

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee Monthly Meeting Minutes August 15, 2012 ~ 7:00 - 9:00pm Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance

Jen Titus, BHWC; Randy Smith, Rancher/Chair; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Doug Finnicum, BSB County; Rick Hartz, BVD County; Garth Haugland, BVD County; Dean Peterson, Rancher; Harold Peterson, Rancher; Cindy Ashcraft, Rancher; Dave Ashcraft, Rancher; Mike Bias, BHRF; Mike Roberts, DNRC; Joe Willauer, Guide; Steve Parker, BHRF; Mark Kambich, Rancher; Hans Humbert, Rancher; John Reinhardt, Rancher; Steve Luebeck, Sportsman;

Introduction

Attendees introduced themselves. June meeting minutes approved.

Stream Flow Report and Drought - Mike Roberts, DNRC

Big Hole River is getting low. All sections in the Drought Management Plan have reached first triggers by this week, although Wisdom reached its first triggers long ago. The Big Hole River below the Hamilton Ditch is severely low, only 102cfs today and dropping while water temperatures are very warm. July 29 the river exceeded 70 degrees for three consecutive days and FWP requested limited fishing in a press release August 1.

However, we can be happy about the delay in hitting the triggers. This year, despite similar water conditions, we are in far better shape than in past years. For example, see comparisons between 2007 and 2012 on similar days:

Location	2007	2012
Wisdom	8.5 cfs	34 cfs
Mudd Creek	62 cfs	84 cfs
Melrose	142 cfs	227 cfs

As the numbers show, we are doing far better this year. This is likely due to baseflows provided by recent wet years, the Drought Management Plan, the CCAA Plans, and the result of many restoration projects over the years. Water users have been very good about turning back water. This year 147 cfs has been voluntarily turned back since June from 9 different landowners in the Upper Big Hole.

The forecast is hot and dry, but with recent precipitation. Prepare for flows to continue to drop.

There is drought funding assistance available through the Bureau of Reclamation. This funding has provided for projects in the past, such as stream gages. The CCAA team is looking into possibilities.

Comments:

River is holding flows better than expected.

Butte Silver Bow Water is experiencing high pH this year - highest ever (reaching 9.5 at times). Later, we ask Steve Parker to explain why. The answer - photosynthesis increases in warm water, which takes

up CO₂, a weak acid. With the removal of the acid, the water is more basic. More algal growth and high water temperature increases this process and the cycle varies between day and night. Algal growth may be high if a previous winter did not heavily scour rocks to remove algae, or other factors that contribute to algal growth - high water temperature for one. In addition, the local geology has some limestone, which is a base.

Reports & New Business

Directors Report: PowerPoint

Jen provided an update on BHWC position. Overall, we are following the financial and operational plan we outlined this spring to ramp down our efforts to meet a new budget. Kevin is off the books. Jen is working 20 hours per week and with minimal travel.

Points:

1. DMP: First triggers hit this week. Press release will go out 8/16 followed by the phone tree.
2. Donations: Total donations are higher than in 2009 and most donors are giving more than they did last year. However, donations are declining this month and we need to give another push this fall prior to the annual appeal at the end of the year. Please consider taking brochures with you and seeking support.
3. Projects: Top priority right now is to reduce our contract load. Our best funding opportunity right now is to cash in our reimbursable grants. This spring a list of projects provided showed 27 open tasks. As of this month, 7 of those are complete and several more are 90% complete.
4. News:
 - Newsletter sent July 2012
 - The Blackfoot Challenge is hosting a workshop in September. BHWC will be represented.
 - The Wise River Monitoring Project will present at the AWRA conference held at Fairmont Hot Springs October 11-12
 - The Wetlands Project will present results at the MWCC meeting 8/17
 - BHWC participated in a Watershed Tour July 25 with the CCAA program and FutureWest.
5. Progress: The reduced capacity of the BHWC this summer did not go unnoticed, as we discussed in the messaging we provided this spring prior to the capacity reduction. Jen hears daily from agencies, partners, and more the noticeable reduction and the request for more involvement - which we cannot offer. This may be a good thing as it supports our messaging. Our involvement can occur, but we need fiscal support.
6. Help Please - With the reduced hours, Jens is way over allocated. We are use to staff providing most support for the BWHC. This will be a change, but the BHWC board, supporters, and partners will be asked to help with tasks regularly to help offset the reduced staff.
 - Tasks Volunteered:
 - Set up September Meeting at the Grange: Mark Kambich
 - Set up October Meeting at the Grange: Joe Willauer
 - Request September Speaker: Scott Reynolds & Steve Luebeck
 - Review Reports for Typos: Steve Luebeck
 - Request Donations from 3 Sources: Joe Willauer and Rick Hartz
 - Accompany the Survey Crew 1 Day in Wise River: Rick Hartz

- Blackfoot Challenge Workshop September 24-28: Looking for landowner representative to attend this all expense paid trip to Seeley Lake. Jim Magee and Bill Cain are also attending. John Peck has tentatively agreed to attend. Looking for someone who can commit to even a partial week.

Steering Committee: A junkyard that was located in Dillon has moved to Glen. A public hearing is scheduled for August 20, 7pm in the Commission Meeting Room in Dillon. The Commission has heard concerns over the move and will hold a public hearing. The site is proposed for salvage parts and vehicle crushing.

Wildlife Committee: The range rider continues to patrol, now riding 2 of 3 allotments. He is funded by RAC funds and continue through October. He will patrol the Steele Creek Ranch, Huntley Ranch and Lapham Ranch. So far, no wolf activity. The range rider was part of the watershed tour July 26.

Weed Committee: Mark Kambich provided an update on the Weed Whackers Ball scheduled 9/8/2012 at the Wise River Community Building. Invitations are out. 70 reservations so far. There is a pre-affle this year for a raft. Tickets are \$10 each or 3 for \$25.

Weed crews in process. The southwest district of Montana Weed Association is selling hats as a fundraiser. Only 100 hats will be sold for \$30 each. Each hat has a number for a Rifle drawing.

Land Use Planning: The floodplain mapping continues on schedule, contracted through ATKINS. This month the agencies, ATKINS and several stakeholders reviewed the resolution options to be used in the mapping and the pros and cons of including structures in the analysis. The result was selection of a 5 meter DEM and to omit structures from the analysis. Expected complete November 2012.

New Business

- None

Future Agendas

- September 18: Jim Olsen, MT FWP - Big Hole Fishery
- October 17: Watershed Restoration Planning and the Wetlands Project Results (or November)
- November 28 (*Note change of week for the holiday)

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm