

**Meeting Notes**  
**Henry's Fork Watershed Council Conference**  
**December 4, 2007**

The Watershed Council's annual conference was held December 4 at the Rexburg CottonTree Conference Center. The meeting began with Steve Trafton and introductions then community building led by Dale Swensen.

After community building Steve Trafton spoke to the group about the Council's function as a Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) for the state. Legislation has been passed which changed how the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) develops total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). The legislation more clearly defines the role of the WAG in this process and requires representation from various interests including agriculture, mining, industry with point source discharges, forest products, local government, livestock, Indian tribes (for areas within reservation boundaries), water-based recreation, environmental interests and land managing or regulatory agencies. Anyone else not mentioned above who is interested is welcome to take part in the process. It is uncertain whether mining needs to be represented since there is no hard rock mining in the watershed. It is possible that gravel and open pit mining would fall under this rule.

Steve asked Council participants to consider serving on the established Water Quality Subcommittee to serve in this capacity. The Council will collect the names of interested people and work with Troy Saffle from the Department of Environmental Quality to get this process started.

Next on the agenda was Jeff Patlovich from Fremont County Planning and Zoning. Jeff reported to the Council that a first draft of the revised comprehensive plan would be online by January 7, 2008 or available at the County offices. Patlovich reported that he has been working on the development code but cites some shortfalls in a procedure in place for transfer of development rights and impact fees for developments. Money is needed to acquire the required studies for these programs. Patlovich also spoke about the highly publicized amendment that protects agricultural cropland. P&Z is yet to decide whether to keep the Land Evaluation Site Assessment as adopted or repeal all or parts of the amendment. And finally, Patlovich reported that he hopes a capital improvement plan can be completed since there has never been one done in Fremont County. This would give the county a long-range plan and planning schedule for equipment purchases and projects— especially anticipated road building and road improvements that are needed.

Dave Tuthill from the Idaho Department of Water Resources was the keynote speaker for the event. Mr. Tuthill spoke to the group about water issues beyond 2008 considering climate change and its implications. Tuthill acknowledge that we have certainly seen a change in weather patterns and that Idaho water managers need to take a serious look at management, conservation, and how to create more storage. Mr. Tuthill told the group that management and conservation measures cannot be overlooked as essential to the long-term water outlook, but more storage is needed for sustainable economies and to keep water in the rivers and streams and available for agricultural uses. He said that the state is looking at many possibilities including rebuilding the Teton Dam – an option that might not be popular in this watershed but should not be discounted entirely. Other potential sites include the Minidoka, Twin Springs, Galloway, and Lost Valley dams.

Tuthill talked briefly about a plan to administrate conjunctive management of ground and surface water. Surface water rights were established before ground water pumping for irrigation was so advanced and ground water irrigation is typically by junior water right holders. Many questions are yet to be answered in Idaho in regards to ground water depletion effects on surface water users and how

this depletion would be measured. The next decade will no doubt witness significant changes in water management and use in Idaho.

Next on the agenda was Mike Beus from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Mike addressed the Council about paleoclimatology and the role of water in the climate system. Mike reported how water influences the intensity of climate variability and change. Water in its liquid, gaseous, and frozen stages ties together major pieces of our climate. He said that water vapor that feeds precipitation is a greenhouse gas that when combined with carbon dioxide, is responsible for the Earth's warm surface temperature. Mike said that by looking at the data we can see how the Earth's temperature has changed over the past years but what is not known is the magnitude of the effect of water on our climate.

Beus reported that the Bureau is developing policies on how to proceed given the current data and models. He said that the Bureau is examining one of the largest systems operated by the USBR, the Colorado River, where the current drought can be seen in the vast shortages in reservoirs there. Reclamation is developing additional strategies for improving coordinated management of the reservoirs in the Colorado River system and is working with the western states to meet the increasing water demands and continue to explore the implications of these shortages. A plan has been drafted that includes contingencies to react to global warming projections.

After a short break, a final community building session was held and many thanks were exchanged to Dave Tuthill, Mike Beus and Jeff Patlovich for sharing information with the Council.