

UPPER NIOBRARA RIVER COMPACT

SPRING TECHNICAL MEETING MEETING MINUTES

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

April 24, 2019

10:00 a.m. Central Time / 9:00 a.m. Mountain Time
Conference Call – Zoom Meeting

1. Introductions

Tom Hayden, NeDNR

Brian Pugsley, WSEO

Carrie Wiese, NeDNR

Jeff Cowley, WSEO

Melissa Mosier, NeDNR

Wray Lovitt, WSEO

Sarah Nevison, NeDNR

John Harju, WSEO

Charlie Ferrantelli, WSEO

Rick Deuell, WSEO

2. Updates

a. Nebraska

i. Update and Current Conditions

Tom Hayden reported there was lots of snow in late spring and frozen ground, when the snow melted it resulted in runoff and high flows in March and April, not nearly as bad as eastern Nebraska. Box Butte Reservoir was drained last year, and then filled to about 21,000 acre-feet during high flows.

Measurements at the stateline gage averaged 8.6 cfs, with a high of 22 cfs. Agate gage averaged 18 cfs. Above Box Butte Reservoir gage, from March 13 – end of March, over 200 cfs for a number of days. Monitoring of a groundwater well produced some improvement since last year. Overall, likely more water in the river all year long now; the ground is saturated but farmers will likely be able to plant crops; grass looks good.

Question of when the 22 cfs reading was recorded: March 26, 2019.

Question clarifying a 145 cfs measurement: confirmed the measurement but could be incorrect due to the amount of water running through.

ii. NRD Activities

Carrie Wiese reported that Upper Niobrara White NRD has requested to start a Voluntary Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the portion of their NRD that is not Fully Appropriated. They have not held any stakeholder meetings yet. Middle Niobrara NRD held an IMP stakeholder meeting in November 2018; the next will be in July 2019. There has been discussion regarding basin-wide strategic management with Upper Niobrara White, Middle Niobrara, Lower

Niobrara, Upper Loup, and Upper Elkhorn NRDs. The next meeting will be in June 2019. This basin-wide discussion intends to help develop remaining IMPs or update existing IMPs and strategically manage the basin.

iii. NPS and USGS Niobrara National Scenic River Hydrogeologic Study and Modeling

Carrie Wiese reported that NeDNR reached out to the National Park Service (NPS) prior to the government shutdown (December 2018 – January 2019) about partnering on model development moving forward. NPS is doing a modeling study with the USGS, and NeDNR is also developing a model for the Niobrara River Basin. NeDNR and NPS will meet next week for an update regarding potential partnership on model development.

b. Wyoming

i. Update and Current Conditions

Brian Puglsey turned it over to Wray Lovitt for the update. Wray stated that they experienced similar conditions to what Tom reported for Nebraska. Wyoming saw lots of runoff from various drainages, specifically Van Tassell and Duck Creek, resulting in about one week of solid high flows. The flooding cleared out cattails at stateline, might help future measurements.

ii. Update of Applications in the Basin

John Harju provided a spreadsheet (*Attachment 1*) of approved groundwater well permits since spring 2018. He mentioned the Wyoming State Engineers Office received a permit for a new monitoring well; the Town of Lusk received a permit for a municipal well; and WSEO approved one new irrigation well permit.

c. Other Topics

None.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Schedule Fall Annual Niobrara River Compact Meeting

Wednesday, October 23, 2019 at the University of Nebraska Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, NE, in late morning (time TBD), before the NPDC Meeting which is scheduled on the same day at the same location.

a. Topics for the Next Meeting

None at this time.

5. Adjourn

At 10:27 a.m. Central / 9:27 a.m. Mountain.