

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

March 21, 2012 ~ 7:00 - 9:30pm

Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance

Jen Titus, BHWC; Ray Weaver, Rancher; Harold Peterson, rancher; Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County Planner; Dean Peterson, rancher; 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; Jami Murdoch, rancher; Mark Kambich, rancher; Garth Haugland, Beaverhead County; Cindy Ashcraft, Rancher; Jeanne Caddy, Resident; Tom Caddy; Resident; Mike Roberts, DNRC

Introduction

Attendees introduced themselves. February meeting minutes approved.

Precipitation & Snowpack Report

Detailed report attached from Mike Roberts, DNRC. Average snowpack is near 94.5%. This is a dramatic increase since last month - 10-20% increase at most SNOTEL sites. The entire report is included in these minutes. Questions arose regarding differences between SNOTEL sites and how snowpack is calculated. Mike stated that NRCS is responsible for ground truthing and the accuracy of the predictions. The SNOTEL sites themselves vary due to location aspect, location, etc. The basin snowpack amount is a weighted average between several SNOWTEL sites. The most important snow calculation is the upper basin, particularly the Dark Horse site, as the upper basin is the most critical in maintaining stream flows.

Presentation: BHWC Strategic Direction, Kevin Brown, BHWC

Kevin presented the strategic direction for BHWC based on comments and developments from the February 2012 financial outlook presentation. A review of the financial state was provided. Staff are working through 6 strategies:

1. Decrease Contract Obligations: Staff are working to decrease contract obligations. There are several open contracts with state agencies that need to be closed this spring and fall.
2. Foundation requests: Staff completed 6 Foundation requests and are working on several more.
3. Private Donations & Advisement: Kevin is soliciting private donations by requesting advisement from high capacity donors. Kevin also sought the advisement of our current Foundations for other possible funding sources. The BHWC Board has been asked to assist in fundraising efforts by approaching friends, neighbors, businesses, etc. they have contact with who might support our great work.

4. **Businesses:** We will solicit support from business with interest in the area and in the work the BHWC does. Solicitation from businesses has not begun.

5. **Online:** Staff have increased social media and webpage traffic and material significantly this month. Staff are also working through our online search presence - i.e. what does one see in searches for "Big Hole" or "Big Hole River". BHWC is not prolific in searches and some negative content exists. Staff are reducing negative content and working to increase search results. This can occur through partnerships to trade links - such as our partnership with the Big Hole Tourism site, who this week posted a blurb on BHWC and a link to our site on their site. This will aid in messaging and soliciting support by increasing positive material and increase opportunity for interested parties to find us online and find appropriate information. Website will have downloadable material on messaging available. Staff will also add Google Analytics to the website to track traffic.

6. **Media:** Staff will seek options for media coverage of the organization. Suggestions include Montana Standard, Montana Outdoors, letters to the editor, and Public Radio commentary. This strategy is under development for implementation in April.

Brochure & Fast Facts: The Steering Committee and staff developed and printed a brochure to use to distribute messaging and to solicit support. There are 500 brochures printed. An envelope is included for a recipient to return support to BHWC. Brochures are available for board members to use. They will also be distributed to other outlets for distribution. It is important to make personal requests, and use the brochure as an informational handout. A second document, called "Fast Facts" was also developed as an alternative messaging and a short handout or email to use in soliciting requests.

In messaging, remind people of the past. Good water years and the progress of BHWC have made times easy, but it wasn't always this way. Remind folks of our history -- of 1988, 1994. Without maintenance, we could easily return to these days.

Board members may assist in soliciting support. Solicitation should be personal and coordinated.

- Kevin will lead a list of possible sources, who will contact that source, and if that source has supported the organization in the past. Send him ideas and if you will contact a source. It is important that we don't duplicate requests to the same person or business.
- Board members may send e-mail requests to their friends and contacts. Kevin will draft and send an e-mail that can be forwarded to all board members.
- Outfitters - Kevin will identify 10 outfitters to reach out to. Scott and Steve will assist in reaching outfitters.
- We will attempt to get information and brochures to board members absent today.

Reports & New Business

Weed Committee - No news

Wildlife Committee: Heidi Hirschy is using four dogs to reduce wolf pressure on cattle. Heidi reports the dogs are working well. The dogs live with the cattle. There have been very few tracks and wolf sightings since the dogs were released.

