

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2012 ~ 7:00 - 9:00pm

Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance

Jen Titus, BHWC; Kevin Brown, BHWC; Phil Ralston, rancher; Pete Kamperschroer, rancher; Jennifer Boyer, FutureWest; Matt Johnson, ATKINS; Dan March, ATKINS; Lynda Saul, DEQ Wetlands; Jim Berkey, TNC; Lawrence Siroky, MT DNRC; Jim Capita, BVD County; Rick Hartz, BVD County; Garth Haugland, BVD County; Dean Peterson, rancher; Rick Larson, BSB County; Doug Finnicum, BSB County; Jim Olsen, FWP; Steve Parker, BHRF; Kris Inman, WCS; Heidi Kretser, WCS; Jow Willauer; Aaron Fiaschetti, DNRC; Roy Morris, GGTU; Mike Bias, BHRF; Alan Manas, Melrose; Ray Weaver, Rancher; Harold Peterson, Rancher; Mike Roberts, DNRC; Steve Story, DNRC

A card was passed for George Trischman's recovery.

Introduction

Attendees introduced themselves. April meeting minutes approved.

Precipitation & Snowpack Report - Mike Roberts, DNRC

The March report was positive, but conditions have changed. March and April were warmer than normal and in some cases record setting. Mid and low elevation snow is mostly gone. Bloody Dick SNOTEL has no snow. Dark Horse SNOTEL is 9% of average. There is a cause for concern for stream flows. The Big Hole and Red Rock watersheds have the lowest flow forecast statewide at 36% of average. In the short-term things are good. In the long-term, anticipate low flows beginning in June unless precipitation increases. Erin Towler, USGS, predicts Wisdom gage hitting low flow targets 40 days this season - this model will be compared with traditional reports. Conditions could improve with a cool, wet summer. Also, due to previous years moisture, reservoirs are full and soil moisture is high, and our restoration efforts in the upper Big Hole may help to reduce pressure on stream flows.

Presentation: Land Use Planning Mapping Update - ATKINS, Jen Boyer, Future West, Steve Story, DNRC

Power Point Presentation & Map Handouts. Report is available in draft form from ATKINS.

Big Hole Flood Discharge Hydro Analysis Report

This project was sought after the existing Channel Migration Zone Maps did not meet state standards. These maps will support regulations for activities that occur within regulatory floodplains. The regulatory floodplain must be adopted by counties in order to regulate floodplains, and therefore these maps are needed. Melrose to Dickie Bridge (34 miles) was studied in 1986, therefore that section did not need to be repeated. This project has two phases: 1. Hydrology of 100 year floodplain [complete], and 2. Mapping [complete Oct 2012]. The next step will be to adopt the maps. That process will begin

January/February 2013. The end of Phase 1 is presented today by ATKINS. This study included 116 miles of river. The analysis created flow estimates through the drainage at different flood stages. The estimates are based on drainage area, reach length, and historic flow data. The most valuable was 86 years of data at the Melrose site. They found 26 flow change locations.

Questions:

- Was the Pattengail Dam break included in the flood estimates? - *Ans.* No, the dam break was removed.
- One gage was omitted from the study due to unexplainable irregularities in the data. Which gage was it? - *Ans.* Notch bottom.

[Break]

Presentation: Upper Watershed Restoration Plan - Jen Titus, BHWC

PowerPoint Presentation

BHWC is contracted by Montana DEQ to complete two watershed restoration plans - one for the upper and one for the middle/lower river. This restoration plan includes the upper watershed from headwaters to Pintlar Creek. The plan is largely driven by recommendations made by the TMDL. In summary, the Upper Big Hole watershed is under several active plans whose goals are not necessarily to improve water quality, but the actions will likely have a positive impact on water quality. These plans are the CCAA, the USFS Forest Plan and the BLM Watershed Assessment. It has been the BHWC's method to support the CCAA program and other projects in their efforts in the Upper Big Hole. Overall, the greatest needs of the river are to decrease water temperature and increase stream flows and largely by improving riparian zones and irrigation infrastructure. Moreover, the partnerships and relationships between stakeholders are a critical part of watershed health and will also require attention to maintain and improve partnerships. The plan is in draft form and available for comment. DEQ will also review the plan. A final is expected in June 2012.

Reports & New Business

Directors Report: BHWC contract obligations were provided in table form. We currently have 26 open projects. Many of those are nearly complete. Donations continue to trickle in. Jen Boyer and Kevin are putting together a Foundation Tour for new and existing foundations - planning for July 2012.

The Wise River Watershed Tour is May 18, 2012. We are putting together a spring newsletter, expected June 2012.

Kevin announced that, due to staff changes, he has accepted a new position with MSU. His first day at MSU will be July 2 and he will remain with BHWC for the month of June to help with transition. The Steering Committee will meet in the near future to determine a plan for the future.

Project Updates:

Wildlife Committee: The range rider will begin in July and is funded by RAC funds.

Weed Committee: Ray Tillman has agreed to be the WWB Coordinator this year. WWB will be 9/8/12. Several spray days are scheduled. A list is available in hardcopy and on bhwc.org.

Land Use Planning: Incentive Program is considering a Conservation Co-Op Bank for investors to protect ecosystems. Landowners have product with value and are issued a share, therefore payment for their conservation practice. LUP is seeking funds to develop a business plan. Jen will host roundtable discussions throughout the watershed to determine threats, outputs and interest in June. She will buy dinner as an incentive to landowner involvement. Jen is also seeking a scoping meeting to determine who are the buyers. This is planned for the end of June.

New Business

- Bonneville Environmental Foundation (Robert Warren): Not approving new projects now, but Kevin and Robert will discuss BHWC tomorrow. Bonneville projects are funded for 10 years. Robert is planning a family trip to the Big Hole in June. He is based in Seattle.
- Rick Harz: Jim Magee provided the CCAA 5 year report, Harold Peterson provided BHWC information and Katie Tackett provided a Beaverhead Watershed Committee update at the last Planning Board meeting.
- Mike Bias - Bug News: Two previously undiscovered Mayflies were discovered in the Upper Big Hole in larval form. Next they will attempt to capture adult stages to finish the description.
- George Trischman, Twin Bridges Rancher and BHWC Board Member was bucked from his horse recently and was badly injured. He is now home recovering.
- The BHWC has four interested people for the Outfitter representative position on the BWHC board. Joe Willower of Twin Bridges/Stonefly Inn is present tonight. Other interests are Wade Fellin, Justin Hartman and Andrew Bennett.

Future Agendas

- June 20 (Wednesday) - BHWC Annual Potluck, 6pm, BHWC Monthly Meeting, 7pm Topic will be drought related.
- July 18 - pending drought conditions

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm