

# Niobrara Compact Technical Group

## Meeting Notes

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR)

Wyoming State Engineer's Office (WSEO)

2:00 p.m. Central Time / 1:00 p.m. Mountain Time

April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Conference Call – GoTo Meeting

### 1. Introductions

|                |       |                     |        |
|----------------|-------|---------------------|--------|
| Tom Hayden     | NeDNR | Wray Lovitt         | WSEO   |
| Tim Freed      | NeDNR | Brian Pugsley       | WSEO   |
| Mahesh Pun     | NeDNR | Charlie Ferrantelli | WSEO   |
| Melissa Mosier | NeDNR | Jeff Cowley         | WSEO   |
| Carrie Wiese   | NeDNR | John Harju          | WSEO   |
| Steve Wolff    | WSEO  | Lynn Webster        | UNWNRD |
|                |       | Bill Wilson         | Public |

### 2. Nebraska Update

#### a. Nebraska Report

Tom Hayden reported that recent measurements of the Niobrara River include approximately 5 cfs near the state line, 15 cfs at 33 Ranch, and 20 cfs at Agate. Overall, streamflow is good for early spring. Box Butte Reservoir is at about 22,000 acre-feet. In fall 2017 the Bureau of Reclamation plans to drain Box Butte to about 5,000 acre-feet (dead storage) in order to make repairs to the toe drains. The Bureau will be running water in May and construction will need to be completed in December.

#### b. NRD activities

Tim Freed reported that basin-wide and individual NRD IMP activities in the Basin are currently on hold as partners continue to discuss implications of a potential transfer of the Spencer hydropower right. NRD IMP activities are expected to begin again in 2018. Basin-wide planning will be accomplished through close coordination of the individual NRD IMPs, rather than through an official basin-wide planning process. In the meantime, NeDNR and UNWNRD have been working with UNL's Conservation and Survey Division on a review of the "aquifer absent" areas within UNWNRD's portion of the Basin.

#### c. Update Regarding Niobrara Basin WaterSMART Report

Mahesh Pun reported that all technical work by NeDNR and the Bureau of Reclamation for the WaterSMART report is complete, but publication of the report has been delayed by the review process. Pun met with a representative of the Bureau in early April 2017

and was informed that an estimated publication date will be provided once the Bureau in Washington D.C. receives an update on the report.

**Q.** Jeff Cowley asked what type of WaterSMART grant provided the funding for this project.

**A.** NeDNR will review the WaterSMART grant and report back to WSEO.

**d. Conjunctive Water Management Model**

Lynn Webster reported that UNWNRD is working through planning for scenario runs in order to better ensure that the results address the questions they have about potential management actions.

**3. Wyoming Update**

**a. Wyoming Report**

Wray Lovitt reported that Niobrara streamflow on the Wyoming side is relatively low, including tributary flow. Wyoming's last measurement near the state line was 3.8 cfs.

**Q.** Pun asked what a normal measurement for this time of year would be.

**A.** Lovitt responded that a measurement of between 4 and 5 cfs would be a better measurement to see at that location at this time of year.

**b. Wells Report**

Wyoming provided a spreadsheet of well permits issued since spring 2016. Only two permits were issued: one for domestic use and one temporary permit issued to WDOT for construction.

**Q.** Freed asked if new gas and oil development in Wyoming has sparked increased applications for permits.

**A.** In some parts of Wyoming this has been the case, but not in the Niobrara Basin.

**c. Other Topics**

Measurements at the state line gage have become difficult to make due to silt accumulating in the culvert. Options include cleaning the corrugated pipe out or taking measurements at a different location. Parties will discuss further.

**4. Topics for next Niobrara Compact Meeting**

- Update on any alternative scenarios and conjunctive management modeling associated with the Upper Niobrara White Model.
- Update on final publication of the WaterSMART report.

The fall Niobrara Compact meeting will be held on November 7, 2017, at 3:00 p.m. (MT) in Torrington, WY.