

BHWC Monthly Meeting
MONDAY, June 18, 2007
Wisdom Community Center
7:00-9:30 pm

7:00 – 7:10 pm Introductions and Review of May minutes

7:10 – 7:35 pm Flows & Precipitation update – Mike Roberts
CCAA Project updates (FWP, USFWS, DNRC)

7:35 - 8:20 pm Groundwater Surface Water Study Presentation, MBMG

8:20 – 8:30 pm Break

8:30 – 8:50 pm Update on USFS response to mineral exploration request (Bolero – Cannivan Gulch)

8:50 -9:20 pm Advisory Panel Recommendation on project funding requests from BHWC

9:20 – 9:30 pm Determine July meeting agenda

Adjourn

BHWC Monthly Meeting
May 18, 2007

Those Attending:

Scott Reynolds, GGTU, Steve Luebeck, Sportsmen, Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC, Dick Marshall, Rancher, Randy Smith, Rancher, John Peck, EPESP, Kevin Greenwood, USFS, John Reinhardt, Rancher, Dennis Havig, USFS, Garth Haugland, Bvhd. County, Phil Ralston, Rancher, Marty Hovan, BSB, Andrew Hanson, Complete Fly Fisher, John Dooling, Rancher, Harold Peterson, Rancher, Ray Weaver, Rancher, Alejandro DeLaPena, Childs and Associates, Adriana Fernandez, Childs and Associates, Kristina Swanson, BHWC, Peter Frick, Green Bridges, Darrin Kron, DEQ, Dan Downing, USFS, Doug Peterson, USFWS, Jeff Everett, USFS, Jami Murdoch, BHWC, Jeanne Caddy, BHWWC, Tom Caddy, BHWWC, Bill Cain, Glen, Tim Coon, Rancher, Hans Humbert, Rancher, Mike Bias, BHRF, Steve Parker, BHRF, Pete Lamothe, FWP, Mike Roberts, DNRC, Terry Grotbo, Geomatrix Consultants, Mike Browne, USFS, and Jill Luebeck, BHWC

Introductions and review of April minutes

Happy Birthday to Dick Marshall!!!

Mike Roberts Snowpack review

March temperatures averaged 10 degrees warmer than average in the upper basin facilitating early snowmelt. High elevation snow is already coming off. The snowpack at Darkhorse Lake showed 9" coming off in the last two weeks with a basin-wide

percentage of only 36% of average for snowpack. Precipitation has been variable with some timely spring storms, and some warm dry periods. The basin-wide percent of average is 87% with 93% for precipitation in the higher elevations. Currently, flows are average at Wisdom and the other gauges are still above average. Center volume runoff is coming off two to three weeks prior to average.

United Bolero

United Bolero Development Corporation has submitted a proposal to do exploratory core drilling of 4 cores within an existing area in the Cannivan Gulch drainage on the Wise River Ranger District. They are looking to mine Molybdenum which is used mainly for stainless steel and steel alloys, paint pigments, flame retardants and lubricants. Molybdenum currently sells for \$30/lb.

Inquiries included the potential for acid drainage, permitting, water quality, and changes in local aquifer. Dennis Havig, District Ranger for Wise River and Wisdom Districts, was asked how the proposal was being evaluated by the Forest Service. Dennis indicated that currently the Forest Service thinks the project will qualify for a Categorical Exclusion. Several members encouraged Dennis Havig, to evaluate the proposal through an Environmental Assessment. Dennis promised the committee that he will let us know in a month how the proposal will be evaluated. The Forest Service had a comment period open to the public from which they received both favorable and unfavorable opinions.

Grayling Listing Discussion

USFWS decision – Doug Peterson

The USFWS decision to not list the grayling under the Endangered Species Act has resulted in removal of grayling from the candidate list. Doug characterizes this as more of a policy than a science decision. The CCAA program is still fully legal, as CCAA's do not require a candidate species to be valid.

The decision not to list was discussed at the recent Steering Committee meeting. The consensus was that the BHWC should continue to dedicate itself to supporting habitat restoration projects and water management on the Big Hole. There is some concern that our ability to acquire funding from congress will be limited by the decision. Nevertheless, we will continue to seek other funding sources for project implementation. There are so many uncertainties out there; it may be a while before anyone knows what this non-listing decision means.

Pete Lamothe, FWP mentioned that two landowners signed up under the CCAA program after the listing decision with full knowledge of the decision. FWP has received no notices from any current signatories wishing to back out of the program. Landowners are still supportive of the program and the work that is underway. All projects are still moving forward and FWP is working on funding for all additional projects. The State (FWP) has made a strong funding commitment to the upper Big Hole.

Harold Peterson was asked what his impression is of the decision. In discussion with others, he feels the landowners are still on board with this and that they are still going to cooperate and do whatever they can to keep the river alive. Ray Weaver and John Dooling also agreed with Harold that they are all going to keep on doing what they have been doing. The state will continue to do good work to benefit the grayling and there is no indication that will change.

TMDL Status – Darrin Kron, DEQ

Upper Big Hole

Water quality standard review continues under the TMDL process. The Big Hole is divided into two reaches for the TMDL - the upper (upstream of Pintlar Creek) and the middle/lower.

DEQ was scheduled to have a watershed plan developed for pre-review in March and public review by April for the upper Big Hole. Unfortunately, that process has been delayed again, this time because of contractor problems. DEQ may be seeking a new contractor to finish the upper Big Hole TMDL watershed plan. In addition, DEQ is understaffed. Darrin has had another watershed TMDL added to his work load-one that takes precedence over the Big Hole due to a lawsuit. Parwana will contact DEQ and determine how we can facilitate completion of the upper Big Hole TMDL work.

On a positive note, middle/lower Big Hole TMDL process is moving ahead very smoothly. The contractors are on schedule and their work is of good quality. Less project oversight has been needed on the lower river.

General Business

Budget: A Steering Committee meeting held in early May the minutes have not been produced for those but will be available shortly. The primary purpose of the meeting was for budget review. Currently, our budget will sustain our work for two years. The BHWC is fortunate to have receive a nearly \$7,000 anonymous donation recently which will help us achieve project goals for the lower Big Hole River. We appreciate the confidence this shows in our efforts. Our Membership Program is another important diversification of support for our organization. Membership benefits include log vests, jackets and pins. Production of these items has just been completed and they will be mailed out soon.

Reminder: Montana. Water Court will hold two public meetings regarding water rights decree:

- Wednesday, June 6, 2007 at 6:30 – Divide Grange Hall, and
- Wednesday June 20, 2007 at 6:30 - Wisdom Community Center.

Next BHWC Monthly Meeting and Agenda:

The next regularly scheduled BHWC meeting (June 20) conflicts with the Montana Water Court meeting in Wisdom. A decision was made to change the date of the next BHWC meeting so as not to conflict with that important meeting.

The next BHWC meeting will be held on **Monday, June 18** at the Wisdom Community Center.

The agenda will include:

- Presentation of results of the ground water/surface water interactions study by Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. This three-year study, titled “Understanding the Water Balance- A Critical Link in Conservation Efforts in the Upper Big Hole River Watershed” was located between Jackson and Wisdom.
- DNRC, MFWP, and USFWP staff will make a presentation outlining current snowpack, precipitation, and flows; status of water management efforts; CCAA program and project updates.

- Dennis Havig, US Forest Service District Ranger, will respond to questions brought up at tonight's meeting regarding the request to conduct exploratory core drilling in Cannivan Gulch.
- Funding recommendations from the Advisory panel for projects in the CCAA-reach of the Big Hole River.

Meeting adjourned 9:10 p.m.