

MEETING NOTES
Yellowstone River Compact Commission
Technical Committee Spring Meeting
Conference Call and Go To Meeting
April 12, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Jodee Pring.

1. Introductions

Those on the call introduced themselves to the group. A listing of those participating on the call along with their contact information can be found at the end of these minutes.

2. Additions to Agenda

Mary Sexton requested that item 12 on the agenda “Forming discussion for December Commission meeting on Federal Chair role – voting” be moved to the beginning of the agenda. All agreed to this change.

3. Forming discussion for December Commission meeting on Federal Chair role – voting

Mark Anderson, Federal Chair, stated he was preparing a presentation to be given at the December full Commission meeting and would like to defer this discussion until that time. Mary Sexton agreed and stated that Montana would bring the information they had concerning this topic to the December meeting.

4. Hydrologic Update - MT and WY USGS

Wayne Berkas, with the MT USGS, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the different gages in the basin and discussed each one briefly. Each slide shows the daily discharge from September 2009 to May 2011. For a copy of this presentation, go [here](#).

Yellowstone River at Corwin Springs, MT

Clarks Fork Yellowstone River at Edgar, MT

Little Bighorn River near Hardin, MT

Bighorn River above Tullock Creek near Bighorn, MT – this gage is currently showing slightly above normal conditions

Tongue River at State Line near Decker, MT – this gage is showing some spikes as some early melting has occurred

Tongue River at Miles City, MT – last year, the peak flow dropped after the ice came off

Powder River at Moorhead, MT – the estimated discharges were verified with discharge measurements

Powder River near Locate, MT – after the ice jams came off, the estimated discharges were verified with discharge measurements, this area had a lot of low elevation snow

5. 2011 Runoff forecasts

Lee Hackleman, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Casper, WY, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the conditions in Wyoming’s portion of the basin. A copy of his presentation can be found [here](#).

Brian Domonkos, with the NRCS in Bozeman, MT gave a PowerPoint presentation on the conditions in Montana's portion of the basin. A copy of his presentation can be found [here](#).

Keith Meier, with the National Weather Service in Billings, MT gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the overall basin and what to expect this coming spring and summer. A copy of his presentation can be found [here](#).

6. Reservoir Operations and Storage (MT and WY)
 - Reservoirs and Rivers of Special Interest (brief reports)
 - Bighorn Reservoir Operations – Keith Kerbel, with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) in Billings, reported that currently, water is being released from Big Horn Reservoir in increments of 500 cfs. Releases should reach 4750 cfs by Wednesday evening (April 13th). The elevation of the reservoir was at 3616 feet at the end of March. BOR may need to evacuate additional water to prepare for May and June runoff.
 - Buffalo Bill/ Boysen Reservoirs – Loren Smith, Superintendent of Water Division III in Wyoming, reported the following:
 - Buffalo Bill Reservoir: the current elevation is 5361.9' and the current capacity is 412,296 acre-feet which is 63.8% full. Current outflow is 2313 cfs.
 - Anchor Reservoir: the current elevation is 6364.0' and the current capacity is 530 acre-feet which is 3.4% full. Current outflow is 6 cfs.
 - Boysen Reservoir: the current elevation is 4715.8' and the current capacity is 577,663 acre-feet which is 77.9% full. Current outflow is 1200 cfs.
 - Bull Lake Reservoir: the current elevation is 5775.9' and the current capacity is 71,250 acre-feet which is 46.7% full. Current outflow is 36.2 cfs.
 - Pilot Butte Reservoir: the current elevation is 5452.7' and the current capacity is 27,400 acre-feet which is 81.3% full. Current outflow is 0 cfs.
 - Lake DeSmet - Carmine Loguidice, Superintendent of Water Division II in Wyoming, reported the following:
 - On September 30th 2010, Lake DeSmet was at 203,650 acre-feet which is 87% full; April 1, the current storage was 201,752 acre-feet which is 85% full. Mr. Loguidice stated this should be a normal year and reservoirs will begin storing shortly. He is anticipating less than normal releases if conditions remain the same. He also reported that the mountain reservoirs on the Tongue River experienced a cold winter and required minimum releases were being made for fish.

- Tongue River Reservoir – Art Hayes, Tongue River Water Users Association, reported the following:
 - Tongue River Reservoir is currently at 59,202 acre-feet. For the last 12 days, they have been staging up the releases to aid fish in the lower Tongue River. This will continue until the outflow reaches 450 – 500 cfs. Tongue River Reservoir will probably spill this year.
- Cooney and Glacier Reservoirs; Rock Creek drainage Clarks Fork, Yellowstone - Kevin Smith, MT DNRC, reported the following:
 - This has been a good water year so far. The Tongue River is at 120% of average. Cooney Reservoir currently stands at 105% of average and Glacier Reservoir will fill this year. The Rock Creek drainage is fairing alright also.

7. Reservoir assignment for Technical Committee

- The group discussed Footnote 1 on Table 10 which states, “Wyoming disagrees with the term “Compact Reservoirs” as used throughout this annual report. Wyoming’s acceptance of this annual report should not be construed as Wyoming’s acceptance of the use of that term.” Wayne Berkas reviewed the 2003 discussion on whether the reservoirs listed in this table should be called “Compact Reservoirs”. The group decided that, pending a decision from the Supreme Court, the term “Compact Reservoirs” will remain in the title along with the footnote. Reservoirs less than 1000 acre-feet in capacity will be removed from Table 10 for the 2011 report. At the December Commission meeting, Mr. Berkas will have an updated Table 10.

8. Coalbed Natural Gas (CBNG)

- Montana DEQ update - Art Compton reported the following: Nothing new in the permit department. The draft OW Ranch permit on Hanging Woman, and the existing Fidelity permit on the CX Ranch/Badger Hills were withdrawn and re-written to include the requirement that all discharges include treatment, as required by last year’s Montana Supreme Court decision. If you’ll recall, Wyoming complies with this Clean Water Act requirement to incorporate technology based limits by referencing in each permit the limits developed for conventional oil & gas. Montana’s position is that CBNG is different enough from conventional oil & gas that these technology based limits aren’t applicable.

Montana is completing its updated technical rationale for the EC & SAR standards, including references to the studies conducted since 2003 and the public input we solicited. MT DEQ plans to distribute the document during the first week in May, in preparation for the Board of Environmental Review’s May 13 meeting.

Elevated pre-runoff EC levels on the Tongue are an issue again this year. The last several years, Wyoming DEQ’s read on this annual event is that it

is caused by mobilization of salts in soils from lower elevation snowmelt and runoff. Montana DEQ agrees that that is a contributing factor. Last year, we did a detailed mass balance that suggested that Montana's permitted discharges account for about 2-3% of the salinity load at Stateline. Prairie Dog Creek's contribution was between 10 and 15 percent of the load. However, that is only the surface flow; the contribution from subsurface water movement that influences the mainstem Tongue is unknown. With the last untreated discharge in Montana coming under treatment this year, we expect that the future influence of Montana discharges will be negligible. We are re-working the mass balance with this year's flow and EC readings. The issue is that these elevated EC flows are stored in the Tongue River Reservoir and influence the quality of early season irrigation water.

- Wyoming SEO update - Jodee Pring reported the following:
Ms. Pring passed around a handout showing the number of ground water permits issued in the state since the CBNG play began. A copy of that handout can be found [here](#). She also passed out a handout showing the surface water reservoir permits that have been issued in the Tongue River, Little Powder River and Powder River drainages in the past year. The CBNG play has slowed down quite a bit, as shown on the graph on the back of the page. Permits being issued in the Powder River drainage have slowly decreased over the last few years. Permits being issued in the Little Powder and Powder River drainages have leveled off. A copy of the handout can be found [here](#).

Carmine Loguidice reported the CBNG activity in the Prairie Dog Creek drainage is ramping down and wells are beginning to get shut-in.

9. Tongue River USGS monitoring network update
 - John Kilpatrick reported the following:
Mr. Kilpatrick passed out a handout showing the FY11 funding for water quality sites in the Tongue River watershed. The gages shown with dark blue numbers and an asterisk are funded through June 30, 2011. A copy of Mr. Kilpatrick's handout can be found [here](#).
10. State Adjudications and Water Rights
 - Montana Tongue River Adjudication – Kim Overcast reported the following:
This affects basins 42B (YELLOWSTONE RIVER, ABOVE AND INCLUDING BRIDGER CREEK) & 42C (TONGUE RIVER, BELOW HANGING WOMAN CREEK). Kathryn Lambert is the water master. She is a senior water master with the Montana Water Court. In basin 42B, approximately 1/2 of the cases have been closed and there are still 286 open cases. In basin 42C, 117 cases have been closed and 1,088 remain open.
 - Crow Compact Update – Kim Overcast also reported the following:
Montana ratified the Compact in 1999 and the basin closures were

implemented at that time. Congress ratified the Compact in December 2010 and the Tribes ratified it in early 2011 with a 71% approval margin.

- Wyoming – Loren Smith reported the following:
Division III has been working on the backlog of old proofs that need to be inspected. Currently, they have about 300 to inspect. The Big Horn General Adjudication is wrapping up with one file remaining to be reported to the court, the Taylor Dutch Flat Ditch.

11. Website Discussion

- Mark Anderson reported that the Commission Annual Reports have been scanned from 1952 to the present and added to the website. In addition, Scott McEwen with the USGS posted all the reports to the YRCC web page. He will continue to maintain the web site for us, at least in the near term.

12. YRCC Records/ Archives

- Mark Anderson stated he has requested funds to archive all of the historical and official YRCC records. When he took over, he received 8 boxes containing letters, correspondence, special reports, and notes from past meetings as well as handwritten notes from past Commissioners. Mr. Anderson inquired about the best place to archive the original source documents, once they are digitally scanned. One possibility is the National Archives. After some discussion, Mr. Anderson stated he will bring a proposal to the December meeting.

13. Schedule next Spring Technical Committee meeting

- The next meeting of the YRCC Technical Committee was scheduled for April 10, 2012. Montana will host this meeting. The next YRCC meeting will be held December 8, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. in Buffalo, WY.

The conference call concluded at 11:30 a.m.

Attendees
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