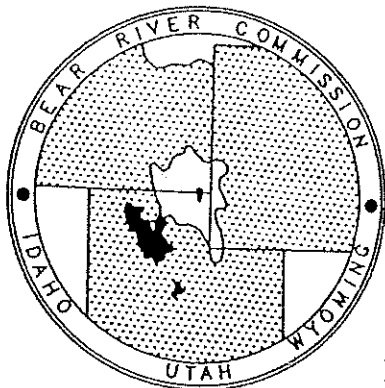


BEAR RIVER COMMISSION



106 West 500 South, Suite 101
Bountiful, UT 84010-6232
(801) 292-4662
(801) 524-6320 (fax)

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JUN - 9 2003

Department of Water Resources

MEMORANDUM BR03-45

TO: Commission Members

Jack
FROM: Jack A. Barnett, Engineer-Manager

SUBJECT: RIVER REGULATION

DATE: June 6, 2003

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ENGINEER-MANAGER

Jack A. Barnett
Suite 101
106 West 500 South
Bountiful, UT 84010

It was predictable that in all three divisions of the Bear River this would be a difficult season with respect to water supply. It was not predictable, however, how all aspects of the early part of the irrigation season would play out so I thought it would be helpful to the Commission for me to give an early accounting of events by division.

Starting with the Upper Division, Wyoming called early for regulation, and on April 28 it was learned that there was only 351 cfs of divertible flow. This compares with the 1250 cfs trigger point in the Compact for a water emergency. In the weeks ahead, we found that we were dealing with ever increasing flows as the limited high elevation snow was melting. On May 26, we determined that the divertible flow was 1653 cfs and we were temporarily out of the water emergency declaration. Today we are still out of regulation but it appears that this may change in the near future.

With respect to storage in the Upper Division, we determined on April 28 that all additional storage as allowed by the original Compact must terminate as the Compact provides that this storage can only occur when direct flow rights are not in need of the water. Direct flow users were in regulation in both Utah and Wyoming in the Upper Division. They were receiving water by priority. Utah, in the lower section of the Upper Division, was in distribution by priority with controls that had not been imposed in the past. This resulted in some lower priority canals not receiving any water.

The three reservoirs where storage was at issue in the Upper Division, in ascending order, were Woodruff Narrows, Sulphur Creek and Whitney. Woodruff Narrows had not reached the level of storage restriction imposed by the Compact brought about because Bear Lake's elevation was below 5911. On April 28, the Woodruff Narrows Reservoir Company was instructed to not allow additional storage. Since that date the company has strived to accomplish this and has released some storage water to users shorted by the natural flow water right regulations. Sulphur Creek had filled prior to April 28.

The Whitney Reservoir is at such a high elevation that on April 28 it could only be reached by snowmobile. This reservoir's storage primarily benefits Wyoming users but it is located in Utah. Melt and storage at this elevation had hardly begun when the storage regulation was imposed. The water elevation was noted on the gage by company officials and they were advised not to allow additional storage. It is difficult to control this storage because of access and there has been a period of time when the road that provides access was in places free from snow so as to prevent the use of snowmobiles while covered by snow in some places so as to prevent the use of wheeled vehicles.

Discussions have advanced that would allow an exchange of some storage water. Evanston City, which controls Sulphur Creek, has offered up to 1400 af of storage water to help with the drought situation. The plan would be to release up to 1400 af of water stored in Sulphur Creek for use by users downstream of this reservoir, which includes users of Woodruff Narrows Reservoir storage water. Whitney Reservoir users would then be allowed to store up to 1400 af for use by its shareholders. I anticipate that this can be allowed by a letter agreement signed by officials in Utah and Wyoming. The Woodruff Narrows Reservoir Company was to meet today and will discuss this issue.

In the Central Division, regulation began on April 25 when it was learned that the divertible flow was 387 cfs. The Compact trigger point is 870 cfs. Since that date, we have been striving to fairly allocate to Wyoming 43% of the divertible flow and to Idaho 57%. We have had to do this while the flows were increasing. At times we have projected ahead to estimate midweek flows when at the first of the week we were calling out regulations. At other times, we have made midweek regulations. Today the divertible flow is 786 cfs. Unlike the Upper Division, the Central Division is neither blessed by storage nor is the regulation complicated by the release of storage water. With no water yet passing Pixley Dam, the Central Division users have been totally dependent on natural flow generated in the division. For the past week Idaho, as allowed by the Compact, is allowing part of its 57% of the flow to leave the Central Division by the Rainbow Canal and this flow is identified as natural flow in the Lower Division as it is passed directly through Mud Lake to the river below Bear Lake. However, discharge from Smiths Fork and at the Border Gage have dropped sharply this past week and one would anticipate a drop in Rainbow.

In the Lower Division, just the right conditions, which were aided by inflows to Cutler from the Cache Valley tributaries, delayed releases from Bear Lake until June 2. Also, the Idaho release of upward of 100 cfs through the Rainbow Canal during this past week helped with natural flows in the Lower Division. Now the Rainbow flows are dropping and 600 cfs is being pumped from Bear Lake. This results in a flow for use by the Bear River Canal Company after all diverters above them have diverted their needed water of around 800 cfs.

The lake is at 5908.69 feet, just 0.06 feet lower than this year's high of 5908.75. The dredge on Bear Lake has excavated 2000 feet of the 3000 foot channel excavation planned. They are now at "the big sand bar." The parties to the Bear Lake Settlement Agreement have agreed on an interim agreement as to the use of Bear Lake waters this year.

np

cc: TAC Members, River Commissioners, Carly Burton, Jody Williams, Kelly Holt, Claudia Conder