

Big Hole



Watershed Committee

Big Hole Watershed Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2011 ~ 6:00 pm

Divide Grange Hall

In Attendance

Dean Peterson, rancher; Ray Weaver, rancher; Liz Jones, rancher; Pete Kamperschroer, rancher; Jim Hagenbarth, Co-Chair, rancher; Harold Peterson, rancher; Kevin Brown, BHWC; Scott Reynolds, GGTU; Steve Parker, BHRF; Jeanne Caddy, landowner; Rick Hartz, Beaverhead County; Bill Cain, Secretary, conservation; Randy Smith, Chair, rancher; Hans Humbert, rancher; Jen Titus, BHWC; Tanya Rosen, WCS; Heidi Kietser WCS; Jim Owens, Brainerd Foundation; Jennifer Boyer, Future West; Jami Murdoch, rancher; Mike Bias, BHRF; Michael Taylor, AECOM; Mary Gilliland, AECOM; Corey Meier, BLM-Butte; Shane Aimei, BLM-Dillon; George Trischman, rancher; Kyle Tackett, NRCS; Cindy Ashcraft, rancher; Al Lefor, outfitter; Mark Kambich, rancher; Roy Morris.

Introduction / Review of Minutes (6:15pm)

Attendees introduced themselves. The October 2011 minutes were approved with no changes.

Precipitation / Snowpack Report

No precipitation or snowpack news to report.

Presentation: Willow Browse Study, Emma Cayer, FWP

PowerPoint presentation of study & results.

Questions/Comments

- Are you still raising seedlings? - There is one more round in the greenhouse to be used. No additional seedlings are planned. The program can be restarted if a special project warrants use of seedlings. Instead, restoration will rely more on natural regeneration.
- One landowner commented that his seedlings have done well. The thistle was present in the first two years, but is gone now.
- When were sites grazed with cattle? - The cattle grazing season was different at each site.
- Is the ability for willows to provide bank stabilization species dependent? - No evidence of this so far, no.
- How many willow species are present in the upper Big Hole? - At minimum 8 to 9, maybe more.
- If cattle grazing impact on browse was dependent on management, what management was used? - Grazing was different at each site, but the difference in impact depended on season/time of year and density. In order to manage for willow growth, each grazing management plan needs to be site specific to be successful.

Committee Reports

Director's Report (*Kevin Brown*)

- Jim Owens visited from the Brainerd Foundation - thank you for the support.
- Jen Titus provided an update on the Wise River Diversion and Monitoring Project – consists of 2 components (monitoring to gain better water quality, quantity and fisheries data and the combination of 5 ditches into 1). Groundwater monitoring will continue through winter. Surface water monitoring will start again in spring. The design plans and cost are nearly complete. Project implementation expected in March 2012. Prep work is occurring now.
- 2010 Annual Report is complete and was passed out at the meeting.
- The Annual Appeal letters are complete. The board appeal was sent recently. The general membership appeal will go out next. Appeals will go out as paper and electronic. BHWC staff will track response rate of both and determine the best way to reach donors.
- BHWC hats are offered as a premium for donations >\$100. The four styles were present at the meeting.
- BHWC staff met with Vauthier-Ferguson regarding marketing, branding, and graphic support for the BHWC. They will put together a proposal after reviewing our materials.

Land Use Planning Committee (LUP), Jen Boyer, FutureWest

- Held a meeting 11/16/2011, 4pm. Attendees addressed issues with both the incentive program and floodplain mapping
- Incentive Program: 1. LUP plans to use examples of similar programs nationwide to build this program. Will invite players of other groups to provide a workshop on how their programs work and their recommendations. 2. What markets are available for an incentive program? LUP will attempt to answer this using a market analysis. LUP requested the BHWC's support to seek funding for the market analysis. Answer, BHWC supports this request.
- Floodplain Management: LUP working with DNRC to update the channel migration zone mapping. At last meeting, LUP had requested \$5000 for this effort from four counties and the BHWC to cost share the remaining balance in addition to funds provided by DNRC and DEQ. To date all parties have committed funds except Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. Jen is working toward a response from this county. The LUP determined it best for FutureWest to administer the mapping effort rather than the state to assure quick movement and shelter the funds from administrative fees. The Scope of Work will be developed in the next week and out for bid in December. The result will be legally defensible floodplain maps.
- Question: If Anaconda Deer Lodge does not commit funds, then what happens? Ans: Not sure, but other groups may have to shoulder more of the costs.

