

Meeting Minutes
Yellowstone River Compact Commission
Technical Advisory Committee Spring Meeting
April 9, 2020, Skype Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 am by Melissa Schaar, MT DNRC

The TAC meeting agenda has been shortened this year. Due to the Coronavirus, we were unable to meet in person. All present joined through Skype. There was some difficulty with the attendee's abilities to access Skype and screensharing capabilities.

1. Introductions

Those participating on the call introduced themselves to the group. A listing can be found at the end of these minutes.

2. Additions/Revisions to Agenda

Art Hayes, Tongue River Water Users would like the TAC to consider:

- a. Near real time SAR sampling at USGS gages along the Tongue River
- b. A study to determine the source of salinity

John Kilpatrick, USGS, raised the question of whether this is something YRCC should be undertaking since water quality hasn't traditionally been part of the Compact. Both Wyoming and Montana agree that the issue is important; however, there needs to be additional lead time to prepare for this discussion. The States would need to involve their respective DEQ's.

William George, MT DEQ, spoke to the continued effort on the Tongue River salinity modeling and site-specific water quality standards. The development of site-specific salinity water quality standards has been put on hold due to staffing issues.

Melissa Schaar, MT DNRC, suggested Art Hayes, Tongue River Water Users, meet with Montana MT DEQ TMDL and Water Quality Standards to discuss what has been done in the past and any plans for additional studies in the future. Melissa Schaar will coordinate with MT DEQ to set up a meeting. The results of this meeting will be summarized and reported back to the TAC.

3. Tongue River Future Flow Modeling Proposal (Theo Barnhart, USGS)

Goals

- Review Historical Data Sets and Seasonal Streamflow Forecasts
- Provide Future Climate Estimates of Streamflow Volumes and Timing from 2030 - 2099

The Statement of Interest was accepted, and a full proposal was submitted by the deadline. Theo will be notified if the project has been funded after May 15, 2020.

Theo provided a PowerPoint Presentation of the proposed project to the TAC. The presentation was emailed to all members of the TAC and those on the TAC distribution list.

The proposed project may only provide a review of seasonal forecast and how they related to observations in the basin, the funding mechanism was not appropriate for additional development with regard to seasonal forecasting. The TAC is interested in a way to better define and have more skill in runoff predictions in low flow years. Theo does think he can target low flow years in the review of season forecasts and low flow years could be targeted in the future climate hydrologic modeling portion of the project. These could prove to be useful for long term management.

4. Structure of the TAC

The TAC is structured with two co-chairs, one from Wyoming and the other from Montana. Traditionally, the Wyoming co-chair is the person holding the River Basin Coordinator Position in the Interstate Streams Division of the WY SEO. That position is held by Sam Swartz. For Montana, Chuck Dalby, Hydrologist, DNRC, held the co-chair position for many years. When Chuck retired, Mark Elison, MT DNRC and Melissa Schaar, MT DNRC, divided the duties. It is the wish of the MT Commissioner Jan Langel, that Melissa Schaar act as the TAC Co-Chair.

The duties of the co-chairs are to host the meetings when they occur in their respective states (every other year), to provide recommendations to the Commission, and to take direction from the Commission. The co-chairs will be responsible for TAC meeting agendas and minutes. In the past the direction provided from the Commission to the TAC has been informal and the TAC, in general, has not been an overly formal group.

Currently, the Commission has asked the TAC to look at improving seasonal forecasting in terms of the Tongue River upstream of Tongue River Reservoir. Additionally, the Commission would like the TAC to provide direction on how best to exchange surface and groundwater information, how often, and in what format.

5. Montana/Wyoming Information Sharing (Discussion)

Chris Brown, WY AGO, and Dave Schroeder, WY BOC, provided a brief history of what was required by the decree and what has been historically exchanged. The discussion was then separated into Surface Water Data and Groundwater Data Exchange.

Surface Water Data Exchange

The TAC agreed to recommend to the Commission that the surface water data exchange should occur 60 days prior to the Commission meeting in December. The data would be exchanged on a cloud-based Share Drive set up by the co-chairs.

For archival purposes, the TAC will recommend that the USGS host all finalized documentation from the TAC on their YRCC website.

Wyoming/Montana representatives agreed to hold a separate ZOOM meeting at the end of April to discuss the nuances of the data exchange. A Doodle poll will be created by Melissa Schaar, MT DNRC, to determine the best meeting time for representatives. Wyoming's 2019 data exchange submittal will be used as a template for the initial data exchange discussion. Montana will review Wyoming's categories in preparation for discussions at the end of April. Topics to be discussed will be data exchange categories, how often the exchange should occur, and timing of updates. The results of this discussion will be provided as recommendations to the Commission.

Groundwater Data Exchange

Wyoming/Montana representatives agreed to discuss this data exchange at the end of April meeting. Topics for discussion will be the categories of data to be exchanged, suggested format, media for exchange, how often the exchange should occur, and timing of data exchange. The results of this discussion will be provided as recommendations to the Commission.

6. Schedule 2020 Yellowstone River Compact Commission Meeting (Dec 2nd, 2020)

The meeting will be held in Billings, Montana hosted by Melissa Schaar/Mark Elison.

Attendees:

Loren Smith, Superintendent, Water Division III, WY BOC, loren.smith@wyo.gov

Sam Swartz, River Basin Coordinator, WY SEO, sam.swartz@wyo.gov

Dave Schroeder, Superintendent, Water Division II, WY BOC, d.schroeder@wyo.gov

Chris Brown, Wyoming's Attorney General Office, chris.brown@wyo.gov

Melissa Schaar, Hydro-science Supervisor, MT DNRC, mschaar@mt.gov

Michael Downey, Water Planning Supervisor, MT DNRC, MDowney2@mt.gov

Christine Schweigert, Hydrologist, MT DNRC, CSchweigert@mt.gov

Brian Holling, State Projects Bureau Chief, MT DNRC, bholling@mt.gov

William George, Water Quality Specialist, MT DEQ, William.George@mt.gov

Kirk Miller, USGS, WY-MT Water Science Center, kmiller@usgs.gov

John Kilpatrick, Chairman and Federal Representative, USGS, jmkilpat@usgs.gov

Theo Barnhart, USGS, WY-MT Water Science Center, tbarnhart@usgs.gov

Seth Davidson, Secretary of Commission, WY-MT Water Science Center, sdavids@usgs.gov

Art Hayes, Tongue River Water Users, browncattle@rangeweb.net

Shanny Spang Gion, Tongue River Water Users, spanggion@gmail.com