

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

February 15, 2012 ~ 6:00 - 8:30pm

Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance

Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County Planner; George Trischman, rancher; Jim Olsen, FWP; Steve Luebeck, Sportsman; Scott Reynolds, George Grant Trout Unlimited; Randy Smith, Chairman & rancher; Jim Hagenbarth, Co-Chair & rancher; Kevin Brown, BHWC; Bill Cain, Steering Committee & sportsman; Jen Titus, BHWC; Liz Jones, rancher; Erik Kalsta, rancher; Russ Riebe, US Forest Service; Becky Kington, BHWC Weed Committee; Margie Edsall; BHWC Weed Committee; Jack Eddie, Beaverhead County; Harold Peterson, rancher; Jim Berkey; The Nature Conservancy; Mark Kambich, rancher; Steve Park, BHRF; Erik Kalsta, rancher; Dean Peterson, rancher.

Introduction

Attendees introduced themselves. January meeting minutes approved.

Precipitation & Snowpack Report

Detailed report attached from Mike Roberts, DNRC. Average snowpack is near 78.3%.

Presentation: BHWC Finance Report, Steve Luebeck, BHWC Treasurer

A pdf of the PowerPoint presentation is available.

Steve presented the financial outlook of the BHWC for 2012 and estimates for 2013-2014.

At the current rate, the BHWC will be out of cash in 9 months - August 2012. In the past the BHWC enjoyed financial stability in grants and federal appropriations. Federal appropriations have ended. While BHWC has continued to be successful in receiving grants, the funding environment offers "move the dirt funds" easily and operational dollars less frequently. The BHWC cash of unrestricted dollars - dollars that are not tied to tasks - is dwindling. Unrestricted dollars primarily pay for staffing. Without staffing we will not have project capacity. In a recent review, BHWC tallied 83 projects completed since 2003. Those projects have provided significant benefits for fish and wildlife, agencies, water users, recreationists, counties, property owners, etc.

In order to prevent the cash available from reaching \$0, the Steering Committee reviewed 8 scenarios. The scenarios offer a plan *if no new funding opportunities are confirmed*. Each scenario has the same common denominator: 1. Cut staff, 2. No new projects.

The following scenario was identified as the best solution as it allowed BHWC staff to meet its current contract obligations (several contracts have spring deadlines) while still retaining cash flow adequately:

- Kevin: 40 hours/week February - April; 20 hrs/week May - June; 10 hrs/week July-September; 20 hrs/week October - December. End position December 2012.
- Jen: 40 hours/week February - June; 10 hours/week July-September; 20 hours/week starting October and through 2013.
- This scenario keeps a 1/2 time coordinator through May 2014.

The organization needs \$100,000/year of unrestricted funds to maintain its current capacity.

This is an urgent call to action:

1. Every board member, please give something. Two reasons: 1. We need you, and 2. Foundations ask how much of the board provides financial support. We would like to say 100%.
2. Seek new memberships. We have 83 members now with an average membership donation of \$117/year. We need to increase the number of memberships.
3. Seek donations. Consider outfitters, lodges, businesses, contractors we have used in the past, property owners, recreationists, etc.
4. Seek line item support from agencies, local governments, and organizations that rely on the BHWC. This includes DEQ, USFWS, FWP, Counties, USFS, BLM . . . Each of these groups have benefitted greatly from the BHWC and would not be as successful if the BHWC ceased to exist.
5. Seek public knowledge. We will be requesting attention from media and promoting online to solicit support.

However, keep in mind:

1. The sky is not falling. We are not doomed. We are challenged to reconfigure how we approach fundraising.
2. The task seems daunting - \$100,000/year. However, consider the implications if BHWC ceased to exist. This is far more daunting.
3. The reason we have this problem is because we have relied on funding sources that no longer exist and because the funding environment has changed. We need to change as well.
4. We will not be compiling a 2012 work plan. Our work plan is simply to fundraise and finish our current project obligations.

Comments: The following comments represent a summary of communications at the meeting. Some comments have been consolidated.

