

Laramie County Control Area Steering Committee

Meeting Summary

February 2, 2015

Herschler Building, Cheyenne, WY

Draft for Review

Approved

Participants:

Bill Bonham, *Laramie County Stock Growers*

Randy Bruns, *Econ Development*

Jim Cochran, *LC Conservation District*

Bill Edwards, *Southeast Wyoming Builders Association*

Dennis Ellis, *Industry*

Dan Frank, *Laramie County Stock Growers*

Greg Gross, *Ag/Irrigators*

Kristi Hansen, *University of Wyoming*

Jim Hastings, *Alternate*

Gary Hickman, *Cheyenne/Laramie County Health*

Scott Horgen, *Industry*

Brenda Johnson, *Alternate*

Judy Johnstone, *Small municipalities*

Rick Kaysen, *City of Cheyenne*

Jim Lerwick, *Ag/Irrigators*

Brian Lovett, *LC Conservation District*

Leslie Mead, *South Cheyenne Community Development Association*

Max Minnick, *Cheyenne Board of Realtors*

Jim Murphy, *Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities*

Kate Noble, *Industry*

Joe Patterson, *Southeast Wyoming Builders Association*

Bonnie Reider, *South Cheyenne Community Development Association*

Bill Shain, *Small municipalities*

Dale Steenbergen, *Econ Development*

Lars Story, *Industry*

Mike Sullivan, *City of Cheyenne*

Lisa Tabke, *Cheyenne Board of Realtors*

Tom Taylor, *Private Property Owner*

Troy Thompson, *Laramie County*

Commissioners

Tim Wilson, *Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities*

Scott Zimmerman, *Rocky Mountain Farmers Union*

Facilitators and Consultants:

Steve Smutko, *UW Ruckelshaus Institute*

Shannon Glendenning, *UW Ruckelshaus Institute*

Bern Hinckley, *Hinckley Consulting*

Agenda:

1. Welcome; Steering Committee member introductions; Agenda review & approval; Announcements
2. Review and Adoption of the 1/19/2015 meeting summary
3. Discussion of additional meeting times
4. Steering Committee interests
5. Review and Discussion of options starting with the irrigators' proposal

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Meeting Summary Draft 1/19/2015

Presentations:

- Mark Stacy and Chris Lindstone, *Lindstone and Associates*

Action Items Completed:

2/2/2015 Agenda approved

1/19/2014 Meeting summary adopted

Summary:

1. Welcome; Steering Committee member introductions; Agenda review & approval; Announcements

Steve Smutko opened the meeting, steering committee members introduced themselves.

The agenda was reviewed and approved

Announcements were about the technical reports and materials on the committee website.

2. Review and Adoption of the 1/19/2015 meeting summary

Meeting summary reviewed approved

3. Discussion of additional meeting times

The frequency and length of meetings was discussed. The time and length of the meetings, every other Monday, will be changed to 5:30-8:30.

4. Steering Committee interests

Steve Smutko led the committee in an activity to share their interests. Interests are a way to evaluate the proposals put before the committee. Committee members were asked to prepare 3-5 interest statements, consisting of a verb and an object.

5. Review and Discussion of options starting with the irrigators' proposal

Greg Gross introduced Lindstone Associates, Mark Stacy and Chris Lindstone. He discussed the background of the proposal. The proposal was developed by bringing together a group of irrigators in the eastern part of Laramie County. The group reached out to the Laramie Conservation District, the NRCS, and the State Engineer's Office. The plan was presented to the SEO at a public hearing. The group of irrigators brought the proposal to the County Commissioners, ultimately leading to the Steering Committee.

Mark Stacy and Chris Lindstone presented a proposed plan.

They discussed that the intent of the plan was to be inclusive of all water users in the area. The overall concept is an adaptive concept, a market based plan. The main points of the

- Redefine control area boundaries
- Establish overall use reduction plan
- Market based proposal
- Establish a water management council
- Increase well spacing requirements

The table with calculations for fees and costs was handed out. Lines 1-13 are the assumptions of calculations. Lines 14-23 are calculations for fees assessed one time to new users. 24-35 describes an annual fee assessed to existing users. 36-43 show revenue generated and impacts from proposed plan. Lines 44 on, considers the impacts of the proposed plans based on matching funds from the state of federal funding sources.

