects. The Big Hole Cooperative Ditch has come in under budget which may allow for additional improvements. Contractors selected were Gateway Engineering out of Bozeman and Jeremy Miller out of Alder. The Kalsta/Spring Creek Project is moving forward. The RFP is being developed. The Beaverhead Conservation District is working on getting the contract with state funding agency in place.

New Business

- **Wise River Assessment:** Liz Jones reported. In September, a committee headed by Pete Kamperschroer and which included Liz, Andrew Hansen, Dean Stanchfield, and Lee Kirkpatrick met to develop scope of work. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate irrigation infrastructure, hydrogeomorphic features, and fish habitat on the lower 12 miles of Wise River from the confluence of Pattengail Creek to the Big Hole. Funding for the assessment was secured through DNRC. Three consulting firms were interviewed. The committee chose Oasis Environmental out of Livingston. The committee met with the Oasis to go over the scope of work and time frame. Oasis will begin working with ranchers on the head gates and irrigation structure. They will meet with USFS and MFWP fisheries biologists on fisheries issues, as well as with outfitters and guides in order to broaden their perspective. The assessment should develop a prioritized list of potential projects that may improve water management, instream flows, water quality, and fish habitat. The BHWC will be consulted as to which project(s) might be pursued. Funding is available through the assessment grant to have Oasis write and submit a grant proposal on behalf of the BHWC. Deadline for that grant is May 2010...
- **Missouri Headwaters Partnership (MHP):**
 - Kevin informed the group about the annual meeting of the MHP on November 12th in Twin Bridges. Flyers were handed out and the specifics on the speakers for this presentation are also on the BHWC website. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend.
 - Dick Marshall will be honored at the November 12th for his work with the watershed over the years. He will be presented with a certificate and plaque. The certificate was passed around at the meeting for all in attendance to sign.
 - Now that Dick has retired, a member of the Committee is needed as the BHWC representative to the MHP.
- **Listening Session on November 5th in Whitehall:** The Montana Partnership will be holding a listening session at 1:30pm in Whitehall at the USDA Building. The Partnership has evaluated the need and design a new funding program for conservation and restoration in Montana. This is a great opportunity to influence a

potential, future funding source. Everyone, especially landowners, are encouraged to attend.

- George Trischman introduced Cindy Ashcraft and noted that Dick Marshall had suggested that BHWC consider her as his replacement on the Governing Committee. The group was in consensus and Cindy is now a governing member of the BHWC.
- Garth Haughland volunteered to speak with the Nature Conservancy regarding a replacement for Nathan Korb on the BHWC.

Determine Future Agendas

November 18: Shane Vatland will present his PIT tag study.

December 16: The group decided to cancel the December meeting.

January 20: Senator Tester's staff may be available to present information on the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

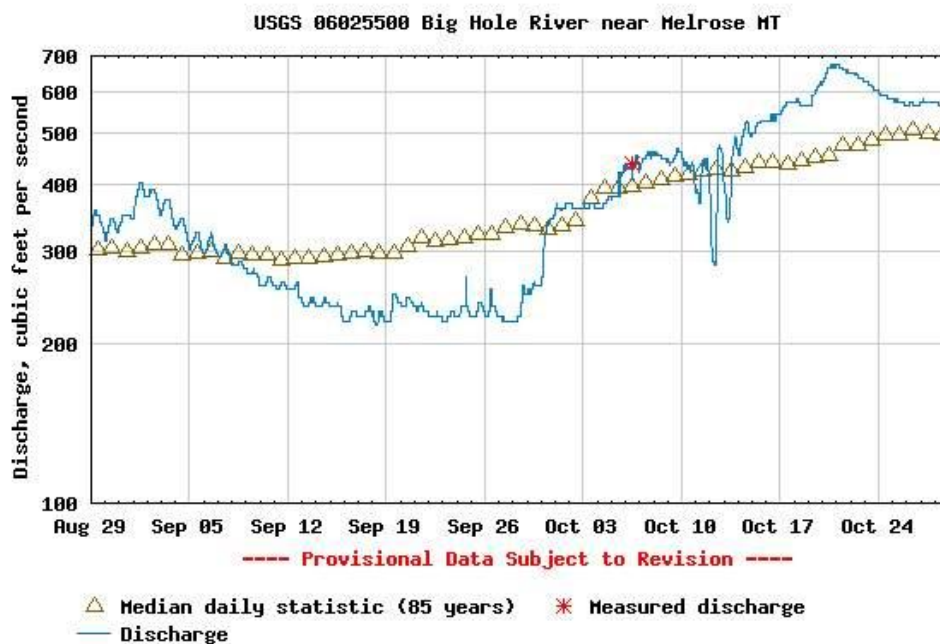
<p><i>Please Note Time Change:</i> The BHWC Monthly Meeting on November 18, 2009 Will begin at 6:00 p.m.</p>

