

**Big Hole Watershed Committee
Monthly Meeting Agenda
March 21, 2007
6:00 pm- 9:00 pm**

AGENDA

6:00 pm Introductions and Review of Minutes

6:15 – 6:45 pm Mike Roberts, DNRC snowpack update

6:45 – 7:30 pm Project Funding Request Presentations – Projects recommended by Advisory Panel

7:30 – 7:40 pm Break

7:40 – 8:45 pm Recommendations for Drought Management Plan from drought subcommittee

8:45 – 8:50 pm April Agenda

8:50 pm – Adjourn

**Big Hole Watershed Committee
Monthly Meeting
February 21, 2007
6:30-9:10 pm
Divide Grange Hall**

In Attendance:

Liz Jones, Rancher, Kristina Swanson, BHWC, Jeanne Caddy, BHWC Weed Committee, Steve Parker, BHRF, Randy Smith, Rancher, Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC, Phil Ralston, Rancher, John Reinhardt, Rancher, Tim Tollett, Frontier Anglers, Andrew Hanson, Complete Fly Fisher, Art Christensen, Bvhd. Cons. District, Dick Marshall, Rancher, Garth Haugland, Bvhd. Co. Commission, Steve Luebeck, Sportsmen, Scott Reynolds, GGTU, Dick Oswald, FWP, Dennis McCoy, Bvhd. Cons. District, Tom Miller, Bvhd. Cons. District, Peter Lamothe, FWP, Jeff Everett, USFWS, Jami Murdoch, BHWC, Erik Kalsta, Rancher, Matt Norberg, DNRC, Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher, John Peck, EPESP, and Jill Luebeck, BHWC.

January minutes approved with one correction. January minutes reported that snowpack in the Big Hole was ahead of January 2006 values when the opposite was actually true. While the fall precipitation totals for water year 2007 were above average, most of that precipitation came in the form of rainfall and snowpack in mid-January (88% of average) and was considerably less than the snowpack in mid-January of 2006 (113%).

New BHWC Governing Members are welcomed

Noorjahan welcomed new BHWC governing members John Peck representing the East Pioneer Experimental Stewardship Project and Andrew Hanson from the Complete Fly Fisherman representing Outfitters and Guides.

Snowpack Update

Matt Norberg (DNRC) provided a brief update on the snow pack for the month. January was a poor snowpack and precipitation month for Montana, particularly east of the Divide. So far, February has allowed a slight rebound in those numbers. February 21 snowpack for the Big Hole basin is 81.4% of average, and precipitation is 97%. Assuming normal precipitation and snowpack occurs from here on through early summer, the NRCS streamflow forecasts predict April-July flows in the Big Hole River at Wisdom to be about 70% of average (volumetrically).

2007 and 2008 Appropriations Request Updates

Randy Smith reported that Senator Baucus' office had contacted him and informed him that the continuing funding resolution that congress recently passed, contained funds that would partially fund some of the earmarks that were in the 2007 appropriation bill. These funds are going to the various federal agencies with an understanding that the agencies would fund some of congress' priorities, including the Big Hole project. However, there is no guarantee of funding for any project. It will take a serious lobbying effort for the Big Hole to receive any of these funds.

It is recommended that Randy Smith and Steve Luebeck return to Washington D.C. in late March to try to secure funds for 2008. The trip is estimated to cost close to \$2,500. Previous supporters will be asked to help defray the cost of the trip The BHWC agreed that Randy and Steve should make the trip to D.C.

Legislative Updates

House Bill 6 is under consideration for funding by the Long Range Planning Appropriations Subcommittee. HB 6 provides funding for the Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program. The Montana Legislature established the Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program to fund the conservation, management, development and preservation of Montana's renewable resources. Administered by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the program provides both grant and loan funding for public facility and other renewable resource projects. There are numerous projects along the Big Hole River that we will look to the RRGL program to fund. We have one project currently under consideration that highly ranked.

Please contact your Senator or Representative if you are concerned about HB 6. Leave a message with our Senator or Representative at 406-444-4800.

Sonoran Institute Planning Conference

The BHWC has applied to send a team to the Sonoran Institute Planning Conference, to be held at Chico Hot Springs from March 26 through March 28. The purpose of the conference will be to provide education and guidance on land use planning to watershed groups to promote the conservation of water resources through local planning processes and policies. The conference is free except for the cost of travel. Should the BHWC be awarded a spot at the conference, the team will consist of Garth Haugland, Harold Peterson, Jim Hagenbarth, Steve Hess (BSB Senior Planner, Nathan Korb, Charlie O'Leary (BSB County Commissioner), and Noorjahan Parwana.

Drought Management Plan Review

Suggestions were solicited for amending the Drought Management Plan. A sub-committee will be formed to review the document and make recommendations to the committee. The Drought Subcommittee will include Dick Oswald, Scott Reynolds, Andrew Hanson, Steve Parker and Erik Kalsta. Harold Peterson, Mike Roberts, Dave Amman, Mark Kambich, and those who were on the 2006 DMP subcommittee will also be requested to participate. Anyone who is interested in participating on the DMP subcommittee should contact Noor. Any suggestions for amending the DMP should be submitted to the subcommittee members. DMP subcommittee meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 12, from noon to 4:00 at Divide Grange Hall.

Some of the suggestions made to the DMP are:

- The document seems confusing to read with all the amendments in it
- There is a need to support more positive discussion, understanding and problem solving around the issue of drought management among various stakeholders. .
- Educational around water rights is necessary. DNRC has a Water Right Handbook that might be Useful. There should be an educational meeting with the Outfitters & Guides regarding the water laws.
- Include more participation from the Outfitters and Guides in the phone tree.

