

**MINUTES**  
**UPPER NIOBRARA RIVER COMPACT**  
SPRING TECHNICAL MEETING

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR)  
Wyoming State Engineer's Office (WSEO)  
Technical Group

**April 10, 2024**

3:30 p.m. Mountain Time/4:30 p.m. Central Time  
Panhandle Research and Extension Center  
4502 Ave I, Scottsbluff, NE

Online Option Available

**In attendance**

- Tom Riley – Director, NeDNR
- Ryan Kelly – Coordinator, NeDNR
- Andy Pedley – Coordinator, NeDNR
- Jim Ostdiek – Environmental Supervisor, NeDNR
- Trevor Massey – Environmental Specialist, NeDNR
- Stefan Remund – Environmental Specialist, NeDNR
- Brandon Gebhart - Wyoming State Engineer
- Cory Rinehart – Superintendent, WSEO
- Michelle Hubbard – Basin Coordinator, WSEO
- Wray Lovitt – Hydrographer, WSEO
- Bill Wilson – Rancher

## Updates

### Nebraska

- Update and Current Conditions (Jim Ostdiek)
  - 19.96% of the state was covered by some degree of drought - compared to 98.32% the previous year.
  - No administration had occurred on the Niobrara River since October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.
  - Precipitation was about one half of an inch lower than the average since October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.
  - Box Butte Reservoir was at 7,306 AF on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, 1,233 AF higher than the previous year.
  - At the time of the meeting, Box Butte Reservoir was at 18,581 AF, 5,372 higher than the previous year.
  - Niobrara River at the Wyoming-Nebraska state line was starting to see some runoff with the warmer temperatures. Current flow was around 11 cfs.
- NRD Activities (Andy Pedley)
  - Upper Niobrara-White NRD had entered into a contract to update their groundwater model. NeDNR was working with the NRD to update their Integrated Management Plan (IMP), expanding the plan to the entire district. The changes to NRD rules resulting from the IMP update were expected to be minor.
- NPS and USGS Niobrara National Scenic River Hydrogeologic Study and Modeling (Andy Pedley)
  - NeDNR and USGS were working on a groundwater model. All of the USGS documentation was expected to be finished by the end of the year.

### Wyoming

- Update and Current Conditions (Wray Lovitt)
  - The Wyoming portion of the Niobrara Basin had recently received about 18-24 inches of snow. The flows at the state line had increased.
  - More precipitation was expected in the coming weeks, making for a good year in terms of moisture.
- Update of applications in the basin (Michelle Hubbard)
  - Since the last meeting, three stock/domestic wells had been permitted.
  - One Irrigation/stock well and one Irrigation well had been approved.

## **Other Topics**

- No other topics.

## **Public Comment**

- Bill Wilson asked if the holder of a surface water right had to be a Nebraska resident. Tom Riley responded he did not believe so, but he would check. Mr. Riley assured Mr. Wilson that the laws of the State were adequate to protect the waters of the State from interstate transfers which were not in the interest of Nebraska.

## **Schedule Fall Annual Niobrara River Compact Meeting**

- Meeting set for Nov 14<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm in Torrington, WY

## **Adjourn**