Currently, the Big Hole River throughout its length is experiencing above-normal flows. This is at least partly due to cool fall weather combined with excellent October precipitation. Today the river is flowing 15% to 40% above normal. At Wisdom, flows had begun to drop below normal (median) in late September. But with diversion reductions and the fall weather, the river today is running 86 cfs, well above the long term median of 72 cfs.

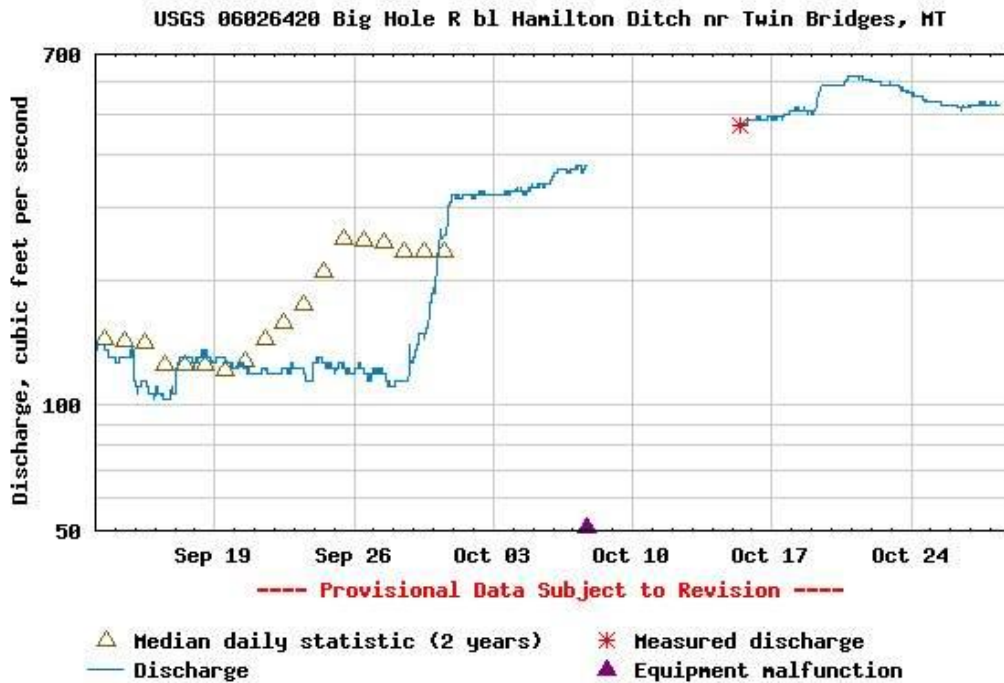


At the Mudd Creek gauge, flows dipped below normal in late September, then rebounded strongly since then. Today the flow is 224 cfs, well above the median of 160 cfs. Near Wise River the flow is 349 cfs.

At Maiden Rock, flow today is 516 cfs, and the long term median is 396 cfs. At the long-running gauge “near Melrose”, the river is running 567 cfs, and the long-term median is 499 cfs. Here, the river dropped below median beginning in early September, and remained that way until October. Recall that there was almost zero precipitation during September. Still, flows during that period were in the 225 to 250 cfs range.



At The Notch, near Glen, the river today is flowing 605 cfs, well above the 471 cfs median. At the High Road Bridge above the Hamilton Ranch, the river today is flowing 530 cfs. There are no period-of-record statistics for this gauge after September 30, but the river would appear to be well above normal, and exhibited the same fluctuations as the upstream gauges.



Precipitation and Climate

Based on the SNOTEL sites in the basin, precipitation this month and water year (which began October 1) sits at 195% of the 30-year norm. Although it is obviously early in the season, snow pack appears to off to a good start. For the water year ending September 30 (Water Year 2009), precipitation was 104% of normal at these same sites.

The latest Climate Prediction Center Forecast (October 15) for southwest Montana predicts an increased chance of above-normal air temperatures for November through March, and below-normal precipitation for November through January. For February through the summer, the prediction is for warmer air temperatures and near-normal precipitation.