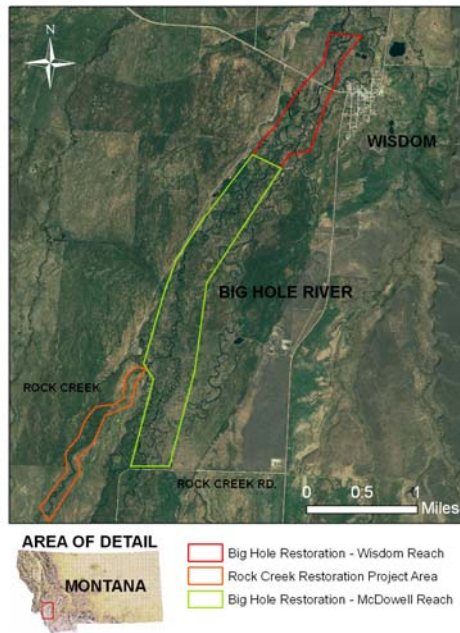
Dick Oswald, FWP also suggested additional modifications to the Plan including a split of the present Lower Reach into two smaller reaches with the inclusion of a thermal series into the lowermost reach of the two.

Project Advisory Panel recommendations

Six projects were recommended for funding by the Advisory Panel, which met on January 22, 2007 to hear proposals. Due to time constraints, three presentations were made at tonight's BHWC the meeting and three more will be made at the March meeting.

Big Hole River Grayling Riparian Habitat Restoration – McDowell Reach – Peter LaMothe, presenter

The purpose of this request is to secure funding to cover the design and planning costs associated with restoring and enhancing approximately 6.0 miles of grayling habitat in the Big Hole River between Rock Creek Road and the Wisdom Bridge. The project is located on the Big Hole River near the town of Wisdom, MT



The project would provide the design and planning information necessary for pursuing additional cost-share, complete the project permitting process, and implementing the restoration and enhancement phase of the project.

The CCAA Habitat Technical Committee reviewed three proposals for the design and planning work required for this project. The cost estimates ranged from \$84,057.54 to \$46,198.00. PBS&J was awarded the contract pending funding based on the merits of their proposal, the quality of the work performed in the recent past, the information included in the final design package, and the cost associated with their proposal.

The total/BHWC funding request for this project is \$46,198.00

Rock Creek Monitoring Plan – Presenter, Peter LaMothe

The purpose of this request is to secure funding to cover costs associated with monitoring the success of grayling restoration efforts in Rock Creek, a tributary to the Big Hole River that was previously intercepted by an irrigation ditch. Rock Creek is located near the town of Wisdom, MT.

Monitoring the effectiveness of restoring connectivity and improving habitat in Rock Creek will: 1) answer questions related to Arctic grayling biology, 2) guide future restoration efforts, 3) track success of a high-profile project, and 4) meet the obligations of funding partners.

Total project cost is \$32,721 BHWC funding request is \$18,801.

Upper Big Hole Bird Monitoring - Presenter, Jeff Everett

A critical objective of the CCAA is the restoration of riparian habitats. These habitats, while occupying less than 1% of the physical area, provide habitat for a wide diversity of birds as well as other plants and animals, and are known to support the highest diversity of breeding birds of any habitat type in the western US. Over half of Montana's 245 species of breeding birds use riparian areas during all or part of the year, including 54 of the 107 Montana Partners in Flight (PIF) priority species.

The Avian Science Center (ASC) of the University of Montana in Missoula has been monitoring the riparian bird community in the Big Hole for the past two years, and in many cases their survey data is from restoration project sites. In 2007, we would like to expand the number of survey sites and include reference reach surveys, to develop a reference to what a bird community should look like in a healthy Big Hole riparian habitat. Valuable pre-project data exists for many of the restoration projects that have been developed as part of the CCAA, and we seek to continue monitoring these existing points as restoration projects are implemented, as well as expand the efforts to include projects that are currently being developed for the next several years. Riparian areas are an excellent indicator of the overall health of the ecosystem, and monitoring the bird communities is another tool with which we can measure our success.

The avian monitoring surveys take place along the mainstem Big Hole River throughout the CCAA project area. Specifically, surveys are conducted on the Wisdom Reach, Jackson Reach, and Little Lake Creek Road restoration projects and will be expanded to cover restoration projects proposed for 2007.

This project will have several benefits, the primary one being that good before-and-after monitoring of the avian community response to riparian restoration will provide us with the opportunity to utilize funding sources that target birds for our restoration efforts. This link is critical for several large-scale funding programs, including NAWCA (North American Wetlands Conservation Act) funds as well as IWJV (Intermountain West Joint Venture) funds, which can be used for restoration work including riparian fencing, instream restoration and riparian revegetation projects. Leveraging funds from the avian community also provides us with the opportunity to generate new and meaningful partnerships (such as the one with the ASC). Also, monitoring the avian community's response to restoration provides us with another barometer with which to gage the success of our efforts, in addition to the traditional monitoring that we are already doing (water quality, temperature, fisheries, vegetation, etc).

Total project cost: \$10,000.00; BHWC funding request \$4,000.00

The BHWC agreed to fund all three of these projects.

March Agenda

1. Presentations for the remaining three project funding requests.
2. Mike Roberts (DNRC) will report the 2006 water year.
3. Drought Management Plan (DMP) recommendations from DMP subcommittee.

The meeting will start at **6:00 pm** due to the lengthiness of the agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.