

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2014 – 7:00 pm

Divide Grange

In Attendance

Jen Downing, BHWC; Gary Jones, BHWC; Suzanne Taylor, Public; Jim Berkey, TNC; Pete Kamperschroer, Rancher/Outfitter; Harold Peterson, Rancher; Greg Evertz, MACD; Kris Inman, WCS; Russ Riebe, USFS; Bill Cain, BHWC; Mike Bias, Big Hole River Foundation; Tom Welsch, Big Hole River Foundation; Doug Finnicum, BSB Water; Dean Peterson, Rancher; Roy Morris, Trout Unlimited; Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher; Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County; Garth Haugland, Beaverhead County; Don Reese, Jackson; Jim Carpita, Beaverhead County; Jim Magee, USFWS Partners; Doug Clark, Anaconda-Deer Lodge County; Rich McElDowney, RESPEC Consulting; Jim Owens, Brainerd Foundation; Emma Cayer, Montana FWP; Ann Schwend, DNRC; Mike Roberts, DNRC; Kyle Tackett, NRCS; Bryan Gartland, DNRC; Craig Fellin, Outfitter; Chuck Bulen, Business Owner; Jim Olsen, Montana FWP, Kenn Lingas, Wild Planet Films.

Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves. Gary Jones introduced at BHWC's new Conservation Programs Coordinator.

Meeting Minutes

January 2013 Meeting Minutes approved, no additions.

Proposed 2014 Drought Management Plan (Power Point attached) - Jen Downing

The BHWC Drought Committee met in February and reviewed DMP use and comments received during the 2013 season. 2013 Season Highlights:

- Section 1, 53 days under closure
- Section 2, 0 days under closure
- Section 3, 0 days under closure
- Section 4, 54 days under closure

Proposed Changes for 2014 Drought Management Plan:

- Sections 1 and 2, Trigger to start April 1 instead of May 1.
- Section 2, Measure flow at bottom of Section 2, Dickie Bridge from Mudd Creek
- Section 3, Move endpoint to Maiden Rock from Melrose Bridge
- Section 4, Define section as Maiden Rock to Notch Bottom
- Section 5, Add temperature triggers to match State Drought Management Plan.

Questions were raised concerning common names of locations versus the name of the USGS gaging sites.

Question: Will moving trigger location in Section 2 result in not being able to compare historic data? Ans: USGS has always measured flow at the new location. Flow triggers have been changed, adjusted for the Dickie Bridge using the same analysis methodology (wetted perimeter).

Comment: Location of temperature measurement at Notch Bottom appears to be in error on the map. Ans: Map will be updated to accurately reflect location.

Question: Why is temperature data collected at Melrose (Kalsta Bridge) not used in Drought Management Plan? *Ans:* The USGS Melrose site is the longest running gage site for the Big Hole River, its importance for long-term record and restoration success monitoring crucial, and data will continue to be collected here. With the section division between Sections III and IV at Melrose Bridge, irrigators in this sections were split between sections and the condition of drought issues was not accurately reflected. With Section III now ending at Maiden Rock, each of Section III and IV are now similar hydrologically.

Question: How can we do a better job of informing non-commercial fisherman on voluntary hoot-owl regulations? *Ans:* Need to do better job of outreach. MFWP posts restrictions at all fishing access locations and attempts to maintain. Hoot Owl regulations are not voluntary and are enforced by FWP.

Other Drought Management Plan Efforts and Changes:

- Wise River Drought Triggers – Not enough information yet, have collected data for only two years. Data will continue to be collected at four locations in Lower Wise River.
- USGS Real Time Temperature Data: BHWC is looking into adding real-time temperature data to measurement sites in Sections 2, 3 and 4. This change would result in all DMP triggers available online in real-time and therefore improve responsiveness to drought conditions.
- Track Our Efforts – There is still a need to track of the Drought Management Plan implementation and irrigator use outside of CCAA area. In 2013 BHWC requested irrigators submit their conservation actions voluntarily - we received no submissions. BHWC will look into other possibilities.
- Committee Changes – Jaime Wood to replace George Trischman, Roy Morris to replace Scott Reynolds.

Reports

Directors Report, Jen Downing

- Continuing BHWC capacity training and improvements. Focus on fundraising and housekeeping.
- Annual Appeal. Annual appeal went well. Donations are near last year.
- The BHWC annual meeting took place in February at Fairmont Hot Springs. Discussion items included review of 2013, annual work plan, budget, board positions, and organizational direction. Changes to the board include Jaime Wood taking over for George Trischman, and the resignation of John Dooling.

Steering Committee, Jim Hagenbarth - None

Wildlife Committee, Dean Peterson

- Wildlife Committee met March 10 at the Wise River USFS office to discuss the 2014 Range Rider Program and Carcass Removal Pilot Project. These programs were awarded funding in January from the Montana Livestock Loss Board. Carcass removal pilot is planned for fall 2014. Range Rider will run July-September.
- USFS Forest Service will be adopting new food storage rule, similar to the one in the Madison. USFWS will provide a recommendation for the rule. Will likely include option of fencing of food areas. No implementation date known at this time.

Weed Committee, Mark Kambich - None

Land Use Planning Committee, Jen Boyer/ Jen Downing

- Still awaiting DNRC Floodplain Map adoption and expected in a month or so. Process will then move to individual counties for adoption. New development standards are drafted. The Land Use Planning Committee met in January to discuss next steps for floodplain map adoption and the incentive program.
- The incentive program will seek two grants for development of a pilot program. One grant has scored very high in review and is in line for funding awaiting award. A second will be submitted this spring.

Presentation: Upper Big Hole Grayling Recovery Update – Emma Cayer, MFWP; Jim Magee, USFWS; Kyle Tackett, NRCS; Mike Roberts, DNRC

Emma Cayer, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Update on the Legal Status of the Arctic Grayling

- Background – USFWS issued a revised 12-month finding for grayling in both lakes and rivers in the Upper Missouri Basin. Finding indicated that upper Missouri grayling are a distinct population, and the population was warranted for listing, but was precluded. Through court action, USFWS is re-evaluating finding. Proposed listing decision is expected in September, 2014. The listing decision will consider a threat analysis as well as current and ongoing conservation measures.
- Possible outcomes in decision are:
 - Endangered,
 - Threatened, or
 - Not Warranted for listing
- 60-day comment period follows the proposed listing decision. USFWS will then review comments received. Final decision is expected September, 2015.
- Proposed listing decision considers all Upper Missouri grayling.
- Threats to grayling in the Big Hole are identified as: Habitat, Streamflows, Entrainment, and Barriers for migration.
- Update on site-specific conservation plans: 17 are complete, 12 in draft form. Goal is to complete all by May 1, 2014. Need complete and signed plan for CCAA. After completed and signed, landowner is protected from further actions being required on their land.

Jim Magee, USFWS; and Kyle Tackett, NRCS; Big Hole Arctic Grayling Conservation

- CCAA created a "Strategic Habitat Conservation Plan" and identified best resources in the best place for the best use.
- Big Hole topography results in best grayling habitat (cold water, low gradient streams) on private land. Landowner engagement critical to success of program.
- Biological Goal of program: healthy habitat and connectivity. Goal of 500 breeding fish with a confidence of 95%.
- Design of program is to divide watershed into tiers, philosophy of conserve the best and restore the rest.
- CCAA program provides conservation on a watershed scale basis and provides equality among all participants.
- Landowner site-specific plans are the core of the CCAA and are custom plans work with the landowner.
- Addressing the threat of non-functioning riparian and channel habitat.
 - Goal is to maintain and restore habitat within the first five years. Solutions resilient to climate change.
 - Tools available include fencing, grazing management, stock water systems, noxious weed management.
 - Implement tools and monitor system for response.
- Addressing the threat of habitat fragmentation.
 - Goal: remove barriers to grayling migration
 - Tools: Fish ladders, rock diversions, replace culverts with bridges.
 - Result: 67 miles of new habitat now open for migration. 98% of Tier 1 habitat is now accessible to grayling.
- Addressing threat of entrainment:
 - Goal: Identify, reduce and eventually eliminate grayling entrainment
 - Tools: entrainment surveys, fish screens, grade control.
 - Result: 138 miles of ditches sampled, 78 grayling recovered.
 - Site plans have entrainment monitoring protocol
 - Fish screens not required yet. Pilot program, maintenance issues encountered.

Mike Roberts, DNRC; Upper Big Hole Hydrology and CCAA Report

- 2013 Water Year Review. Generally very dry year until September, wettest September in 90 years. Year somewhat comparable to 2007.
- Landowner water contributions during low-flow conditions were evident and kept things from being much worse.
- CCAA goal is to meet in-stream flow targets for 75% of the time in all management sections during average snowpack years after ten years of CCAA implementation. Did not meet 75% goal last year, but things are getting better.
- 2014 snowpack very encouraging for water year. *Streamflow report is attached.*
- Remaining challenges to CCAA program are to finish site plans and implementation and monitoring.

Emma Cayer, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Grayling Response Goals

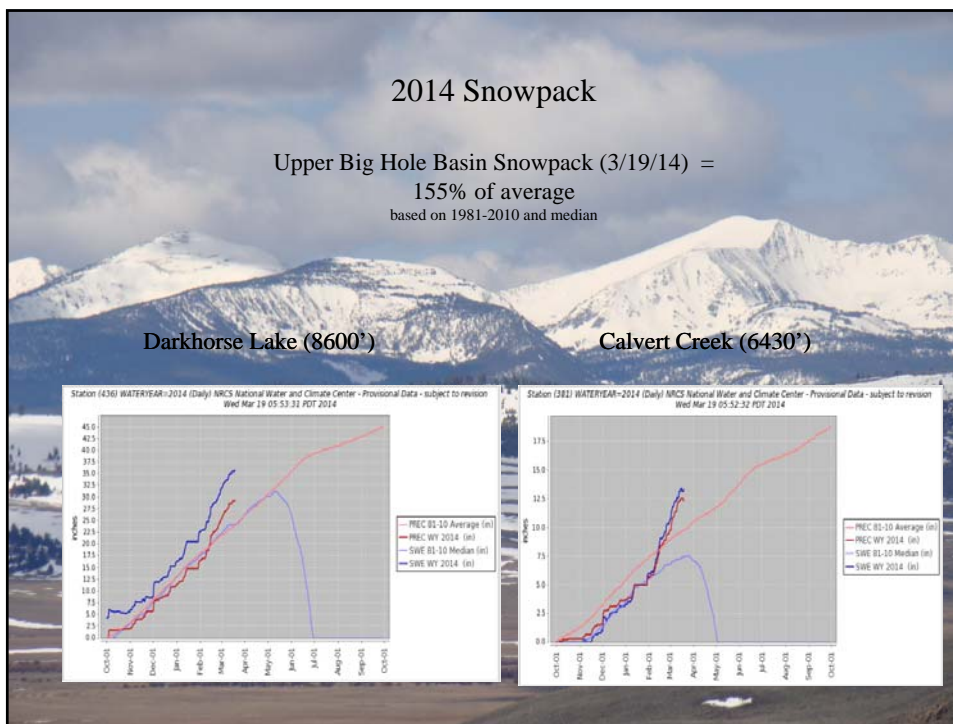
- Goals include increased distribution, increased abundance, and increased genetic diversity of grayling in the watershed.

Question: Will listing decision be based on a specific number of fish present, or potential for growth and improvement? Ans: Agencies are not worried about a specific number of fish. Focus is on the specific threats listed and how these threats are addressed in the long term.

New Business


Greg Evertz, contractor for MACD, has information available for those interested in modifying areas of concentrated livestock holding that may impact streams. Grant funding is available for items such as relocating pens or corrals, fencing, and other items. Funding is provided directly to the landowner. Please contact Greg if you are interested: Greg Evertz, MACD Livestock Advisor, 406-591-6304, carbonado@msn.com

Adjourn



| 2014 BIG HOLE BASIN APPROXIMATE SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT | | | | |
|---|-----------|--------------|--------|----------|
| | 1980-2010 | current | normal | |
| | elevation | inches | inches | % Median |
| Barker Lakes | 8250 | 18.7 | 12 | 156 |
| Basin Creek | 7180 | 11.5 | 6.5 | 177 |
| Bloody Dick | 7600 | 16.3 | 10.4 | 157 |
| Calvert Creek | 6430 | 13.3 | 7.4 | 180 |
| Darkhorse Lake | 8600 | 35.6 | 25.1 | 142 |
| Moose Creek | 6200 | 21.1 | 14.9 | 142 |
| Mule Creek | 8300 | 20.7 | 12.6 | 164 |
| Saddle Mtn. | 7940 | 34.3 | 21.6 | 159 |
| TOTAL | | 171.5 | 110.5 | 155.2 |
| BASIN AVERAGE (% Normal) | | 155.2 | | |
| 2014 BIG HOLE BASIN APPROXIMATE PRECIPITATION | | | | |
| | 1980-2010 | current | normal | |
| | elevation | inches | inches | % avg |
| Barker Lakes | 8250 | 15.6 | 13.9 | 112 |
| Basin Creek | 7180 | 10.5 | 8.1 | 130 |
| Bloody Dick | 7600 | 16 | 12.8 | 125 |
| Calvert Creek | 6430 | 12.3 | 9.8 | 126 |
| Darkhorse Lake | 8600 | 29.2 | 24.1 | 121 |
| Moose Creek | 6200 | | | |
| Mule Creek | 8300 | 18.8 | 14.4 | 131 |
| Saddle Mtn. | 7940 | 24 | 20.8 | 115 |
| TOTAL | | 126.4 | 103.9 | 122 |
| BASIN AVERAGE (% Normal) | | 121.7 | | |

