



Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2023 – 7:00 pm at the Divide Grange
Zoom option also provided

In Attendance

In-person: Pedro Marques, BHWC; Ben LaPorte, BHWC; Tom Bowler, Resident; Betty Bowler, Resident; John Reinhardt, Rancher/BHWC; Dave Ashcraft, Rancher/BHWC; Amber Burch, Beaverhead County; Matt Lacey, USFS; Kristen Thompson, USFS; Diane Hutton, Resident/BHWC; Matt Norberg, DNRC; Kaitlin Bolen, DNRC; Art Mangels, Big Hole River Retreat; Paul Peterson, MFWP/Peterson Cattle Co.; Jenna Dohman, MBMG; Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher/BHWC; Jim Dennehy, BSB Water/BHWC; Jim Keenan, BSB Water/BHWC; Steve Luebeck, Sportsman/BHWC; Susan Monahan, Big Hole Ranch; Sam and Susan Stone, BHR; Mark Kambich, Rancher/BHWC; Stan Strizic, Resident; Pete Kampershroer, Rancher/Sportsman; John Craig, Resident; Steve Reimers, Rancher; JM Peck, Rancher; John Wittingham, BBS; Peyton Butler, Missoula; Jeff Copeland, Consultant; Dave Duffy, Resident; and Randy Smith, Rancher/BHWC.

Zoom: Peter Frick, Rancher/BHWC; Eric Thorson, Sunrise Fly Shop/BHWC; Polaris Photo Lab; Jim Olsen, MFWP; Kim Giannone; Ty Daniel, UM-Western; Kathy (no last name); “Baskin”, Benjamin Langton, UM-Western; “trout wrangler”; Ellen Mills, UM-Western; and Devinn (no last name), UM-Western.

Meeting Minutes

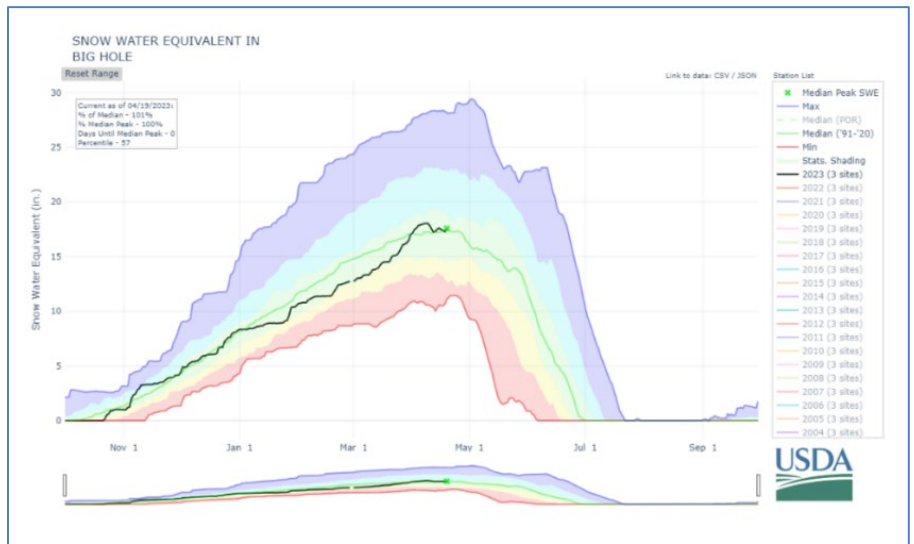
BHWC monthly meetings are held at the Divide Grange with a virtual (Zoom) option provided thanks to Southern Montana Telephone Company, who donated the internet service. Meeting minutes and recordings are available at <https://bhwc.org/monthly-meetings/> (scroll down for meeting minutes archive). Printed copies are available during in-person meetings. Contact Tana Nulph, BHWC Associate Director, at tnulph@bhwc.org or (406) 267-3421 to suggest additions or corrections.

Reports

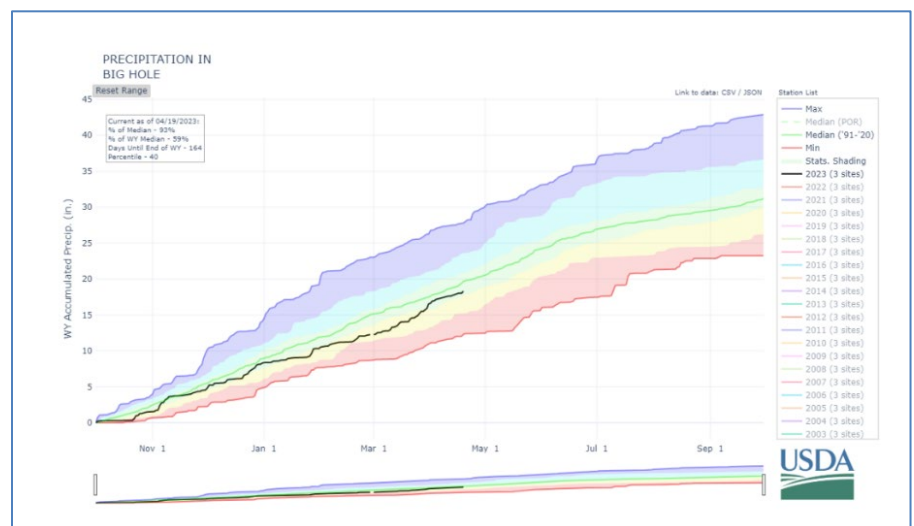
*Streamflow and Snowpack Report –
Matt Norberg and Kaitlin Boren,
Department of Natural Resources and
Conservation*

Station	Network	Elev. (ft.)	Obs	NRCS Median	% NRCS Median
Barker Lakes	SNOTEL	8250	17.6	15.6	113%
Basin Creek	SNOTEL	7180	9.1	8.9	102%
Bloody Dick	SNOTEL	7600	12.4	11.7	106%
Calvert Creek	SNOTEL	6430	6.2	4.9	129%
Darkhorse Lake	SNOTEL	8945	30.6	31	99%
Moose Creek	SNOTEL	6200	16.9	13.8	122%
Mule Creek	SNOTEL	8300	15.7	16.4	96%
Saddle Mtn.	SNOTEL	7940	23.3	24.6	95%
Slagamelt Lakes	SNOTEL	8620	28.0		
Basin Index					109%

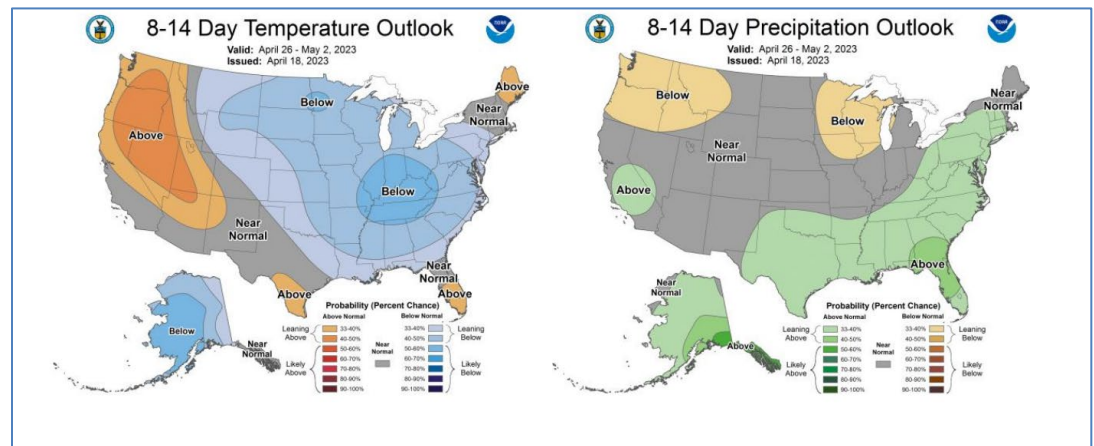
- Snowpack:** Snowpack in the Big Hole is currently 99% of NRCS median values, however the modeled Hypsome-SWE value is 141% (2004-2023). The modeled snowpack for the basin indicates that the lower elevation snowpack is well above average, the mid-range snowpack is slightly above average, and the high elevation snowpack is also slightly above average. Below are the current SNOTEL observations as well as the % median for individual sites across the watershed:



- Precipitation:** Total precipitation in the Big Hole is currently below median values (94%).

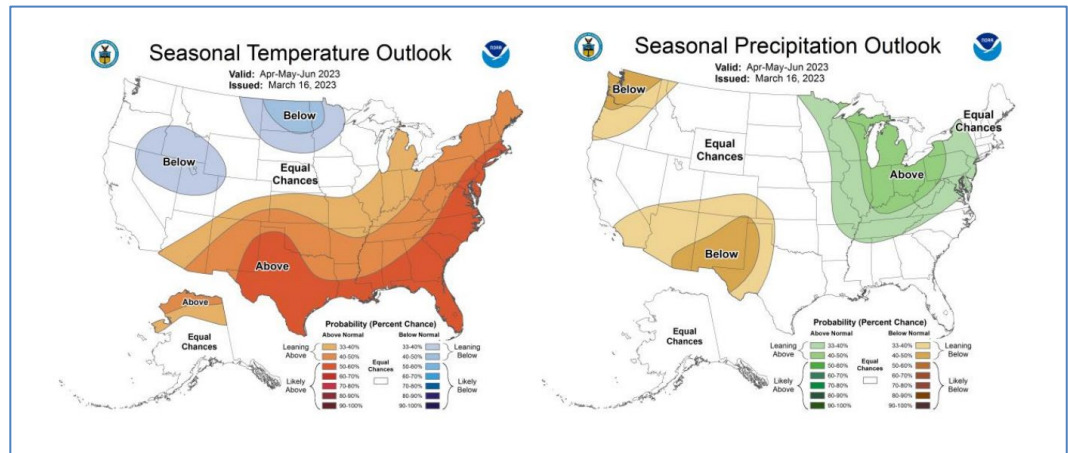


- Outlook:** The 8-14-day outlook predicts below average to near normal temperatures and leaning below average precipitation.



- *Seasonal Outlook:* The three-month outlook (Apr/May/June) predicts leaning below to equal chance temperatures and equal chances for average precipitation.

- *Synopsis:* ENSO-neutral conditions are expected to continue through the Northern Hemisphere into the spring, followed by a 62% chance of El Niño developing during May-July 2023



Director's Report – Pedro Marques, Executive Director

- **Building Capacity to Match the Demand**
- Conservation Fellow for Mt. Haggin on her way
- Peyton Butler- Social Media
- Digital Ad buy training
- - **Proposals Out**
- BoR WaterSMART EWRP (4 Alternatives Pennington Bridge)
- Cinnabar Foundation
- NFWF America the Beautiful Watershed Restoration Academy
- “ “- Conflict Reduction Program boost
- - **Comments**
- MT Beaver Working Group
- SB 442 sign-on
- Upper Red Rock Lakes grayling project support

- **Drought Management Plan 2023**

- Sub-committee approved draft
- Triggers at Glen gage same as Melrose

- Merging sections 3 and 4? -Pedro clarifies no. Triggers are now the same, sections stay separate

- No objections to ratifying drought management plan 2023!



Communications and Wildlife Report – Pedro Marques, Executive Director

- Wildlife update
 - Carcass Compost program is going. Rails were put on trailer and John is available to pick up carcasses throughout the Big Hole. Call or text 209-628-2225.

Steering Committee Report –Roy Morris, Secretary

- Made some changes and adjustments, but keeping things basically the way they are

Restoration Report – Ben LaPorte, Program Manager

- East Pioneer Riparian Conifer Encroachment-Browns Gulch
 - Stated 2023 field season 3/29!
 - Working with outfit out of Dillion
 - Helping riparian plants not be out-competed by conifers
- Elkhorn Ranch Beaver conflict mitigation project
 - Beaver deceivers!
 - Land owner wants to keep beavers, but also doesn't want his property flooded
- Trail creek conifer encroachment removal project
 - Working on starting phase 2
 - Small lodgepole pines that fire would help to suppress, but no fires means they grow out of control
- Other happenings
 - DNRC RDGP Planning Grant
 - Good for elkhorn, especially
 - EECA, cost benefit analysis. What are our options and what do they cost?
 - Updating USFS Elkhorn agreement by \$100,000

New Business

- EPA sign-off on Mt Haggin and Stucky ridge! Yay!
 - There will be a celebration in June
- Earth Day Big Hole River clean up Apr. 22 10am-4pm
- Big Hole Historic society book first edition produced, but trying to raise funds for a second edition
 - Have to gather the history of this area before it's forgotten
 - All proceeds raise funds for student scholarships



DillonBookstore

Break – 10 minutes

Save the Date!

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Bureau of Land Management cordially invite you to join us in celebrating completion of the

SEYMOUR CREEK-BIG HOLE RIVER LWCF ACQUISITION

THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023

Celebration location to be determined on the project site in Deer Lodge County.
Further information and official invitation to follow.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

RMEF

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

History of the Big Hole Valley

– Montana Pioneers of the Old West –

1806 – 1930

Big Hole Historical Society

Meeting Topic: Invasive Weeds in the Big Hole Watershed

Presented by: Jeff Copeland, Paul Peterson, John Whittingham, Amber Burch

Jeff Copeland:

- Heavy metal dust devil
- Work on Mt. Haggin
- Sprayed 100 acres every year for 11 years
 - Got rid of knapweed, but the whitetop spread and was too late
- 2018 weed management plan for BHWC
- Control infestation, scouting, and mapping weeds
- Over spraying leads to bare ground and dead animals
- Micro nutrient cocktail
- Knapweed provides an important ecological role, builds up soil, and keeps other weeds from colonizing
 - Why don't you pull it up and burn the roots?

Paul Peterson, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

- Is there a benefit to seed at the same time or immediately following treatment?
- Is there lots of hounds tongue on your side?

John Whittingham, Basic Biological Services

- Use of herbicides in a revegetation strategy
- Knapweed facts:
 - 5 million acres in Montana. The species spread across western states at an average rate of increase of 27% per year since the 1920's.
 - Cm is allelopathic and exudes a compound that is toxic to most vegetation.
 - Cm has a deep and narrow tap-root and is most competitive for soil water during periods of severe drought.
 - Cm displacement of native bunchgrass increased surface water runoff by 56%, and sediment yield by 192% (Lacy, et. al., 1989).
 - Economic impact in Montana from decreased crop production and suppression costs over \$42 million annually (2000).
- Alternatives to herbicides
 - Mowing, trimming, fungi, insects...
- Bugs are good for weed infestations
- Herbicides are mild acids
- Organic can still hurt a person

Amber Burch, Beaverhead County

- Railroad expanding their reach?
- Does Beaverhead County have a cost share?

Upcoming Meetings

- May 17 2023: Restoring Grasslands with Edaphix

Adjourn