

**Big Hole Watershed Committee
Monthly Meeting
February 21, 2007
6:30-8:50 pm
Divide Grange Hall**

6:30-6:40 pm Introductions and Review of January minutes

6:40-7:00pm General BHWC Business

Nomination of Andrew Hanson as governing member representing Outfitters & Guides
Welcome John Peck as governing member representing East Pioneer Experimental Stewardship Project
Update and recommendation regarding federal appropriations
Fred Provenza – Animal Behaviorist to be offered in March
Request volunteers to fill out survey for PhD dissertation on watershed-scale collaborative decision making

7:00-7:30pm Drought Management Plan Review

Please come prepared with suggestions regarding the DMP document or drought management opportunities
A DMP sub committee will be selected to bring recommendations to the BHWC at the March meeting

7:30-7:40pm Break

7:40-8:40 pm Project Advisory Panel recommendations for project funding

Six projects were recommended for funding at the recent Advisory Panel meeting. Three presentations will be made at the February meeting and three will be presented at the March meeting.

8:45 -8:50 Set March Agenda

8:50 Adjourn

**Big Hole Watershed Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 17, 2007
6:30-9:30pm
Divide Grange Hall**

(Steering Committee meeting minutes attached)

In Attendance:

Steve Luebeck, Sportsmen, Marty Hovan, BSB Water, Kristina Swanson, BHWC, Scott Reynolds, GGTU, Steve Parker, BHRF, Mike Bias, BHRF, Steve Armiger, BLM-Dillon, Nathan Korb, TNC, Jeff Everett, USFWS, Matt Norberg, DNRC, Mike Roberts, DNRC, Brian Thrift, BLM, Peter Lamothe, FWP, Jami Murdoch, BHWC, Cheyenne Garrison, BHWC, Andrew Hanson, Outfitter/Sportsmen, K. Walter Peterson, Rancher, Dick Marshall, Rancher, George Trischman, Rancher, Mark Kambich, Rancher, Noorjahan Parwana, BHWC, Joanie Hullett, Resident, Jim Boetticher, Resident, John Dooling, Rancher, Ray Weaver, Rancher, Liz Jones, Rancher, Randy Smith, Chairman, Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher and Jill Luebeck, BHWC.

December minutes approved.

Snowpack Update

Mike Roberts (DNRC) provided a brief update on the snow pack for the year. The Big Hole had a good fall in terms of precipitation but currently the Big Hole snowpack is at 88% of average. This average is ahead of last year at this time. Mike will be prepared to provide the 2006 flow/precipitation review at the March BHWC meeting.

Legislative Update

Bruce Farling, director of Montana Trout Unlimited, summarized several bills affecting water that are being introduced at the Montana Legislature. The primary bill he focused on is SB 370, which was written specifically to benefit irrigators in

the Big Hole watershed. TU helped write the bill at the request of FWP and watershed committee members. Sen. Bill Tash of Dillon agreed to be its sponsor. SB 370 amends Montana water law to make it clear that water right owners who agree to leave water in-stream temporarily as part of their participation in a federal "Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances" for imperiled species are protected from claims that their voluntary reductions in water are tantamount to abandoning a water right.

Farling also discussed HB 104 (Furey-Bonner), which reduces the criterion for "exempt" groundwater wells from 35 gpm or 10 acre/feet to 35 gpm or 1 acre-feet. Use of exempt wells does not trigger DNRC review of their impacts on other water right holders. Farling pointed out that HB 104 does not affect stockwater wells. HB 138 would allow new groundwater development in closed basins such as the upper Missouri drainage as long as the developer prepared a plan that demonstrates depletions their wells cause in nearby rivers is offset bucket-by-bucket by "augmented" flows obtained from an existing source. Finally, a bill will be introduced that will seek to limit the ability of developers to use dozens or even hundreds of exempt wells in subdivisions, a practice that allows developers to skirt DNRC review of the cumulative effects these wells have on existing users of ground and surface water.

General Business

The January meeting is the annual meeting during which the Committee reviews BHWC By-Laws, Budgets and Work Plans and makes any changes or recommendations to these documents.

- o No changes were recommended for the By-laws.
- o Current BHWC Profit & Loss statement and Budget Sheet were distributed. No changes were recommended.
- o Review of 2006 Work Plan and accomplishments were reviewed (Attachment A).
- o 2007 draft Work Plan was reviewed (Attachment B). One addition was made to the Work Plan under the category "Fish and Wildlife". (That addition has been made to the attached 2007 Work Plan. The change is shown underlined).

Regional Collaboration with Other Watershed Groups

In November 2006, the annual pot luck and meeting of regional watershed groups was held in Twin Bridges. The idea of pursuing collaborative efforts between Madison Valley Ranchlands, the Ruby, Jefferson, Beaverhead, and Big Hole watershed groups was discussed. Regional collaboration might provide opportunities and leverage. However, there are many concerns also. The BHWC agreed to support appointing two members to participate in a scoping meeting with the other groups and come back to the Committee with recommendations. Dick Marshall and Nathan Korb volunteered to be the BHWC representatives.

