

**Big Hole Watershed Committee  
Meeting Agenda  
May 16, 2007  
Divide Grange Hall  
7:00 pm**

- 7:00 – 7:10 pm Introductions and Review of minutes
- 7:10 – 7:20 pm Review of snowpack, precipitation and flow  
Mike Roberts, DNRC
- 7:20 – 7:50 pm United Bolero discussion of proposed Core drilling at Cannivan Gulch
- 7:50 - 8:20 pm Discussion of USFWS listing decision on Grayling
- 8:20 – 8:30 pm Break
- 8:30 – 9:00 pm Update of TMDL Status – Darrin Kron, DEQ
- 9:00 – 9:10 pm Other business, Set June agenda

**Big Hole Watershed Committee  
Monthly Meeting  
April 18, 2007  
6:00 pm – Divide Grange Hall**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Jill Luebeck, BHWC, Scott Reynolds, GGTU, Dave Amman, DNRC, Garth Haugland Bvhd. County, Steve Luebeck, Sportsmen, George Trischman, Rancher, Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC, Liz Jones, Rancher, Marty Hovan, BSB Water, Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher, Rankin Holmes,? Pete Kurtz, ADLC, John Peck, EPESP, Mark Kambich, Rancher, Dick Marshall, Rancher, Steve Hess, BSB Planner, Rick Hartz, Bvhd. County, Richard Miller, Steve Parker, BHRF, Doris Fischer, Madison County, Tim Coon, Rancher, Hans Humbert, Rancher, Kristina Swanson, BHWC, Peter Frick, Green Bridges, Jeff Everett, USFWS, John Reinhardt, Rancher, Mike Bias, BHRF, Tom Caddy, BHWC Weed Committee, Jeanne Caddy, BHWC Weed Coordinator and Randy Smith, Rancher.

Introductions were made. March Minutes were approved with no changes.

**BIG HOLE BASIN SNOWPACK UPDATE**

**Dave Amman, DNRC**

We are at the normal time of maximum snow water accumulation for the year. Peak snow pack typically occurs between mid and late April at the higher elevations. The current storm is adding significant moisture and the cold temperatures keep the snow in place. To date, the snow water equivalent is 72% of normal.

The snowpack at Darkhorse Lake is still in place and continues to accumulate, while the snow pack at Calvert Creek mostly melted off with warm March temperatures. Current flows are well below the historic normal throughout the system.

**Weather**

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center forecast (as of March 15) is for near-normal conditions in April. For May through August, the forecast is an increased chance of above-normal air temperatures and below-normal precipitation in Southwest Montana.

**Streamflow Volume Forecast**

The current flow forecasts, which are based primarily on snowpack and are assumed to be followed by near normal climatic conditions through the summer season, do not look good at this time. For the period May through September, flow volumes are forecast at the 50% and 70% chance of exceedence, as follows:

Big Hole River at Wisdom: 62% of average; 47% of average  
Big Hole River near Melrose: 68% of average; 43% of average

These figures do not include these current storms, which are forecast through the next week. The latest precipitation will have a positive effect on flow volume projections.

### **WASHINGTON D.C. TRIP UPDATE**

Steve Luebeck reported on Randy Smith's and his trip to Washington, DC on behalf of the BHWC. They were working on two related issues; first trying to salvage funds from the 2007 appropriation request and second, to urge the delegation to fund the Big Hole Restoration Project with an earmark in the 2008 appropriation cycle, which is currently being developed in congress.

Our 2007 earmark was initially looking very solid during the summer of 2007. Senator Burns had secured an earmark for \$1.58 million in the USFWS budget. Unfortunately, congress didn't complete their work on the appropriations package prior to the election, which was bad for two reasons. First, our key Senator lost the election, and thus we lost a powerful ally on the senate appropriations committee. The second problem was that the new congress simply threw out the 2007 appropriation bill which included our earmark and funded the government at 2006 levels, without any of the earmarks. Congress later passed a supplemental funding bill to fund some of the special projects that were earmarked in 2007 bill; however, congress gave the USFWS discretion in how it spent the money. The USFWS is using part of the supplemental funds to cover short-falls in their own internal operating budgets and then considering some special projects such as the Big Hole Restoration Project. Randy and Steve met with several senior officials in the USFWS in DC. They were generally supportive but made no commitments. Randy and Steve continue to work on this.

The 2008 earmark request is also going to be a challenge. As stated earlier, the loss of Senator Burns on the Appropriations Committee is a serious blow to our efforts. Randy and Steve are working with Senators Baucus and Tester, along with Rep. Rehberg to get the 2008 earmark. Generally, our delegation is telling us that they will try, but due to the cost of the Iraq war, earmarked funds are going to be far more difficult to obtain in the 2008 appropriation cycle.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Montana Water Court has entered its Temporary Preliminary Decree for the Big Hole River Basin. The entire Water Rights Decree is now available for review.

The Montana Water Court will hold two public meetings in the Big Hole Basin to answer questions about the decree.

Wednesday, June 6, 2007  
6:30 pm – Divide Grange Hall

Wednesday, June 20, 2007  
6:30 pm – Wisdom Community Center

### **GRANT PROPOSAL UPDATES**

Kristina, Noor and Jeanne (Weed Coordinator) have all been busy working on grants. We have been awarded \$12,000 from Liz Claiborne/Art Ortenberg Foundation to help with our 2007/2008 operating costs. Kristina has applied for \$10,000 to the Cinnabar Foundation which also supports operating costs. The Harder Foundation is being solicited for potential habitat restoration funding.

Since the launching of the Big Hole Watershed Committee membership drive the BHWC currently has 62 members and has generated over \$7,000. The BHWC received a generous membership from BBHOGA for \$500 to help with the costs associated with the recent travel to Washington D.C. The BHWC has made it easy for members to support us. We now have web-giving capability. Those who wish to have a membership can click onto the website: [www.bhwc.org](http://www.bhwc.org). We have received 2 members thus far as a result of having this on the website.

### **2006 GRAYLING REVIEW**

#### **Jim Magee, MFWP**

Jim Magee presented his grayling review for 2006. The presentation will be posted on the BHWC website.

Jim began his presentation by showing a map of historic grayling distribution. Grayling are clustered in the northern latitudes of Canada, Alaska, Russia and northern Europe. Two outlying southern populations existed in the United States; one in Michigan that went extinct in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the upper Missouri River population, now remnant in the Big Hole River.

Jim then showed a series of maps showing how the upper Missouri River population has declined over time. Originally, they were present in almost all rivers and tributaries in the upper Missouri River system. By 1980, grayling were only found in the Big Hole and its tributaries. By 2006 Grayling were only found in the main Big Hole River and in a very few tributary streams. This decline is attributed to competition with non-native fish, fragmentation, over harvest, habitat loss and climate change. A new concern is genetic viability due to a small spawning age population - a catastrophic event has the potential to wipe out the population in a single stroke.

The 2006 surveys found very few grayling again this year. The grayling surveyed were concentrated in tributary streams, with Steel Creek having the largest concentration, and very few sampled in the mainstem river. Catch per unit effort remains very low despite a large expansion of the miles of river sampled.

High water temperatures are an increasing problem. In 2006, six monitoring stations measured water temperatures in excess of 70 degrees for over 350 hours. These thermal sinks are barriers to grayling movement, as grayling avoid areas with high temperatures and seek locations with lower water temperatures, thus the concentration of fish in tributary streams. During 2007, water temperatures will be measured from aircraft to identify locations with significantly high water temperatures and thermal refuges that are currently unknown.

Another emerging issue for grayling is the increasing number of brown trout showing up in surveys in the upper river. Low levels of rainbows have been present for decades in this reach, but brown trout are a recent arrival. Competition with non-native fish is an identified limiting factor for grayling.

Jim reviewed projects for 2007. Most of the projects are part of the CCAA program, and most will focus on habitat improvement, reducing thermal barriers, eliminating physical barriers, improving stream flow and reconnecting tributaries. Current CCAA enrollment includes 27 landowners with over 124,000 acres enrolled. 2007 projects include 8 stock water wells, 3 feedlot relocations, 7 irrigation infrastructure projects, 1 fish ladder and 12 riparian improvement projects.

