

# Laramie County Control Area Steering Committee

## Meeting Summary

June 1, 2015

Herschler Building, Cheyenne, WY

Draft for Review

Approved

### Participants:

Bill Bonham, *Laramie County Stock Growers*  
Jim Cochran, *LC Conservation District*  
Greg Gross, *Ag/Irrigators*  
Kristi Hansen, *University of Wyoming*  
Jim Hastings, *Alternate*  
Scott Horgen, *Industry*  
Brenda Johnson, *Alternate*  
Rick Kaysen, *City of Cheyenne*

Jim Lerwick, *Ag/Irrigators*  
Leslie Mead, *South Cheyenne Community Development Association*  
Bonnie Reider, *South Cheyenne Community Development Association*  
Lisa Tabke, *Cheyenne Board of Realtors*  
Troy Thompson, *Laramie County Commissioners*

### Facilitators:

Shannon Glendenning, *UW Ruckelshaus Institute*

### Agenda:

1. Welcome; Steering Committee member introductions; Agenda review & approval; Announcements
2. Review and adoption of the 06/01/15 meeting summary
3. Break out groups to discuss objectives
4. Report Back from break out groups
5. Formation of subcommittees and tasks to develop portion of a groundwater management plan based on objectives
6. Next Meetings and Next Steps
7. Adjourn

### Handouts:

5/18 meeting summary  
6/1 draft agenda  
LCCA committee progress to date  
Decision points for LCCA Groundwater management objectives for June 1

### Summary:

1. *Welcome; Steering Committee member introductions; Agenda review & approval; Announcements*  
Shannon Glendenning opened the meeting. Committee members introduced themselves.  
The agenda was approved.
2. *Review and adoption of the 06/01/15 meeting summary*  
No changes were recommended. Meeting summary approved.
3. *Discussion on role of subcommittees and development of a groundwater management plan for LCCA*  
Q: Only the irrigators have put forth a plan of action. What kinds of ideas do other people have about what this group thinks it should be doing?  
C: This might change in September, if the LCCA is expanded.  
C: The irrigators came up with a plan that needs some work. The main reason it needs work is that the SE can't collect the money. The Conservation District has said that it will work around the edges of the State Engineer's plan to come up with a way to retire land.  
C: The irrigators have said we can take care of ourselves. The work that still needs to be done is to figure out what to do with the other user groups besides agriculture.  
  
C: Jim has done the homework of figuring out how to develop an entity with taxing authority that can administer the money associated with a buyout program.  
C: Are we talking about just the control area or are we expanding to the entire county?

C: Let's focus on the irrigator plan, and just talk about the control area for now.

C: We presented the irrigator plan to irrigators last November, and they were fine with it.

C: The home builders had issues with the fees. \$4,000/home was way too high.

C: The impacts to us would not be as significant as they might be for other industry, because we are already more or less fully developed in the county.

C: We tried to come up with numbers that would be palatable to everybody. Maybe the number just needs to be the same for everybody.

C: You can't retire land and then drill a well right next to it.

C: In the irrigator plan, if drilling a well wouldn't harm anybody, then it can be drilled. In the irrigator plan, there is an advisory board that evaluates whether every new well could be drilled.

C: Our plan, when we create one, will replace the existing plan.

C: If this group says, no more irrigation wells in the control area, period. To me, this would show harm to those who are outside of the draw down areas that have been defined by the State Engineer's Order.

Q: Have there been any calls on groundwater in Laramie County?

Lisa: No.

Q: Because it's difficult to prove harm?

Lisa: How hard it is to prove harm depends on hydrogeologic setting. If all groundwater users are senior and all groundwater users are junior, it's pretty easy to regulate based on priority.

C: We might be able to offer guidance to the county regulators. For example, what should well spacing be?

Q: Are we talking about offering a regulatory plan for the control area to the State Engineer that meets the statutes, to replace the Order? Or are we talking about a county-wide groundwater planning document that would offer guidance to the county commissioners?

C: The only thing we can do is the former.

C: Funding can't be part of the plan that you send to the SE, because we don't have authority by statute to address financial incentives. We don't have any mechanisms available to us to implement financial incentives.

Q: Should we work on the plan or should we work on the financial incentives piece?

C: We should work on the plan.

C: Under what authority and by what means would our work accomplish anything?

Philip: The current situation is analogous to the situation we had four years ago, for example, when we had a temporary SE order in place and alongside that, was a separate buyout program administered by NRCS and the Conservation District.

C: I thought that from the beginning, Comprehensive plan

C: What points of the Order can you live with and what parts don't you like at all? I don't think it's worth arguing with the SE Order about the map. Not worth the battle. What points do you irrigators want us to work on?

C: Fair question. The deficiencies of the Order are there because of the lack of the plan. The mechanism to transfer water.

C: So, you are looking for another way to transfer water, outside of the process of petitioning the Board of Control. Temporary water use agreements, where you can temporarily change the use of water. How far can you stretch well location? Within the same local area, but 20 miles would be stretching it.

Lisa: What you are envisioning would require a statutory change?

C: That's beyond the scope of this committee.

C: It's not. If we think it's the right way to proceed, we can move forward with that.

C: The Albin irrigators are probably fine with everything in the Order. Half of them are opposed to the expense of metering.

C: The only area I have significant concerns about is the Lodgepole drainage. This is the area I differ with the AMEC study. Lodgepole recharge, I have deep concerns. In Lodgepole right now, it's running. The AMEC study ignores these realities. We could be spending our money much more wisely than the monitoring that is laid out in the Order. An all-inclusive plan is what we need to do.

C: Too much is based on assumptions that many of us don't agree with.

C: What is the right way to develop land around the city of Cheyenne? It's the role of the developers to figure out what makes sense.

C: The AMEC study is a coarse model that misses details. What we need is a finer resolution study on Lodgepole Creek.

Lisa: We don't have information on every single well in the county. So we made scientific guesses.

Q: Is there enough information for us to do a more detailed model on Lodgepole Creek?

Q: How long would a Lodgepole Creek model take? Is there data available to refine the model?

C: What does the order mean for me if I'm on Muddy Creek? I have the right to drill a new well, 1.5 miles outside the critical area. That will affect ALL irrigators for 20 miles downstream on Lodgepole Creek.

Lisa: That new well would be limited to 20% impact.

C: That will encourage me to drill a well as deep as you could within the High Plains Formation.

Q for Lisa: 1000af adjudicated water right, has been used in ag. If I want to change it to industrial use, is there a sufficient mechanism within the SE guidelines to allow this type of transfer?

Lisa: There are permanent and temporary mechanisms for transferring water.

Jim L: There's a mechanism in place to do transfer one on one. The irrigator plan looks at the entire aquifer.

C: The irrigators plan was reducing the number of straws within a bucket, moving straws from critical area buckets to other buckets.

*[More discussion about sw/gw interactions on Lodgepole Creek and whether we can rely on the AMEC study.]*

C: Near the Meadows. When the City turns on their pumps, we see an effect immediately.

C: GW and SW are very much connected on Lodgepole Creek.

C: Do we want to pay you to retire land and then drill a new well outside the critical area?

C: Why are we developing a plan? The goal is to prevent a repetition of excessive development.

C: Three things that everybody is agreeing to.

- Focus on Lodgepole Creek.

- Resolve issues associated with metering requirements. Instead of mandatory, have voluntary requirements. Voluntary reporting would be twice a year: prior to turn-on and again at the end of the year.

- Resolve issues associated with monitoring.

*Jim L drew a picture of the four water user groups. Of these four groups, only Ag has developed a proposal.*

C: Respectfully disagree. City of Cheyenne has a master plan that looks decades into the future.

C: So Jim, you're suggesting that the developers develop a proposal. I will take that back to the groups that I represent.

C: Monitoring allows us to see what's happening. Metering helps us to identify what comes out of the ground.

C: Metering is incredibly useful. The issue for the irrigators is how the information is used. The water meter does not give us any more information than what we get from the metering that happens on our bills.

C: There needs to be enough flexibility within the plan that this group puts together that irrigators in Albin can propose something for their area that could work for themselves.

Jim H: What don't we like about the Order? If we can all agree on things we don't like, then that would be the basis for our voluntary agreement that we submit to the SE.

C: for our homework for the next meeting, we need to Come back with responses to Conservation District's and irrigator proposals.

**Homework:**

Alter Order as a group

Identify likes and dislikes of:

- Irrigator and conservation district plans
- Transfer preferences for moving water around
- Order.

*Meeting adjourned.*

**Next Meeting**

**Date: June 15, 2015**

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