

YAMPA RIVER BASIN PARTNERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 29, 2006 9 am – 11 am Hayden Town Hall, Hayden, Colorado

Mission: 'Working with the citizens of Yampa River Basin to balance natural resources and social issues to protect and enhance our quality of life through open communication, education and coordination of efforts'.

Call to Order and Welcome at 9:15 am by Chairman, Tom Gray, Moffat County Commissioner. Members offered the Pledge of Allegiance with a moment of silence. Members were encouraged to sign in to communicate about YRBP projects and introductions were made of all attendees.

Organization information:

- YRBP Annual Meeting Minutes for September 29, 2005 were approved.
- YRBP Financial report for June 2006 of \$225.02 in bank approved.
- YRBP approved a MOU with Yampa Valley Partners for administration to be signed by Chairman, Tom Gray.

Work Plan Updates / Discussion:

Yampa River Endangered Fish Recovery and Water Management Plan Pat Nelson, Non Native Fish Coordinator of Fish & Wildlife Service

'Recovery Program' is a partnership of state, federal and local agencies, environmental and water user groups. The Recovery Program was designed to address the factors which have contributed to the decline of endangered fish. Elements of the program include fish habitat, water flow and quantity and restoring access along riparian ecosystem, monitoring endangered fish population counts, genetics management and non native fish management activities.

Non native fish management efforts are critical to recovery of the endangered fishes and conservation of other native fish species. However, recognizing the dual responsibilities of State and Federal fish and wildlife agencies to conserve and protect native species and provide sport fishing opportunities. In 2006, northern pike are being stocked into the Loudy Simpson pond and in the Yampa State Wildlife Area ponds. Smallmouth bass are being stocked into the Public Safety Center (Craig) pond to provide fishing for children and people with disabilities, and into Elkhead Reservoir to provide recreational fishing when the reservoir reopens for public use in early 2007. Discussion followed on placement of bass fish for sport fishing opportunities. In 2007 the Recovery Program focus will be on stocking fish in Elkhead Reservoir.

Yampa River activities include management of pike populations. This includes studies of origin of fish, marking of fish for movement, recapture and relocation of fish and population estimates. Concern of non native fish in Yampa and other rivers relates to impacting recovery of these species. If the species do not recover, this Recovery Program in Northwest Colorado will not be a success and chaos may ensue with respect to depletions for municipal governments. Limiting factor for successful recovery is not water, but impacts of non native species.

Public meeting to be held in Craig, Monday, August 7th, 2007 from 7-9 pm at the Craig Holiday Inn. Request was made of the YRBP Executive Committee to speak that evening.

**Elkhead Reservoir Expansion Project –
Dan Birch, Colo. River Water Conservation District**

Elkhead project progress this year is very good and keeping on schedule in large part due to good weather. Currently, the statistics for this project are at \$31 million cost resulting in additional storage for approximately 12,000 acre feet including 5000 acre feet on a permanent basis for Recovery Program and 7000 acre feet on a permanent basis from River District with an additional 2000 acre feet being leased back to Recovery Program. The main purpose will be water storage and released only, as needed.

After spring runoff the water was depleted to enable demolishing the spillway. Bridge and road work are scheduled to be completed by early November 2006. Reservoir is schedule to be filled spring 2007. Park improvements include replacement of current facilities (parking lots, boat ramps, etc.) as soon as they are able per an Agreement between City of Craig, State Parks and Colorado River Water Conservation District, which was signed June 2006, allowing for Colorado State Parks to provide \$1 million dollars of new improvements as a recreational amenity. Parks has limitations in completing amenities due to reservoir construction constraints, but will work to meet deadlines.

June 20, 2006 was a public open house and other events will be planned for public awareness of this project.

August 8th, 2006 the Recovery Program Management Committee will meet in Craig at the Craig Holiday Inn including a Recovery Program barbeque dinner on Tuesday, August 8th at Loudy Simpson Park in Craig.

**Yampa Basin Watershed Plan (Yampa 208 Plan) – Bill McKee, Colorado Dept of
Public Health and Environment Water Quality Division**

The Yampa 208 Plan was completed in 2002 with YRBP participation, the State Health Department and local consulting group, Montgomery Watson Harza with consultant, Jean Ray. The Executive Summary and YRBP Resolution Supporting the Yampa Watershed 208 Water Quality Plan were distributed. Copies of the complete Yampa 208 Plan are available from State Water Quality Division.

Clean Water Act initiated many regional planning areas to address water quality and quantity issues. Watershed planning and implementation includes monitoring of water quality and habitat with data for decision making with the growth in our valley. Water quality standards and monitoring are responsibility of State Health Department, but comprehensive efforts are difficult due to decreasing resources. Local groups around the state are offering to do monitoring and data development to complement the state work on stream restoration, monitoring, easement and access. A range of public private efforts are important to continue implementation of Watershed Plans with citizen activities includes conservation, better practices, and monitoring projects.

Scale of oil and gas exploration in our area is smaller than other neighboring areas and there is concern of potential impact of groundwater.

Information was given on Yampa Basin Proposed List of Impaired Streams –monitor and evaluation listing. Algae counts are up in certain areas and can impact swimming, boating and eventually fish habitat due to oxygen ‘sag’.

General Discussion:

How can Yampa River Basin Partnership be effective?

Chairman, Tom Gray, initiated the discussion of the purpose and intent of YRBP by reviewing a list of past projects.

It was noted that following the Inter Basin Compact discussions \$40 million dollars have been committed over the next ten years for water projects by the state legislature. Agreement by local basins and state compact committee is needed to apply for funding.

Discussion was on focus of YRBP on water issues. Concern expressed about duplication of efforts by local regional groups and their focus including YRPB, Yampa River Legacy Initiative, Yampa Valley Economic Development Council and Yampa Valley Partners.

Question was brought up about importance of this group serving as public process for federal regulatory agencies. Pat Nelson of Recovery Program identified a project opportunity of locating additional fishing opportunities. YRBP served as the ‘local voice’ for Recovery Program over the recent years.

Do we want to work together on health of water in our region or individually as local governments and organizations?

Discussion: Other groups are often formed around a problem. We are fortunate to have available water and relatively good water quality. General agreement was the need to remain involved in water discussions.

Monitoring, public education and projects were identified as important and will take leadership and funding. Other watershed groups include water districts, etc. with consistent funding. The question raised was about the value of the Yampa 208 Plan to those water districts that might be ‘point sources’.

Idea suggested for YRBP annual meeting included a tour of Elkhead Reservoir expansion project prior to the barbeque and annual meeting in Hayden at State Park Headquarters and update on activities on Yampa 208 Plan.

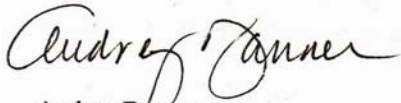
Thanks were given to Bill McKee, State Health Department, who will be retiring summer 2006. Bill will contact staff with his replacement name and contact information.

What are the 2006 Work Plan items?

Decision: The conclusion was to use YRBP as a communication group in 2007 and hold an annual meeting as per the By Laws.

Meeting was adjourned at 11am.

Respectfully submitted by Audrey Danner, Yampa Valley Partners



Audrey Danner,
Executive Director