### **REPORT ON LAND USE PLANNING CONFERENCE**

Jim Hagenbarth, Garth Haugland, Harold Peterson, Steve Hess, Nathan Korb, and Noorjahan Parwana represented the BHWC at the recent Sonoran Institute Planning Conference at Chico.

The conference provided a great deal of valuable information and resources regarding land use planning including: problems associated with unplanned development (drinking water wells polluted with pharmaceuticals, destruction of property from floods and fire); examples of better alternatives (cluster development, using vegetation strips to manage storm water runoff while making communities more livable); strategies for encouraging smart growth (e.g. Transfer Development Rights); and many other topics.

Jim Hagenbarth pointed out that there must be a mechanism for providing private landowners just compensation for lost economic values resulting from land use planning.

One primary goal identified by the BHWC group is to provide County Commissioners and Planners with more authority over development in the 100-year floodplain. To begin with, we need to understand local, state, and federal regulations governing floodplain development.

Opportunity: There is a \$5,000 grant opportunity available through the Montana Smart Growth Coalition and the Sonoran Institute to help support citizen land use planning efforts. Eligible activities could include, for example, financial support for bringing in guest speakers, consultants to help with local planning or growth-management projects, costs associated with educational opportunities and conferences, production of educational materials that support planning efforts.

### **BIG HOLE LAND USE PLAN UPDATES**

County planners from Beaverhead, Deerlodge, Madison, and Silverbow Counties made presentations about development issues such as subdivision requests, requests for construction in floodplains, and variance requests with respect to the river setbacks (River Conservation Development Standards Ordinances) in each of their respective counties.

### **Doris Fischer, Madison County Planner**

Doris addressed the committee and told them about all four counties adopting the Big Hole Land Use Plan, There are five recommended actions contained in the plan: (a) Adopt a Right-to-Farm Policy or Ordinance for the Big Hole watershed; (b) Target new development close to existing towns with good services, along highway or county road corridors, and away from high risk areas such as high wildfire risk spots and floodplains; (c) Facilitate the purchase of development rights or conservation easements; (d) Adopt a River Conservation Development Standards Ordinance that would establish a minimum building setback of 150' from the river and also take into account local sanitation and floodplain regulations, the presence of riparian areas, and the potential for erosion; and (e) Work cooperatively across the four counties on a 100-year floodplain study.

Madison County adopted a countywide "Right-to-Farm" Policy.

Doris explained to the committee that Madison County hasn't done too much with the second or third Recommended Actions but that they worked with the three other counties and adopted the River Conservation Development Standards Ordinance. Under the Ordinance, they have approved six permit applications and denied one.

Madison County and the Madison County sanitarian make extensive use of the 100-year floodplain study, which also provided us with mapped data regarding a channel migration zone and avulsion potential zone.

### **Steve Hess, Butte-Silver Bow County Planner**

Steve Hess updated that Butte Silver Bow has a "Development Permit" process where nobody can build in the county without permission. One application was denied because they wanted to build 160' from the floodplain. Steve stated that they don't have as many issues as the other counties to date.

### **Peter Kurtz, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Planner**

Peter Kurtz reported that there are currently no permit requests. Anaconda-Deerlodge County has several conservation easements in place in the Big Hole Basin and several pending. Currently there isn't anything at all happening as far as subdivisions, development permits or variance requests.

### **Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County Planner**

Beaverhead County also adopted a "Right-to-Farm" policy which has been in effect for three years. In Beaverhead County you do not need to get permission from the county to build. Beaverhead County does not have a floodplain map. The 100-year Floodplain study is of use to them for planning purposes.

At a previous meeting, the BHWC requested to be informed about development proposals in the Big Hole watershed. Doris Fischer indicated that Madison County has an "early notification" procedure whereby the subdivider needs to notify adjacent landowners and review agencies about a development plan prior to submitting that plan to the County. They offered to add the Big Hole Watershed Committee to their contact list.