Wildlife/Wolf Working Group (*Dean Peterson & Jim Hagenbarth*)

- FWP continues brucellosis monitoring in south pioneers and Dice creek.
- Range rider will continue in 2012.
- Meeting will be held next week to discuss wolf pack numbers and source of risk management/sources available to minimize risk.
- Comments:
 - Tanya Rosen, WCS has a wolf report that will be available next week.
 - Guard Dogs as wolf deterrence: Dogs are used in other areas nationwide. Little interest in use locally. It is good to explore all options for deterrence measures. The Hamilton Ranch (George Trischman) commented that they have been working with a researcher from Utah on the use of guard dogs. They may give this a trial run in 2012. Tanya (WCS) suggested visiting a ranch that used guard dogs or invite that ranch to visit with BHWC. While dogs can be helpful deterrence,

they also bring their own challenges, i.e. feed, train, house, care, and mitigate danger with housing dangerous dogs.

Weeds (*Mark Kambich & Kevin Brown*)

- Weed Committee met last week to discuss final outcome of WWB2011 and plan for 2012.
- The committee will draft a proposal for the BHWC regarding the future of the WWB
- Three goals were identified for 2012 season: 1. Weed Monitoring, 2. Fight Five Campaign, 3. Wise River Oxeye Daisy Test Sites.

New Business

- Divide Diversion Dam Dangerous Passage: (*Al Lafor, Great Divide Outfitters*) Al was on the advisory committee for the dam development. He offered photos of the pass through. Many floaters find the dam difficult to pass, especially at flows of 3,000-5,000cfs, and there have been many accidents in 2011. In addition, since the dam is now passable, floater traffic attempting the dam has increased. Al floated the dam engineers through for a floaters perspective. Al recommends pursuance of a boat ramp at the pump house to be used as a portage for floaters. BHWC members also suggested overhead guides to identify channel. Rocks in the pass through are also hazards and should be removed. FWP contacted Al regarding the danger level. Al commented that the question is not if someone could be killed in the dam, but when. This was continuance of a discussion that occurred at the September 2011 BHWC meeting with HKM.
 - Scott Reynolds, acting on his own behalf, sent a complaint to the Mile High Conservation District August 2011 that the Divide Dam was in violation of the stream access law - a man made structure was impeding safe boat traffic. Scott reports that the CD has 90 days to work with FWP and the county on a solution. If no solution, the complaint goes to a three person arbitration. If still no compromise, then the complaint goes to court. The complaint is nearing its 90days on the first phase.
 - Result: BHWC supports safe river use and helped to develop the river recreation plan, and therefore has a role in this issue. The BWHC should voice its concern. Kevin will draft a letter addressed to the Mile High Conservation District and copied to FWP and Butte-Silver Bow County in support of safe portage and boat passage, and to include the issue of safety with the rocks and possible signage for the float lane. The letter will be reviewed by the Steering Committee, followed by the BHWC committee before being sent. Likely to occur by e-mail since the next meeting will not be until January 2011.
- Downed Cottonwood Tree Danger (*Jim Hagenbarth*) Jim met with Jim Olsen, FWP and Tom Miller, RE Miller recently to discuss the safety on impact concerns arising from downed trees in the river as the result of high flows this spring. Two trees down early this spring at the notch posed significant risk to floaters. Five additional trees were identified after that. Jim advocates early identification of these trees to mitigate safety risk and to reduce costs of cleanup prior to the tree causing significant river changes that in turn cause other problems with bridges and irrigation, etc. A 310 permit is required for removal.
 - Comment: What about the importance of Large Woody Debris? Perhaps there is a way to move the trees to position them to act as Large Woody Debris and/or bank armoring without complete removal? Trees have been used to repair gullyng by redirecting flows under a short time scale.

- BLM Butte Field Office Update: (Corey Meier) -
 - Watershed Assessments: The Butte office recently changed over to a watershed districting approach, similar to what is used by the Dillon field office. They are completing watershed assessments, identifying needs, and will revisit watersheds on 10 year cycles. The current watershed under review is the Big Hole North - This includes the region from Divide to Wise River North of Highway 43. The review is drafted now and will be available in January. BLM plans to hold a public meeting January 25, 2012 in Wise River to present results and gather public comment.
 - Maiden Rock Mine Reclamation: The mine reclamation is complete and the area is reseeded. The project was as dangerous as planners expected. The total cost was \$750,000 - slightly under budget.
 - Comment: What is the long-term plan for weed treatment on the access road? The access road was built in the RR right of way. The RR granted the BLM permission to access for monitoring and treatment long-term. The BLM has a weed treatment program in place. In addition, since the road is in the RR right of way, the weeds can also be treated by RR right of way weed treatment plans. Mark Kambich noted that the Weed Committee a weed treatment plan in place for the Maiden Rock area including paid contractors to treat the area.

Future Agendas

- December – No Meeting
- January 18th – BLM to present the results of the Big Hole North Watershed Assessment in anticipation of the Wise River Public Meeting to be held the following week.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.