

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2013 - 7-9:00pm

Divide Grange

In Attendance

Jen Downing, BHWC; Bill Cain, Secretary; Pete Kamperschroer, Rancher; Liz Jones, Rancher; Ray Weaver, Rancher; Harold Peterson, Rancher; Garth Haugland, Beaverhead County; Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Dean Peterson, Rancher; Steve Armiger, BLM; Mike Bias, BHRF; Joe Willauer, Guide/Outfitter; Tom Welsch, Big Hole River Foundation; Jim Owens, Brainerd Foundation; Steve Hess, BSB; Jim Carpita, Beaverhead County; Tiffany Lyden, DNRC; Steve Story, DNRC; Mike Roberts, DNRC; Bill Garrison, Rancher; Jim Garrison, Rancher; Erik Kalsta, Rancher; Doug Clark, ADLC; Craig Fellin, Outfitter; Paul Cleary, Landowner; Sandy Cleary, Landowner; Elizabeth Childrey, Landowner, Bill Childrey, Landowner

Introduction & Snowpack Report

Attendees introduced themselves.

- Joe Willauer and his wife welcomed a baby girl last month.
- Bill Garrison is here tonight, and was the first chairman of the BHWC.
- Randy Smith's mother, Holley Smith, passed away last week. Holley was a conservation advocate for decades, most notable in her efforts to stop the Reichle Dam.

April minutes approved.

Big Hole snowpack report provided by Mike Roberts, DNRC.

- We had a dry spring and recent warm weather has increased stream flows. The Dark Horse SNOTEL site levels are below average and similar to 2007, the last year there was a river closure. We need cool weather and increased precipitation to improve conditions. The Wisdom gage is below the 160 cfs target, but the remaining gages remain above targets. CCAA members are implementing their site plans and water has been turned back. Many ditches turned on in the last week and fields are beginning to wet. Irrigators can expect requests to turn back water in June. Be prepared for a tough year, especially since this is the second year in a row of low precipitation. The 10 day forecast looks promising, with cool weather and some precipitation. FWP conducted the grayling spawning survey this month and results are good.

BHWC Updates, presented by Jen Downing

Part I: BHWC Drought Management Plan 2013: Presentation of the DMP Version 2013

- New, easy to read format.
- Section IV divided to create Section IV: Melrose Bridge to Notch Bottom and Section V: Notch Bottom to Big Hole River Confluence with the Jefferson River.
- New high water temperature triggers, including a hoot-owl fishing hours restriction.
- Water temperature measuring point in Section II moved from Mudd Creek bridge to Dickie bridge to coincide with the end point of Section II.
- Improved clarity in triggers and actions descriptions.
- New quick reference guide to triggers.

- DMP Amendments located in a separate document to reduce the length of the DMP.
- Points of contact updated
- River restrictions, closures, and re-openings better aligned with MFWP Statewide Drought Policy.

Part II: Big Hole River Trend Analysis: Presentation of the final report, results and implications:

- **The Study:** 17-years (1996 – 2012) of air & water temperatures and stream flows trends at Wisdom and Melrose. Study looked at 1) stream temperature versus air temperature, 2) Stream temperatures versus stream flow, 3) Stream temperature versus solar radiation. Results provide future recommendations. The project served as a water temperature “Check-Up” to identify gaps or needs. Our Questions were: 1) Can we see progress in improving water temperature? 2) Are we collecting the right information?
- **Conclusions**
 - *Water Temperature:* Wisdom warmer early in season, Melrose warmer later in season, each peak in late July.
 - *77F:* Last occurrence in Wisdom = 2007. Last occurrence in Melrose = 1998
 - *Thermally Critical Period:* (90% of hours > 70°F): June 25th to August 18th -- Wisdom. July 5th to August 18th -- Melrose. Period most common to both locations: July 1st and August 18th
 - *Stream Flow:* Flows moderate water temperature to a point, but solar radiation is also driving water temperature – more so than air temperature.
 - *Too Soon:* While trends show potential improvement, data limitations and length of time made it too soon to tell if we are without question improving water temperature.
- **Implications**
 - *Continue Current Restoration Strategies:* Initial trends show potential improvement.
 - *Shading:* Riparian and channel restoration critical to reduce water temperature by reducing solar radiation.
 - *Monitoring:* Establish long-term, complete monitoring network including water temperature, air temperature, flow and weather at all critical points.
 - *Tracking:* We need to keep better record of DMP use & river closure, restoration record, monitoring record

Part III: Middle-Lower Big Hole Watershed Restoration Plan: Presentation of the completion of the WRP, in draft and under DEQ review.

- **Greatest Issue:** High water temperature & high sediment loads.
 - Most common problems are tied to poor riparian and channel condition.
- **Primary Focus:** Reduce Water Temperature, Increase Stream Flow
 - *Secondary Focus:* Reduce Sediment and Nutrient inputs.
 - *Tertiary Focus:* Wildlife & Weeds
- **Primary Methods:**
 - Improve Stream/River function by increasing riparian vegetation and improving channel shape.
 - Improve irrigation infrastructure
 - Promote water storage via wetlands.
 - Monitor watershed variables tied to primary focus.
 - Promote education, involvement and partnership in watershed restoration and conservation.

