

Minutes of the
Yellowstone River Compact Commission
Technical Committee Discussions
Sheridan County Courthouse
Sheridan, WY
April 24, 2007

1. Introductions

Keith Kerbel called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. Introductions were made and a signup sheet was sent around (attached). No additions were made to the agenda.

2. Hydrological information from various sources:

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Roy Kaiser presented a [PowerPoint](#) summarizing the snow accumulations in the basin. Roy pointed out that the large snow accumulations that were received from the end of March storm, particularly in the Tongue River drainage, certainly helped the outlook, but all four of the major Yellowstone tributary basins remain below average.

Lee Hackleman also presented a [PowerPoint](#) focusing upon the upper drainages of the Wind, Bighorn and Shoshone River basins in Wyoming.

US Geological Survey

Wayne Berkas provided a handout of information on Montana key gages with bar graphs of the period of record and flows for this water year so far.

National Weather Service

Sally Springer presented a [PowerPoint](#) of the precipitation received thus far in the water year. The longer term forecast is for normal temperatures and slightly lower precipitation.

3. Forecasts and runoff estimates

Roy handed out a summary of the forecasts based on April 1 conditions ([PowerPoint](#)). Lee stated that the April 15 adjustments will be just slightly increased from the April 1 estimates. Current estimates show the Powder River at 63% of average, the Tongue at 100% and the Bighorn drainage at 60%.

4. Reservoir operations and storage information

a. Bighorn Reservoir operations and long term management discussions

Lenny Duberstein, Reclamation's Montana Area Office, presented a review of the work done thus far by the Long Range Operations Group ([PowerPoint](#)). The group first met in March, 2007 in Powell, Wyoming and next on April 12 at Fort Smith. A problem

statement and Charter is being developed and the group plans to meet about every 6 weeks to discuss what operational changes might be considered to accommodate more of the users of the reservoir and its water supply. Lenny also described the MOU between Reclamation and the National Park Service regarding their cooperative efforts at the National Recreation Area surrounding the reservoir. More information on the long range group can be found at http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/yellowtail/bighorn_longterm.cfm

John Lawson, Reclamation's Area Manager in Mills, Wyoming, then presented information on the operations of Boysen and Buffalo Bill Reservoirs in Wyoming ([PowerPoint](#)). John reported that currently inflows to Buffalo Bill are estimated at 66% and Boysen at 54% of average. John described the reality of the one fill rule in Wyoming and its impact on reservoir management. Reclamation works closely with the Wyoming Game and Fish in determining winter releases, but that John cannot impact his contractual obligations to space holders when determining releases for winter instream flows or for spring flushing flows. John described that Buffalo Bill dam was raised in 1981 and the enlargement was done in partnership with the State of Wyoming-Water Development Commission.

b. Lake deSmet—Bruce Yates

A joint powers board is responsible for the management of Lake deSmet since it was acquired from Texaco a few years ago. A Level II study was funded by the Wyoming Water Development Commission to review the firm annual yield from deSmet and begin to outline possible future uses from the Lake. A sub-division has been platted for the west side of the Lake which could have management ramifications for the JPB. Bruce's PowerPoint can be found at [Lake_DeSmet.ppt](#).

5. Wyoming State Climatologist—Steve Gray

Steve described that the drought monitor conditions for Wyoming improved after the late March snowstorm, but drought conditions as shown in the Drought Monitor are still "moderate". The April to June period in 2006 was extremely dry in Wyoming's basins of the Yellowstone drainage. The March 28-29 storm made a difference for the Tongue River, but not the Wind/Bighorn. The long-term precipitation deficits of this drought are impacting soil moisture and other factors included in the SWSI for this year. The 60 day outlook from mid-April to July shows some improvement. Steve's full PowerPoint can be found at [Gray.ppt](#).

6. Request from Commission to identify "indicator" gages in each basin

Myron Brooks provided a handout that had been developed by Kirk Miller from the Wyoming USGS office showing potential long-term, real-time gages that could be candidates for the Technical Committee's consideration. The Committee agreed that we did not have sufficient guidance from the full Commission as to our charge and what the uses of the gages might be. We will request further discussion from the Commissioners tomorrow.

7. Coalbed Natural Gas Discussion

i. Montana Bureau of Mines information

John Wheaton, MT Bureau of Mines and Geology, described the monitoring network that Montana has in place along the stateline with Wyoming. Some of these wells have been in place since the 1970's and were originally installed to track water impacts from the area coal mines. John's main areas of emphasis have been in the Prairie Dog, Hanging Woman and Powder River drainages. His full PowerPoint can be found at [Wheaton.ppt](#).

In the interest of time, the following agenda items (7ii, 7iii, 7iv, 8 and 9) that were slated for Technical Committee discussion were delayed and discussed during the full Commission meeting on the following day.

- ii. Development numbers since last Commission meeting
- iii. Platte River pipeline study
- iv. Wyoming EQC activities

8. Tongue River USGS monitoring network funding

9. Commission minutes discussion

10. Report of meeting highlights and recommendations to Commission meeting
4/25/07

Highlights to be brought before the full Commission:

- Current Conditions and Streamflow Forecast estimates
- Indicator gage work completed by Kirk Miller
- Short re-cap of presentations made by:
 - Lenny Duberstein
 - John Lawson
 - Bruce Yates
 - Steve Gray
 - John Wheaton

(John Wheaton will be asked to provide a brief summary to the full Commission.)

11. Set next meeting

The Technical Committee will likely meet the day prior to the next full Commission meeting which will be determined tomorrow.

12. The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Yellowstone River Compact Commission
Technical Committee
Sheridan, Wyoming
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<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Email Address</u>
Loren Smith	WY SEO	lsmith@seo.wyo.gov
Peter Michael	WY AG	pmiche@state.wy.us
Sue Lowry	WY SEO	slowry@seo.wyo.gov
Sally Springer	NWS Billings	Sally.Springer@NOAA.gov
Lee Hackleman	NRCS Wyo	lee.hackleman@wy.usda.gov
Mark Opitz	NRCS Casper	mark.opitz@wy.usda.gov
Christian Levine	MT DEQ	clevine@mt.gov
Sarah Bond	MT AG	sbond@mt.gov
Chuck Dalby	MT DNRC	cdalby@mt.gov
Wayne Berkas	USGS-Montana	wrberkas@usgs.gov
Bill Horak	USGS-Denver	wfhorak@usgs.gov
Carmine LoGuidice	SEO-Sheridan	clogui@seo.wyo.gov
Bill Knapp	SEO-Sheridan	bknapp@seo.wyo.gov
Kevin Smith	DNRC-SWP Montana	ksmith@mt.gov
Art Hayes Jr.	TRWU	browncattle@rangeweb.net
Evelyn Roundstone	Northern Cheyenne Tribe	e_reoundstone@yahoo.com
Mike Whitaker	SEO-Sheridan	mwhita@seo.wyo.gov
Patrick Erger	Reclamation	perger@gp.usbr.gov
Bruce Yates	Sheridan Co–Lake DeSmet	byates@sheridancounty.com
John Wheaton	MT Bureau of Mines & Geo	jwheaton@mtech.edu
Doyle Fritz	WWC Engineering	dfritz@wwcengineering.com
Steve Gray	UW- WRDS	sgray8@uwyo.edu
Myron Brooks	USGS-Cheyenne	mhb Brooks@usgs.gov