Five elk reported positive for brucellosis in Sage Creek near Lima. Jim Hagenbarth attended the Stockgrowers Association meeting. He reports that Idaho tested 300 elk and all were negative for brucellosis, which is good news for possible elk migrations into Idaho.

Drought Management Plan Review: Drought Management Plan is reviewed for 2012 and approved by the DMP review committee. Changes for 2012 were formatting, correction, and clarification and an addendum that includes the two proposed sections for 2013. No changes were created that would alter implementation for this year. Therefore, the BHWC proposed that the DMP considered final without requiring a vote. A few more changes on the phone tree are needed to be complete this week.

Land Use Planning: The Incentive Program development was the topic of a public forum held March 20 and a workshop held March 21. The Incentive Program goal is to provide payment for ecosystem services. A panel of experts were invited to help the Big Hole develop an incentives program and panelists agreed that the Big Hole does have opportunities for program development. More development is needed and a future meeting will be scheduled to have several "experts" help BHWC navigate through the next steps of developing a PES program.

Beaverhead County Atlas: Beaverhead County developed a Beaverhead Atlas - a photo, map and data review of the county. It is available in both printed and digital format.

Divide Dam: The issue of safety for floaters at the Divide Dam has been presented as an issue of importance at past BHWC meetings and to BSB from other parties. Butte Silver Bow has made changes to improve floater safety since last season. The BHWC questioned whether or not additional changes should be made. Kevin and Randy met with BSB staff this month to discuss the issue at the dam site. We discussed the portage and boat chute and possible safety improvements; BHWC sent a letter to BSB asking them to explore additional safety measures; in response to the letter BSB showed Randy and Kevin what they'd done to address safety, discussed use and utility of the dam by different user groups at different flows, and discussed options for better identifying the boat chute; Randy, as chair, determined BHWC's concerns were addressed by BSB; several individual members have additional concerns and would like additional improvements made to the dam and are pursuing these options with BSB independent of BHWC.

Watershed Tour and Wise River: The watershed tour this year will be May 18 and will highlight project work in Wise River. This will include a seminar on the monitoring results and a tour of the construction project. School students will be invited to participate. The tour will be held at the Wise River Community Building. Wise River construction will occur April 2012.

Future Agendas

- April 21 (Wednesday) - BHWC Monthly Meeting, 7pm. Agenda TBA
- May 16 (Wednesday) - BHWC Monthly Meeting, 7pm - Land Use Planning Update, Watershed Restoration Plan.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm

General Comments:

Snowpack and precipitation have rebounded somewhat from low February numbers thanks to recent wet storms in southwest Montana. As of March 21, they are slightly below average. The basinwide snowpack average is 94.5%. Precipitation is 97% of average. All SNOTEL stations reported increases of 10 to 20% of average over the mid-February report. Darkhorse lake continues to lag behind, reporting 83% of average.

The March 1, 2012 NRCS Water Supply Outlook predicts streamflows at Wisdom and Melrose to be 78% and 80% of average assuming average temperature and precipitation between April and July. That prediction pre-dates the recent mid-March storms.

BIG HOLE BASIN APPROXIMATE PRECIPITATION				
		15-Jan		
	elevation	current	normal	% avg
		inches	inches	
Barker Lakes	8250	14.6	14.8	99
Basin Creek	7180	7.9	8.2	96
Bloody Dick	7600	13.9	14.4	97
Calvert Creek	6430	12.8	10.1	127
Darkhorse Lake	8600	24.2	28.9	84
Moose Creek	6200	19.9	18.7	106
Mule Creek	8300	15.3	14.8	103
Saddle Mtn.	7940	22.7	25.4	89
TOTAL		131.3	135.3	
BASIN AVERAGE		97		
BIG HOLE BASIN APPROXIMATE SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT				
		15-Jan		
	elevation	current	normal	% avg
		inches	inches	
Barker Lakes	8250	12.1	13.1	92
Basin Creek	7180	6	7.5	80
Bloody Dick	7600	11.7	11.8	99
Calvert Creek	6430	11.1	8.2	135
Darkhorse Lake	8600	24.9	29.9	83
Moose Creek	6200	16.3	16.8	97
Mule Creek	8300	13.1	14.7	89
Saddle Mtn.	7940	24.2	24.3	100
TOTAL		119.4	126.3	
BASIN AVERAGE		94.5		

-NRCS Data compiled by Mike Roberts, DNRC.