Reports

Directors Report:

- *Lower Big Hole Sub-Committee:* The April meeting was held in Twin Bridges and focused on the issues in the Lower Big Hole. Attendees agreed that a Lower Big Hole Sub-Committee was warranted:

- Focus Area: Glen to Mouth
- Sub-Committee Members: Landowners, counties, agency representatives, organizations interested in region.
- Goal: To work together to determine solutions and funding sources for problems plaguing the area, including dewatering, high water temperatures, low fish populations, bank erosion, weed infestation, infrastructure degradation, irrigation, river migration, etc. Solutions should be reviewed on a landscape scale, rather than addressing individual problems. Does not address immediate concerns.

- *Projects:*

- Focus remains on closing DEQ contracts
- Final Watershed Restoration Plan
- Final Lower Wise River Report
- Newsletter
- Watershed Tour (or PR piece)
- French Gulch
- WCS Proposal for Swamp Creek not accepted
- RAC 2013 (Range Rider Project) funding in question.

- *News:*

- Tom Hinz, Montana Wetlands Legacy Partnership retires.
- BHWC signs on to Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition vision.
- BHWC part of "Large Landscape Conservation in the West"
- BHWC 990 complete

- *Dates:*

- May 22: Range Seminar - Dillon
- May 30: Montana Watershed Coordination Council awards CCAA - Helena
- June 18 – 19 – 20: Floodplain Map Public Meetings
 - June 19 Floodplain Map Meeting replaces BWHC meeting.
- June 22: "Tip the Big Hole"

Steering Committee - N/A

Wildlife Committee - Dean Peterson: Wildlife Committee is interested in hosting a BHWC meeting with Montana FWP Wildlife Biologists. The state legislature has removed funding for the moose study. Dean Peterson and Jim Hagenbarth spoke to legislatures and asked the project be re-funded, since funds for that project were earned from Moose tags.

- The Carcass Removal seminar by WCS was held earlier today. Erik Kalsta and Jim Owens attended and reported the event was well attended. The compost piles reduced to a surprisingly small amount and both the sight and smell were tolerable. This program helps to reduce subsidizing predators. Beaverhead County landfill site may be a prime location for a carcass compost site due to the large size, and the composted material could be used a cap material at the landfill. MDOT supports the program. Garth pointed out that Harold Peterson is the chair of the solid waste committee for Beaverhead County.

Weed Committee - N/A

Land Use Planning Committee - Jen Boyer, Future West, Steve Story, DNRC and Tiffany Lyden, DNRC

1. *Incentive Program*: Jen Boyer would like to pursue funding to pilot the incentive program through a federal program that runs through DNRC. Up to \$300,000 may be available and awards are made February 2014. Both riparian and uplands conservation would qualify.

- Jen will attend a 10 day marketing program called PERC June 23 to develop the incentive program.

2. *Big Hole River Floodplain Map State Adoption Meetings Preparation*: Steve Story completed the technical review of the floodplain maps and ATKINS is making final adjustments in preparation for state adoption this summer. Public notice of the process will begin May 20, 2013. This includes press releases, legal notices, letters, etc. Jen Boyer is willing to meet with individuals to answer questions about the maps. This process will be for state adoption of the floodplain maps only. County adoption will follow at a later date.

- Meetings will be: June 18, 6pm in Wisdom, June 19, 6pm in Divide Grange and June 20, 6pm at Twin Bridges High School. Landowners of parcels in the floodplain will receive personal letters. Help support this effort by inviting friends to the public meetings, attend the meetings.

Technical Issues

- Wisdom Area: Increased accuracy with an on the ground survey of the Wisdom area was completed after the approximate survey showed much of the town in the floodplain. The new survey increased confidence and reduced the number of parcels included in the floodplain.
- Approximately 600 parcels are included in the floodplain study. This includes parcels that are in public ownership. Note that one landowner may have several parcels.

What happens if you are in the floodplain?

- State identifies land as in the 100 year flood risk area.
- Development standards for new or changed construction, including state/FEMA standards. Permits are issued to satisfy standard.
- No mandatory flood insurance until FEMA adopts. After FEMA adoption, insurance is required if there is a federally backed loan on the property.
- Landowners may submit accurate surveys of their land to add to the approximate mapping to refine the mapping. Landowners can protest inclusion with a ground survey.

Big picture: The reason for the mapping is to ensure human health and safety and to ensure appropriate river development.

New Business - N/A

Future Agendas

- June 19, 2013: 6pm: Floodplain Map Adoption Public Meeting (the group agreed this will replace the standard monthly meeting) held at the Divide Grange. **Annual Potluck will be postponed to a later month.**

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9:20pm