Kevin Brown: Foundation relationships have improved and gifts increased in recent years to \$40,000/year. Memberships and private donations provide ~\$10,000/year. If these maintain, we will need to raise an additional \$50,000/year (half of our \$100,000 need). BHWC has identified several new foundations that we will be applying to in March. One of the questions these foundations ask: What percentage of your board financially contributes to the organization?

Rick Hartz: Beaverhead County has benefitted greatly from the projects and coordination of the BHWC that otherwise would have been a cost to the county; therefore, it would make sense to seek support from all four counties and Rick would stand behind that request.

Steve Luebeck: Approach all agencies that have benefitted because BHWC work has decreased agency need for effort.

Kevin Brown: We need to tell our story. Until last week we had been underselling the organization. For example, we were citing 24 projects completed. Our new tally shows 83 projects completed since 2003. Then, BHWC matched every dollar spent 5 times, thus leveraging those funds.

Jim Hagenbarth: Fortunately, BHWC has the foresight to see this problem early and make adjustments early.

The BHWC assisted the ranch with a project the ranch was unsuccessful in financing. BHWC provided \$120,000 and the ranch paid \$93,000. Without BHWC, this project would not be completed. Asking for financial assistance and hearing "no" isn't easy, but "if you don't ask, you won't get it." Many property owners have seen and will continue to see property values increase as a result of BHWC work. Property owner donors will recoup their donation in property value.

Kevin Brown: Jim Owens, Brainerd Foundation was very impressed with BHWC stakeholder involvement. Kevin has asked Jim to make BHWC recommendations to other Foundations who may be able to offer support.

Bill Cain: Professional staff provide organization credibility. We can expect to see Foundation support drop if we lose our staff. We are fortunate with the quality of staff we have currently. We will have a difficult time recruiting similar caliber if we drop staff and try to rehire. Retaining staff is a need for effective fundraising. *Ans: (Jen and Kevin)* We enjoy the work!

Bill was chair of the Montana Community Foundation where they had three rules for board members for financial support: "Give, Get, or Get Off." While it sounds harsh, we also have too much at stake to lose the BHWC, and we are dependent on securing local support.

Becky Kington: The most difficult part of a directors position is to fundraise. What is the action plan?

Ans: Jen and Kevin will focus on 1. Finishing existing contracts, 2. Fundraising. The Steering Committee will work to engage every board member in our challenge. Others are identified to help bring a sense of urgency and engage a broader audience. We are thinking of ways BHWC has provided benefits to help us market our message and take advantage of our momentum.

Erik Kalsta: Do we have access to economic multipliers? i.e. Dollars spent on restoration has resulted in x number of jobs, etc? *Ans.* No. However, we can tally the dollars spent in each county.

Steve Luebeck: Before tonight, only the Steering Committee and staff knew of this problem. Now, we all must leave here and seek support, but without instilling panic. No one will want to support a sinking ship. We can especially seek support in new memberships - it is easier to retain a member year after year once a new member is added. Encourage ranches and other businesses to donate from their business account and enjoy the tax break. Consider supporting the good work of the BHWC - the work

that many rely on - as a cost of doing business and similar to a professional affiliation. Steve himself gave \$500 from the Fairmont Hot Springs.

Big Hole River Foundation versus Big Hole Watershed Committee

Rick Hartz: Do donors understand the difference between BHWC and BHRF and the possibility of donating to both?

Steve Parker: We could improve the synergy between the organizations.

Bill Cain: Bill was a founder of the BHRF and advocates the dependency the BHRF has on efforts the BHWC initiatives, watershed restoration, and BHRF project support. BHRF would find their efforts to be more difficult if the BHWC were not present. Perhaps BHRF should support BHWC financially as well due to the large interest in BHWC's existence. The competition level between the two groups has improved, but still present.

Kevin Brown & Steve Parker: BHWC and BHRF agree to meet in the future to discuss how to improve synergy and partnership between the groups and try to reduce the competitive relationship between the groups.

Mark Kambich: Mark admits he is guilty as anyone in not donating when he should. . . Thoughts for promotion - can we put some of this information on the website?

