

State Engineer's Office

• *Mission and philosophy*

The mission of the Wyoming State Engineer's Office and Board of Control is to provide for the general supervision of the waters of the state, and of its appropriation, distribution and application to beneficial use as provided under the prior appropriation doctrine, and to maintain the flexibility within that framework to meet the changing needs of the residents of Wyoming. The State Engineer's Office collects, analyzes, maintains and provides water-related information to ensure the appropriate management and regulation of Wyoming's water resources.

• *Results of outcomes*

The State Engineer's Office strategic plan for this reporting year contained a single goal and four objectives for reaching that goal. This was a significant simplification from the office's first strategic plans which detailed several goals and multiple objectives. As all of the efforts of the agency revolve around the single mission of the proper administration of the state's water resources, the move to a single goal seems to more accurately reflect the activities of the office.

Several accomplishments were met during the fiscal year. Many of the water right records of the office date back prior to statehood. As these records are still accessed daily by water rights analysts and technicians, they are showing wear from body oils and tears from tight, cramped filing drawers and general use. A pilot project to preserve records was completed to examine the options available for the preservation of these historic records, while still allowing for the necessary access. Hundreds of the most vulnerable maps and other paper records were encapsulated into mylar type material along with acid free paper to reduce further deterioration. Several of the old record books were also revamped to allow for the individual pages to be removed in a releasable type filing book.

To improve the accessibility and protection of older records, the microfilm resource of the office continues to be upgraded. Much of the microfiche was of poor quality so the original microfilm was accessed because it tended to have better clarity. However, the continuous access into the vault by multiple personnel leaves these records more vulnerable to loss or misfiling. These records need to be recoverable should some type of disaster strike the Herschler Building and damage the State Engineer's records. As part of this effort, more than 50,000 individual microfiche sheets were reviewed during the reporting period, and new fiche was remade from the original film as needed.

The number of water right applications received continues to be high. The following shows the number of applications for new water rights received by both the ground water and surface water divisions of the agency. Also shown are the number of water rights searches completed.

General information

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Agency contact

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Other locations

Cokeville, Riverton, Sheridan and Torrington

Year established

1890

Statutory references

Constitution, Article 8 and Wyoming Statutes - Title 41

Number of authorized personnel

Full-time 95, part-time 26

Organization structure

Administration, Ground Water, Surface Water, Board of Control, Technical Services, Special Projects, Water Division I-IV and Board of Registration

Clients served

General public

Budget information

Goal I, Fund 041	
Objective A	\$3,669,011
Objective B	419,703
Objective C	549,242
Objective D	50,781
Goal I, Fund 042	
Objective A	26,673
Total	\$4,715,410

- Ground water, applications approved: 4,018
- Surface water, applications approved: 482
- Ground water, water right searches: 1,000
- Surface water, water right searches: 530

There is continued interest throughout the state in water quality matters. Litigation pertaining to the development of total maximum daily loads (TMDL) on impaired water bodies in Wyoming has raised the awareness of the connectivity of water quality and water quantity by various user groups in the state. The State Engineer's Office has begun discussions with the Department of Environmental Quality to be proactive in the recognition of the connections between amount of flow in a given river or creek and its impact on the water quality of that stream.

The trend toward forging new or expanded cooperative arrangements with other state and federal agencies seems to be continuing. As costs for basic research and data collections continue to rise, these cost-sharing arrangements allow the agency to stretch its limited dollars toward gaining additional water resource information. This agency has joined with the Bureau of Reclamation in identifying several water gaging stations across the state that are in need of rehabilitation and upgrading of equipment. Another agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation provides for geographical information system (GIS) mapping of some irrigation district lands that are served by Bureau of Reclamation facilities.

❖ *Strategic plan changes*

The current agency plan (FY99) contains one goal and four objectives, which are unchanged from the previous year:

Goal: Provide for the proper regulation, administration, management and protection of the waters of the state of Wyoming (Wyoming Constitution, Article 8, and W.S. Title 41).

Objective 1: All water being put to beneficial use in the state is permitted and is distributed to beneficial use in accordance with state law.

Objective 2: Aggressively protect Wyoming's apportionments provided through the various interstate compacts and decrees to which Wyoming is a party.

Objective 3: Gather, analyze, and publish data regarding Wyoming water resources for administration, regulation and management purposes.

Objective 4: Educate the public and agency personnel in water resources issues and make information from the SEO available to the public.

Although the goal and four objectives in the strategic plan did not change, several new individual strategies will commence in FY99. Funding was received to hire a Water Conservation Officer on contract to develop a water conservation program for the state of Wyoming. An additional staff person will be hired to work on the review of subdivision plans that are submitted to this office. A statutory change was made a couple of legislative sessions ago requiring a developer to show the adequacy of the water supply for the proposed subdivision prior to its approval by the county commissioners. The rules pertaining to the

requirements of the State Engineer's Office have not been updated for quite some time. It is anticipated that the formal rulemaking process and public review of the proposed changes will occur during this upcoming year.

The closure of the Wyoming Water Resources Center by the 1998 Legislature will likely decrease the amount of general interest in water education that occurs across the state. The State Engineer's Office, along with the Water Development Commission, may need to pick up some of these efforts. The proposed Water Planning Program that will be presented to the 1999 Legislature for funding may provide the vehicle for some additional public participation and outreach on water issues.

In looking toward the 2001-02 and 2003-04 bienniums for a five year forecast, several contemporary water issues will need to be addressed, including:

- Further investigation and integration of public interest into the water rights processes.

- Providing new opportunities and incentives for water conservation within the basic legal tenets and protections of Wyoming water law.

- Additional water right transfers between water users in the more fully appropriated river basins.

- Examining the use of the instream flow law to allow private individuals to transfer their existing water rights to an instream flow right.

- Upgrading of gaging facilities for real-time, accurate recording of stream flows, diversions, and storage.

- Increase in the surface water/ground water conjunctive use requests for administration.

- Examining the potential impact of new water quantity allocations on water quality.

- Wyoming's ability to complete future water development will be further complicated by environmental restoration needs for additional water supplies at habitat sites in downstream states.

- Address public expectations of additional information and services provided electronically.

State Engineer's Office organization chart