Weed Committee Update

Cheyenne Garrison (BHWC Weed Coordinator) updated the group on the 2007 Weed Committee Budget. Approval of budget will be made pending review and recommendation by Steering Committee.

The 2006 Weed Whacker's Ball which was held in Twin Bridges this past September was a great success. The event generated around \$15,000 and had great support from the community. The 2007 Weed Whacker Ball will be held in Wise River again. The Weed Committee feels attendance will be bigger than the last two years because it coincides with Governor's Range Tour. There could be as many as 200 in attendance from the Range Tour alone!

The final Work Plan for 2007 will be completed in February. The primary goals are: Education and Outreach, On the Ground Accomplishments, Sustainability and Inventory and Evaluation.

Cheyenne announced that she will be turning over her duties to a new Weed Coordinator due to the arrival of her second child the first week of March. She thanked the committee for all their support and has agreed to be an active member of the Weed Committee and will continue to organize the Weed Whacker Ball on a contract basis.

Big Hole Watershed Committee featured in Montana PBS film

The meeting ended with a showing of a portion of a recently completed documentary film, "Headwaters of a Continent-Montana's Working Watershed Groups". The committee only watched the segment on the Big Hole which was filmed primarily on LaMarche Creek at the property of Dave and June Guckenber. The film features our own Harold Peterson, Randy Smith, Steve Luebeck, Jim Hagenbarth, and Dave Guckenber. It was produced by Alison Koch for the Montana Water Center, MSU in Bozeman. The film will air on Montana PBS on Saturday, February 17 at 5 p.m. and Sunday, February 18 at 8:30 a.m.

February Agenda

- o Drought Management Plan Review
- o Presentations of projects recommended for funding by Advisory Panel

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Attachment A

2006 Initiatives (Review)

1. Develop Watershed Restoration Plan

Purpose: A watershed restoration plan will identify priorities that will enable a more focused approach to fundraising efforts and determine data gaps that will define research goals.

- Select habitat projects in core grayling reach for funding. Project selection will use new ranking system and process. One third of federal appropriations funding dedicated to core grayling reach will be dedicated in 2006.
- √ **Ranking system developed. \$231,000 of \$336,000 total- or 69%- of appropriations funding dedicated for HT projects in 2006.**
- Develop a ranking system for selecting projects for funding on the lower Big Hole River (non-grayling reach).
- √ **Ranking System in use throughout 2006.**
- Using ranking system, projects will be funded on lower Big Hole River. One third of federal appropriations funding dedicated to lower reach will be delegated in 2006.
- √ **\$23,000 of \$62,000 total- 37%- dedicated to projects on the lower Big Hole in 2006. Ranking system has not been developed for the lower Big Hole River. Watershed Planning process is underway. Three areas of priority concern have been identified for focus in 2007.**

2. Project Funding

Purpose: Develop budget and strategy for disbursement of new federal appropriations funding source.

- Develop one year budget for upper (grayling) reach.
- √ **Ten year budget has been developed.**
- Develop one year budget for lower reach.
- √ **Per Project budget and process for funding lower Big Hole projects was adopted at the September 2006 BHWC meeting.**
- Determine priority research project for grayling ecology.
- ∅ **Need advisory panel to make recommendations.**

3. Fundraising

- Operations – develop support for one third of BHWC annual operations expenses from local public and private sector and through foundations.
- ∅ **11% total budget raised from individual and business donations and memberships**
- ∅ **8% total budget raised from state grant**
- ∅ **0 raised from foundations for operational support.**
- Projects:
 - Support funding to implement project currently identified on the lower Big Hole (Big Hole Ditch/Owlsley Slough; Fishing Access Relocation; Garrison-Kilwein Diversion; Kalsta Spring Creek; Hagenbarth Ditch; Peck Riparian Fencing and Stockwater Wells; Wise River Headgate Reconstruction)
- √ **Kalsta Spring Creek and Hagenbarth Ditch designs funded; Bids received for Garrison Kilwein Ditch- Partial implementation funding secured.**

Attachment B 2007 Initiatives

Water Quality and Water Quantity

TMDL-upper

- Work with MT DEQ, TMDL Outreach Coordinator, and landowners to assure adequate review of upper Big Hole Watershed Restoration Plan.
 - Begin outreach and education efforts – *February through April*
 - Stakeholder review of draft plan, including two community meetings and individual meetings as required - *March*.
 - With DEQ, provide public information meeting(s) and venue for public comment during official comment period; press releases; distribute Plan to local communities – *April*.
 - Complete the upper and North Fork TMDL plans.

TMDL- lower

- Use outreach efforts to facilitate private landowner support of data collection and monitoring on the middle and lower Big Hole – *May through October??*.

