

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

10:00 a.m. Central Time / 9:00 a.m. Mountain Time  
April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Conference Call – GoTo Meeting

**Agenda Items:**

**1. Introductions**

Carol Flaute	NDNR	John Harju	WSEO
Tom Hayden	NDNR	Wray Lovitt	WSEO
Tim Freed	NDNR	Sue Lowry	WSEO
Mahesh Pun	NDNR	Beth Ross	WSEO
Jim Ostdiek	NDNR	Brian Pugsley	WSEO

**2. Updates**

**a. Niobrara Basin WaterSMART Grant**

Mahesh Pun provided an overview of the climate variability results of two hydrologic models under the WaterSMART grant in collaboration with the Bureau of Reclamation. These models evaluate the impacts of climate variability on water resources availability in the basin. The Upper Niobrara-White groundwater model – also referred to as an integrated or conjunctive water management model – examines the hydrologic impacts of climate conditions and multiple management scenarios for the Upper Niobrara Basin. The Central Nebraska groundwater model examines the impacts for the Middle and Lower Niobrara basins. Both models utilize historically calibrated baseline data to explore baseline flow and groundwater level changes subject to three different climate variability scenarios (more precipitation, lower precipitation and higher temperatures, and central tendency conditions). They also allow for the exploration of flows under various demand scenarios. The NDNR modeling team is working with NRCS to perform this analysis, gathering more data and improve

model calibration. Climate variability scenario results will be ready for publication in July or August.

**b. Nebraska updates**

**i. General conditions (Tom Hayden)**

Tom Hayden reported that more water rights are currently being regulated than in the past due to a change in administration as a result of the Spencer Power House call on the river during 2014. Peak state line flow reached 85 cfs in 2014. A new monitoring site has been established between the state line and Agate (titled “Niobrara River at 33 Ranch”). As of April 10<sup>th</sup>, Van Tassel Creek reached 95 percent of average flow to the state line. Box Butte Reservoir was at a higher elevation than the last two years as of April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (39,096 AF). The higher conditions are on account of storage carryover from 2014.

**ii. NRD activities (Tim Freed)**

Tim Freed indicated that the NDNR is currently participating in basin-wide planning in collaboration with the Upper Niobrara, Middle Niobrara, Lower Niobrara, Upper Loup and Upper Elkhorn Natural Resource Districts.

**c. Wyoming updates**

**i. General conditions (Brian Pugsley)**

Brian Pugsley reported on low snowpack conditions within the state; therefore, streamflows in Wyoming are not expected to be exceptional unless spring storms ensue. Wray Lovitt confirmed dry conditions throughout the basin, however, appropriators continued to take advantage of groundwater and surface water availability. The state line gage read at 3.7 cfs as of April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**ii. New groundwater permits (John Harju)**

John Harju provided an update on the permits approved in the Wyoming portion of the Niobrara River Basin since the spring 2014 Niobrara

technical group meeting. The majority of the new approved permits are for domestic and stock wells; the town of Lusk applied for a miscellaneous use permit and one irrigation permit was granted for 20 acres. State line monitoring well data records are no longer available; Tom Hayden and Brian Pugsley are looking into the status of the University of Nebraska's operation of the gage.

**iii. Governor's Water Strategy (Sue Lowry)**

Sue Lowry provided a brief update on the 2015 Governor's Water Strategy that was released in January. This report outlines ten initiatives prioritizing water management, development, protection, conservation and restoration throughout the state. The "Ten in Ten" initiative sets the goal of moving forward with 10 high priority projects statewide in the next 10 years and it is designed to build on existing programs, efforts and infrastructure. The State Engineer's Office is hoping to tie several budget requests to water management initiatives outlined in the document such as stream gaging improvements and data collection. Additionally, the Wyoming Water Development Commission will allocate money to planning, studies, and construction projects. An electronic copy of the Strategy can be found at <http://water.wyo.gov>.

**3. Details for the next Niobrara River Compact meeting**

The fall 2015 Niobrara Compact meeting date was set for the afternoon of October 22<sup>nd</sup> to coincide with the North Platte Decree Committee meeting; location is set for the Branding Room at the Goshen County Fairgrounds in Torrington. Wyoming will be responsible for preparing the agenda and taking notes at that meeting.

**4. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m. Central Time / 10:20 a.m. Mountain Time.

**Attachments:**

NDNR Presentation: WaterSMART model (Mahesh Pun)

WSEO Spreadsheet: New Wyoming groundwater permits issued since April 2014