Planners encouraged the BHWC to provide input to the Counties regarding development proposals. Committee members know the watershed well and could contribute valuable information during the development review process.

There was conversation about bringing Karl Christians (former State Floodplain Administrator) to the Big Hole to provide information about floodplain regulations. Garth Haugland mentioned that Beaverhead County recently denied a request to develop two homes in the floodplain. The County would like to do something about regulating development on floodplains but doesn't know if Montana law permits local jurisdictions to regulate more strongly than State.

### **MAY AGENDA**

Presentation from United Bolero Development Corporation: United Bolero Development Corporation of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada has submitted a proposal to core drill in the Cannivan Gulch drainage on the Wise River Ranger District, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Please see attached letter for more information on this.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm

Dear Interested Party:

United Bolero Development Corporation of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada has submitted a proposal to core drill in the Cannivan Gulch drainage on the Wise River Ranger District, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. The Forest Service is seeking public comment on the proposal. Exploratory core drilling operations is planned in the Cannivan Gulch drainage (see attached map) in Sections 15, 16, and 22, T. 2 S., R. 11 W. The project area is located approximately 9 miles north of Wise River, MT. The proposed start-up date of operations is June 15, 2007, and the duration of the operation would be approximately five months, with an annual reclamation close-out by October 31, 2007, and final reclamation being completed by August 1, 2008.

United Bolero has submitted a Plan of Operations (POO) which contains a proposal to complete 6,225 feet of drilling in four exploration drill holes designed to define the outer limits of mineralization of a known deposit, and to verify previous drilling within the interior of the deposit. All drilling equipment and materials would be flown into the project area, and removed at the close of project operations. Drilling would be accomplished with a skid-mounted, helicopter-supported core drill. Operations would be conducted 24 hours per day during 10-12 day cycles by two or three rotating crews. Drill sites would be lined with a protective plastic liner to prevent oil or fuel from leaking onto the ground. Drill sites on uneven ground would require construction of a temporary wooden platform to provide a flat, stable surface for the drill to sit on. Ground disturbance at each hole is expected to be minimal, and total ground disturbance is estimated to be less than one-half acre.

Fuel and lubricants flown into the drill sites would be stored on a lined drill deck, and/or within a small container such as a stock tank. Chemicals would be limited to nontoxic drilling additives used to aid lubrication during drilling, and to seal fractures, cracks, and voids along the walls of the drill hole to prevent loss of circulation. Water used during drilling operations would be pumped from a local creek, or spring, to the drill sites.

The primary project area access route would be by Montana Highway 43, the Quartz Hill Gulch road (#187), and Cannivan Gulch road (#7406). An alternate route would include the use of the Trapper Creek road (#188) to access road #187 in the Canyon Creek drainage. No new permanent road construction, or reconstruction, is being proposed. Full size motor vehicle access for the drill crews would be on existing roads to within approximately one mile of the drill sites. Access from the existing roads to the drill sites would be by foot or by ATV's on temporary new ATV trails which would be reclaimed when the work is completed.

Proposed drilling operations would not be located within any wetland, floodplain, inventoried roadless area, wilderness study area, or research natural area. Appropriate State and Federal permits will be acquired prior to commencement of operations.

Following scoping, the Forest Service will complete an environmental analysis for this project. The General Mining Law of 1872 provides mineral claimants the opportunity to explore their claims; however, the Forest Service may require reasonable modifications in the proposal to reduce the environmental effects of the project. We would like to receive your comments on this proposal by May 7, 2007. If we do not hear from you in response to this letter, we will assume that you are not interested in this project. Your comments should be sent to the Wise River Ranger District, ATTN: Kevin Greenwood, P.O. Box 100, Wise River, MT 59762. Electronic comments can be sent to the following email address: [dhavig@fs.fed.us](mailto:dhavig@fs.fed.us). For further information on this proposal, you can call Kevin at the Wisdom Ranger District office at (406) 689-3243.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Dennis Havig*

DENNIS HAVIG  
Acting District Ranger  
Wise River Ranger District