Projects - lower

- Get design for Garrison project and find funding for implementation – *spring/fall*.
- Complete Hagenbarth, and Carpenter Projects, pending funding- *December/June*.
- Find funding implement of Wise River headgate reconstruction – *March/December*.
- Find funding and begin implementation of Peck stockwater tank projects – *April*.
- Collaborate with Big Hole Ditch Co and NRCS to develop plan, design and funding strategy for Big Hole Ditch project - .
- Collaborate with FWP, NRCS, and landowner to gather flow and temperature data required for Kalsta Spring Creek project – *February through June*.
- Continue to support Big Hole Drought Management Plan including amending Plan and updating phone tree – *February through March*.

Research

- Collaborate with MT Bureau of Mines and Geology DNRC on completion of ground water surface water study and presentation of data results to BHWC – *March*.

Education – Communication

- Two newsletters - January/ September.
- One annual drought newsletter - *May*.
- One watershed tour and educational conference (Water Rights/Water Quality) – *Early October*.
- Two Ladies Tea events.
- Assure Weed Coordinator achieves o & e goals.
- Assure TMDL Coordinator achieves o & e goals.

Weeds

- Provide oversight and support of Weed Committee goals.

Fish and Wildlife

- With Hub & Spoke team, determine goals for 2007/2008 with respect to Grayling Recovery Support Coordinator and develop funding strategy to support resulting goals - *February through March*.
- Prepare revised appropriation request for FY 2007 - *January*.
- Prepare appropriation request for FY 2008 – *February*.
- Find funding sources to support BHWC travel to D.C. – *March*
- Solicit project applications and organize Advisory Panel review meeting pending available 2006 appropriation funding – *May*.
- Facilitate meeting between MFWP, private landowners, and EPESP to address big game conflict issues – April - October.

Organization and Administration

- Achieve greater operational sustainability
 - Double annual membership dues from \$6,000 to \$12,000
 - follow-up letter – *January*.
 - newsletter remittance envelopes.
 - enlist BHWC governing member support in membership recruitment.
- Secure commitment from two foundations for general or operational support.
- Set up web-giving - *March*.
- Apply for DNRC - Watershed Planning Assistance Grant – *March*.

Land Use Planning

- Support Review Board for the Big Hole Land Use Plan river setback standards.
- Assure BHWC is informed of all subdivision requests adjacent to Big Hole River and tributaries.
- Seek educational opportunities regarding development and planning issues (e.g. Sonoran Institute, collaboration with Upper Missouri Watershed Groups)- *yearlong*.

Watershed Planning

- Complete first round of lower Big Hole watershed plan development – *April*.
- Recruit watershed planning subcommittee – *April*.
- With WP subcommittee, begin implementation of three goals identified in Plan – *May through October*.
- With full watershed planning group, evaluate 2007 results and enlarge Plan – *November*.

BHWC Steering Committee Meeting
January 9, 2007 - 6:00 to 9:00 pm
Perkins Restaurant, Butte

By-Laws Review

No changes recommended

Work Plan Review

Consideration deferred to BHWC governing members

Budget Review

Steve Luebeck (Treasurer) will provide budget update at the BHWC meeting on January 17, 2007)

Grant Proposal Request Update

\$12,000 secured for flow measuring devices (DNRC)

\$99,330 funding recommended for irrigation infrastructure improvements (DNRC-RRG)

\$31,700 pending for irrigation infrastructure improvements (HB 223)

\$28,500 pending from foundations for weed program, riparian habitat restoration, and fish ladder

Letters of Inquiry made to Bonneville Power and Liz Claiborne/Art Ortenberg Foundation

Applications pending to Cinnabar Foundation and Doris Duke Foundation.

\$1,050 EPA-319 funding sought for educational conference and watershed tour

BHWC match sought for Carpenter headgate project (\$1,000)for \$17,500 funding request). No recommendation was made. Decision will rest with BHWC.

BHWC operational budget is running low. Parwana instructed to prioritize fundraising and grant writing efforts toward funding sources that support operational expenses.

Weed Committee Update

Cheyenne Garrison is stepping down as Weed Committee Coordinator. She will continue to serve on the board and wishes to contract to organize the Weed Whacker Ball.

2007/2008 Appropriation Update

Randy will be in Washington D.C. in January on personal business. He is willing to spend an additional two days in order to visit congressional delegation and petition for continued, if reduced, support of 2007 appropriation request There is reason to believe some funding support may yet be possible. Decision was made to recompense Randy for the additional two nights accommodation and expenses for those two days.

Randy has had contact with Rehberg and Tester and Steve has been talking to Baucus' staff in regard to 2008 appropriation request. Rehberg sits on House Interior Appropriation Committee. Parwana was directed to prepare application and budget for 2008 appropriation request.

Other Business

MWCC Watershed Award applications are requested. Recommendation *not* to spend on this effort.

NRIS requests support (conceptual and financial match) for wetland mapping grant request. Not enough information known to make recommendation. Suggest a presentation to the BHWC by NRIS.

Future Steering Committee Meeting Dates:

Steering Committee meetings be every other month and will fall on the second Tuesday in the late afternoon or early evening.

Next meeting will be March 13, 2007.