

JANUARY 8, 2004 MEETING WITH ROCKY FORD/MINERSVILLER WATER USERS

Attending the meeting:

Steve Clyde	Dave Hansen & Gordon _____ (Hansen, Allen & Luce Eng)
Dan Goff	Mark Truman
Spence Eyre	two other water users
Jerry Olds	Lee Sim
Kerry Carpenter (by speaker phone)	

This meeting was precipitated in part because of the concerns they have over the possibility of groundwater regulation – they do not believe that it is fair or right that they be regulated unless the upper portions of their hydrologic system (the Beaver River) are also accurately and honestly regulated.

Concerns expressed by the water users based on their perceptions and beliefs of water use in the area:

1. The water diversions and uses above Patterson Dam are not adequately regulated.
2. There has been a large expansion of irrigated acres in the Beaver Valley area.
3. The conversion from flood irrigation to sprinkle irrigation has contributed to the decrease of return flows to the Beaver River for use by water users below the Patterson Dam.
4. The storage of water in Three Creeks and Kents Lake Reservoir has not been adequately regulated. As a result the owners of the reservoirs have been able to store water at will and in disregard to the limits of their storage rights. They believe there was between 800 and 1400 acre feet of water that should have come down to Rocky Ford Reservoir but was instead stored in the upper reservoirs.
5. Since the area is now almost totally irrigated by sprinklers rather than by flood irrigation is there a justification to retain the 4 af/ac duty that is in the Proposed Determination of Water Rights Book?

Dave & Gordon have done a limited review and investigation of the irrigation in the Beaver Valley and have compared it with our 1997 mapping project. They believe there are areas of uncertainty on our 1997 maps and there are some areas that have been put under irrigation since then but basically they are in agreement with our conclusion that there has been no major expansion of irrigation in the Beaver area since the 1977 hydrographic survey. If there has been any expansion it is limited to a couple of hundred acres. This was a surprise to the water users who have always maintained there had been major expansion. Hopefully this report will help to put that perception to rest.

Dave and Gordon reported on a visit with the NRCS people in the Beaver area. They indicated there were situations where water users have sold their water rights and yet have continued to irrigate their entire farms. The NRCS also indicated there were situations where water rights that have late priorities (essentially high water rights) have been used throughout the irrigation season rather than being cut off by priority as the river flow drops. There might also be some irrigation of land before or after the irrigation season defined in the PD or in the water right. Also concern that some wells are being pumped throughout the season that are only supposed to be supplemental to direct flow rights.

Discussion of what could be done;

It would be more doable to start working on regulation of the reservoirs that to try to bring the wells in the valley under regulation. However, even measurement and regulation of the reservoirs will be difficult. Three Creeks Reservoir especially is a challenge because two of the three creeks flowing into the reservoir are not accessible by vehicle and it would be a relatively major engineering and construction effort to install measuring devices on any of the three creeks. Access to the reservoirs, especially during the early part of the filling season is a challenge.

The water users in attendance wanted something done by the start of irrigation this year so that regulation could be improved. This may not be entirely possible, however, Jerry did commit that we would begin to take a look into it and would try to start a process by the beginning of irrigation. In a discussion later with Kerry, we agreed that there is not much that can be done until there are measuring devices but perhaps the discussion at the annual meeting will be helpful.

Some or all of the Minersville water users plan on attending the Beaver River annual meeting to air their concerns and discuss the situation. (Will that be helpful?)