Ans. Yes. We will use web, social media, traditional media, e-mail, and print. However, know that the best, most effective request comes from a personal request. We need help with the storytelling that can help us with our outreach.

Steve Luebeck: We want the message and strategy that comes from each one of us to be consistent, uniform, and show stability. We are drafting messaging now and will compile an implementation plan for the next meeting. We would like everyone to use this consistent messaging. This will include use of media in requesting reporting by local sources. We will also put mechanisms in place to handle the implementation plan, including preparation for online and paper payments, membership forms, etc. The messaging and implementation plan will be available after we have conferred with all board members.

Steve Reynolds: There seems to be two issues: 1. Short-term financial needs, and 2. Long-term consistent financial needs. What brought us all together was water. Perhaps water as our common interest can play a role in this challenge, such as a water users fee.

Question: Does the BHWC agree to continue? *All those present:* Yes.

George Trischman: Times have been hard before when the river was dry and we were angry. We got through it then, and we'll get through this too.

Jim Hagenbarth: We're the only group in the country to take on the Endangered Species Act and turn it around.

Russ Riebe: Agency missions are changing. Budgets are deeply cut and agencies are coming to depend on groups like BHWC to "row the boat" rather than agencies "rowing the boat." The county will see this too in the proposed reduction in taxes that support rural schools and infrastructure.

Harold Peterson: "Nothing would have happened on the ground without the BHWC, because before we would have told the agencies to "hit the road" . . . and I am damn proud of the work we've done . . . and I don't want to see it go down the drain now . . . more users should chip in. If we hadn't done anything in '95, the grayling would be listed and we'd all be suffering."

Jim Olsen: Consider success in water years. 1988 and 2007 were similar water years. The Big Hole River ran three times the water in 2007 than in 1988. In 1988 the river ran dry at Wisdom for 35 days. Drought management and restoration have made that possible.

George Trischman: Since we started the Drought Management Plan, he has only had to turn their water off once prior to when he intended to. Prior to drought management, he was often short on water.

Mark Kambich: Great presentation Steve. Let's put material on the website, like the stories we've just told now.

Erik Kalsta: BHWC gave the weed committee \$40,000 to start. We tried to keep the weed committee going. Most of the committee is burned out or inactive. The weed committee has been struggling with sustainability. Perhaps the weed committee should give BHWC its funds or some of its funds?

Jack Eddie: Beaverhead County relies on some of the weed money as match for other grants.

Ans: The weed committee is reliant on the BHWC for survival. Keep in mind the weed committee is a sub-committee of the BHWC. Our hope is that the WWB will help to support BHWC as the single event of the BHWC, while much of the focus and a portion of the funds remains for weeds.

Jim Burkey: If WWB attendees (near 350 annually) all became members, that would more than triple the current membership. Could you build BHWC membership into the ticket price? Offer a "free" membership for one year with attendance?

Kevin Brown: Most donations occur in November-December annually.

Steve Luebeck: Members/Donors have the option of automatically renewing/donating online using a credit card through our Network for Good donation program.

Rick Hartz: Consider United Way (Beaverhead, Butte, Anaconda). Donors can select which organization they want funds to go towards and have payments automatically withdrawn from paychecks.

Reports & New Business

BHWC Weed Committee Proposal for WWB 2012

Becky Kington, Margie Edsall and Jack Eddie were prepared to discuss their proposal for WWB 2012 with a split responsibility and profit plan with the BHWC. However, in light of tonight's discussion, chose to rework the proposal. They will make changes and submit to Kevin. The Steering Committee

will review first, followed by presentation to the board for a speedy plan of action, as a plan needs to be in place soon. The proposal contains comments from a survey of weed committee members and interests that summarized the main interests of the weed committee.

Drought Management Plan Review

The Drought Management Review meeting occurred 2/15/2012, 4:30pm. Overall the plan remains largely the same. Jen will correct formatting and typos and update materials (update outfitter list - FWP can supply, Phone tree, etc) in preparation for possible plan use this year. Attendees discussed dividing the most lower reach (Melrose to Mouth) into two sections (Melrose to Notch and Notch to Mouth) and incorporating the use of the High Road stream gage. Jim Olsen drafted the divided section plan. Jim Olsen and George Trischman will present the proposal to water users in the new proposed section prior to inclusion into the Drought Management Plan. Attendees also proposed a Wise River DMP Section to the plan for 2013 in light of stream gages and projects in 2012. The top priority need identified is an outfitter representative on the BHWC board to facilitate outfitter contact in Drought Management Plan implementation.

BHWC Board Changes

Outfitter Representative: Two nominations to date: Wade Fellin, Al LaFore. Attendees suggested contacting the outfitter group FOAM (led by Robin Cunningham) for suggestions. Justin Hearburn (sp?) was recommended by Erik Kalsta.

The Nature Conservancy, Jim Berkey, Welcome to the Board! Jim lives in Missoula and has been with Nature Conservancy for 4.5 years. Prior he was with Blackfoot Challenge and Five Valleys Land Trust. He works with landowners on easements and with programs that help provide cash incentive. He is based in Dillon in the summer while his family, including two kids, remain in Missoula year-round.

Harold Peterson, new Beaverhead Conservation District Representative: This replaces Art Christensen. As a result, a rancher position is open.

Dean Peterson, Welcome to the Board! As a result of the open rancher position, Dean was nominated and accepted as the latest rancher to fill the open rancher position.

Landscape Conversations, February 28, Great Falls. See our website for more information. The Big Hole Watershed will be presented as a success story. Erik Kalsta plans to attend.

Land Use Planning: The LUP Committee used the \$5,000 donated by BHWC for the mapping effort, leveraged it for \$30,000, to leverage again for an additional \$60,000. The engineer was selected Monday.

Future Agendas

- March 20 (Tuesday) – Land Use Planning Incentive Program Public Forum, 6:30-8:30pm
- March 21 (Wednesday) – Land Use Planning Workshops, Butte
- March 21 (Wednesday) - BHWC Monthly Meeting, 6pm. Agenda will continue in financial efforts with implementation plan. It is critical the board members attend.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm

Big Hole Watershed Committee Snowpack Streamflow Report

February 2012

General Comments:

Snowpack and precipitation are below average. The basinwide snowpack average as of February 15 is 78.3%. Last year at this time the Big Hole snowpack was approximately 115% of average. The high elevation stations are the most behind with Darkhorse Lake (8600') and Mule Creek (8300') reporting 69% and 71% respectively.

The February 1, 2012 NRCS Water Supply Outlook predicts April to July streamflows at Wisdom and Melrose to be 69% and 75% of average assuming average temperature and precipitation.

BIG HOLE BASIN APPROXIMATE PRECIPITATION				
		15-Jan		
	elevation	current	normal	% avg
		inches	inches	
Barker Lakes	8250	9.8	11.5	85
Basin Creek	7180	5.9	6.1	97
Bloody Dick	7600	9.5	11.7	81
Calvert Creek	6430	9.5	8.2	116
Darkhorse Lake	8600	16.4	23.3	70
Moose Creek	6200	13.9	15.4	90
Mule Creek	8300	10.6	11.9	89
Saddle Mtn.	7940	16.4	20.6	80
TOTAL		92	108.7	
BASIN AVERAGE		84.6		
BIG HOLE BASIN APPROXIMATE SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT				
		15-Jan		
	elevation	current	normal	% avg
		inches	inches	
Barker Lakes	8250	7.2	10	72
Basin Creek	7180	3.7	5.5	67
Bloody Dick	7600	7.3	9.4	78
Calvert Creek	6430	8.3	6.7	124
Darkhorse Lake	8600	16	23.2	69
Moose Creek	6200	10.7	13.6	79
Mule Creek	8300	8.3	11.7	71
Saddle Mtn.	7940	16.5	19.5	85
TOTAL		78	99.6	
BASIN AVERAGE		78.3		

-NRCS Data compiled by Mike Roberts, DNRC.