Big Hole River Drought Management Plan



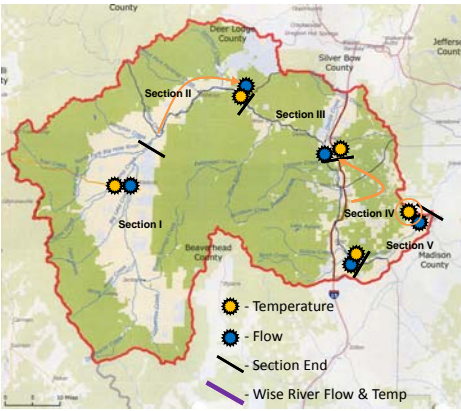
Version 2014

2013 Drought Season

| River Section | Drought Plan Action Dates |
|--|--|
| Section I: Headwaters to North Fork Big Hole River | Conservation: 6/2013 (early target), 7/3/2013 (late target) Hoot-Owl Restriction: 7/22/2013 River Closure: 8/11/2013. Lifted: 10/3/2013 Number of Days Under River Closure = 53 |
| Section II: North Fork Big Hole River to Dickie Bridge | Conservation: 8/20/2013 Hoot-Owl Restriction: 7/22/2013. Lifted 9/15/2013 River Closure: None. Number of Days Under River Closure = 0 |
| Section III: Dickie Bridge to Melrose Bridge | Conservation: 8/26/2013 Hoot-Owl Restriction: None River Closure: None Number of Days Under River Closure = 0 |
| Section IV: Melrose Bridge to Notch Bottom Fishing Access Site | Conservation: 8/12/2013 Hoot-Owl Restriction: None River Closure: 8/20/2013. Lifted: 9/13/2013 Number of Days Under River Closure = 24 |
| Section V: Notch Bottom Fishing Access Site to the Mouth | Conservation: 7/24/2013 Hoot-Owl Restriction: 7/25/2013 River Closure: 7/31/2013. Lifted: 10/3/2013 Number of Days Under River Closure = 65 |

DMP 2014 Proposed Changes:

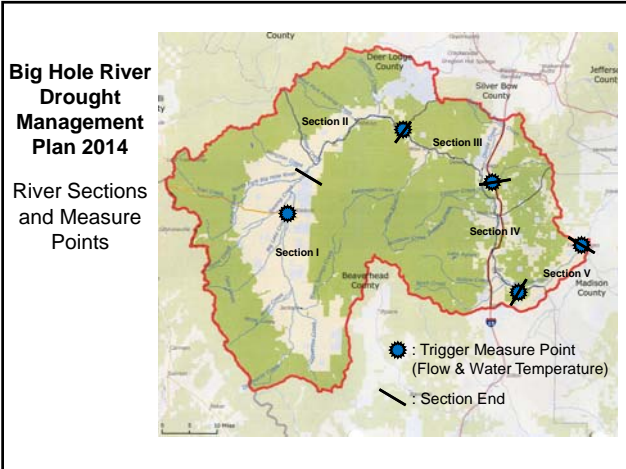
- Section I & II: Start April 1, as in CCAA (was May 1)
- Section II: Flow Measured at Dickie Bridge (was Mudd Crk)
- Section III: End point and flow at Maiden Rock (was Melrose Brg)
- Section V: Add Temperature (as in State Drought Plan)



Flow Trigger Change

- Section II Flows Moved from Mudd Creek to Dickie Bridge

| 2013 Mudd Creek Flow Triggers | New 2014 Dickie Bridge (Gage: Big Hole River Near Wise River) Flow Triggers |
|-------------------------------|---|
| April 1 - June 30: 350 cfs | April 1 - June 30: 450 cfs |
| 100 | 170 |
| 80 | 140 |
| 60 | 100 |




Other DMP Efforts and Changes:

Wise River Drought Management Section - Remains under consideration. Waiting for more data. Flow and temperature data continue to be collected in 4 locations. Two years of data: 2012 was high flows, 2013 was low flows.

USGS Real-Time Water Temperature Data – Potential to add temperature to three gages for Sections II, III and IV. Currently served by thermographs that require download.

Track Our Efforts – Keep track of DMP use. Need to track irrigator contributions outside of the CCAA.

Committee Changes - Jaime Wood replaces George Trischman (irrigator). Roy Morris replaces Scott Reynolds (GGTU).



- DMP 2014 Documents**
- Big Hole River Drought Management Plan, Version 2014
 - Map of River sections and measure points added.
 - 2002-2014 DMP Amendments
 - DMP Phone Tree, Version 2014
 - DMP Quick Reference, Version 2014
- To be circulated in e-mail, posted on website, update on external site, and distributed to BHWC Committee Members and Phone Tree Leaders.*
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