The meeting was opened up to questions for clarification

Q= Question R= Response C= Comment

Q: What exactly does retirement mean in the plan?

R: the water use is gone in perpetuity

Q: I'm concerned about municipal wells, is that an annual fee being proposed?

R: yes, see row 29, it is a \$15/acre-foot fee

Q: In regards to the proposed water management council, would it have or need a taxing authority? The Nebraska Natural Resource Districts are powerful. Could this proposed committee/council cut usage?

R: The taxing status was considered. It could be set up that the water management council could oversee a taxing entity. This idea can be developed more.

Q: I have a question about the viability. Are the water rights that would be offered for sale, actually be worth anything if they were acquired and retired?

R: You would have to ensure that the program was buying viable water rights. The management council would have to research actual usages being retired to make a difference in water use reduction goals

C: Not every part of Laramie County is declining at the same rate. There may be wells where buying them makes the biggest impact to the reduction goals, compared to possibly cheaper wells, that don't contribute to a significant reduction in use. When a well is taken out of production, the other people on wells around them all benefit.

Q: There are about 8,000 domestic wells in Laramie county. With this plan, will the county commissioners have to pass a tax of \$20/year? And then based on the numbers, the irrigators are going to pay about 50% of the fees, but in the AMEC report it says that irrigators use 85% of the water in the control area.

R: in the development of the numbers, we also looked at the economic impacts that agriculture and irrigation have on local economies and communities. These numbers can change.

C: With the retirement and changes in use, we're looking to move water from a lower use to a higher use.

Q: Page 3, #6 of the proposal describes a water management council. What is it exactly? How is it created? Is it a legislative action? Does the SEO do it?

R: The design is not totally flushed out. There are constraints, and this committee needs to develop a committee that considers the constraints put in place by legislation on this committee. The conservation district did say that they would be willing to handle accounts.

Q: If this is based on controlling water, why are we expanding the control area?

R: By expanding the control area, we saw it as a way to make administration easier. We looked at the boundaries geologically, not politically.

Q: The concept is to redraw the control area to reflect the hydrology, but the plan is uniform across the country. In the plan, I don't see any management differences based on hydrogeology?

R: A consideration we had was to make the fees uniform across the area, so that everyone can contribute equally across uses and users. The fees are designed to be distributed equally across everyone, and then the Water Management Council would then use the hydrogeology to make management decisions on where to buy out water rights and such.

Q: Are people really willing to retire their water rights?

R: There are opportunities. Crop prices are down, people are wanting to retire. It would have to be an active well to be retired.

Q: Does this plan have a built-in sunset time?

R: It does not now, but that would depend on the success of strategic purchases of water rights and whatever the group decides to have as their goal for water use reductions.

Q: Do we have an idea of how many wells and their locations need to be bought out to stabilize the aquifer, or stop declines?

R: There needs to be a process developed based on locations and spacing before a well is bought.

Q: How do we know that we're actually making progress and buying the right wells? To me, it is metering.

R: Metering can be expensive. We have pump test data we can use, we have electricity usage for wells, there are monitoring wells that can be used.

Q: There are other considerations beyond buying out a water right. There is also the cost getting the water onto the ground, including pipes and center pivots. How much does it cost for a new center pivot?

R: Somewhere between \$80,000-85,000 to build a new circle.

C: Conservation doesn't always mean leaving the water in the ground, according to federal agencies. It means using the water better. People will change crops and practices to use the same amount of water better than before.

C: The mayor of Pine Bluffs said that the irrigators' plan meets his and his community's interests.

Steve Smutko concluded that this is one option that has been developed. There might be parts of the proposal that work for most people. For the next meeting think about the components of the plan that you like, what you want to change. For those who are thinking about other options, we can get them on the table, they don't have to be fully formed.

6. Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting

Date: 2/16/2015 5:30-8:30

Location: Herschler Building, Room B63, 122 West 25th Street, Cheyenne, WY