

# State Engineer

## Mission and philosophy

The mission of the Wyoming State Engineer's Office and Board of Control is to provide for the general supervision and protection of waters of the state, the appropriation, distribution and application to beneficial use as provided under the prior appropriation doctrine; and maintenance of 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 for ensuring 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. As all of the efforts of the agency revolve around the single mission of the proper administration of the state's water resources, this single goal accurately reflects the interrelated activities of the office.

As a majority of the items in the agency strategic plan revolve around the day-to-day administration of Wyoming's water resources, a drought year emphasizes the dedication of the agency staff and quality of their commitment to the agency mission. Very low snow pack conditions were once again experienced across Wyoming during the first half of the reporting period. Southwest Wyoming suffered the highest impact of drought in the state. During a dry year, the demands on our field staff greatly increase as many stream and river systems are in regulation that otherwise might not be under more normal hydrologic conditions.

The continuing large-scale development of coalbed methane in northeastern Wyoming has created a huge increase in the workload of this agency. Under current Ground Water Division practice, each well is permitted under the agency's groundwater statutes. The workload increases for the groundwater staff in moving these applications through the permitting process, and for support services' staff, as each of these permits needs to be micro-filmed and added to the water rights database. As additional groundwater is brought to the surface via coalbed methane development, the number of reservoir and stock reservoir permit applications has dramatically increased the workload for the Surface Water Division of the agency.

The Cheyenne office and Division I field office staffs are continuing the process to implement the Negotiated Settlement of the Nebraska v. Wyoming litigation. On November 13, 2001 the United States Supreme Court accepted the settlement reached by the parties to the lawsuit. Implementation of the provisions of the

## General information

Patrick T. Tyrrell, state engineer

## Agency contact

Harry C. LaBonde Jr., deputy state engineer  
Herschler Bldg., 4E  
Cheyenne, WY 82002  
Seoleg@state.wy.us  
Website: seo.state.wy.us

307-777-6150

## Other locations

Cokeville, Riverton, Sheridan, Torrington

## Year established

1890

## Statutory references

Constitution, Article 8 and WYOMING  
STATUTES - TITLE 41

## Authorized personnel

109 full-time employees, 22 part-time employees

## Organizational structure

Administration, Ground Water, Surface Water, Interstate Streams, Board of Control, Support Services, Water Division Nos. 1-4, Board of Registration for Engineers and Land Surveyors, Board of Water Well Drilling and Water Well Pump Installation Contractors

## Clients served

General Public

## Budget information

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| General Fund           | \$0                |
| Water Development Fund | \$8,921,788        |
| Federal Funds          | \$834,147          |
| Other Funds (Private)  | \$25,692           |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>\$9,781,627</b> |

settlement is now underway. Wyoming is required to adjudicate water rights in the North Platte River drainage that are not yet adjudicated, continue to conduct and refine the irrigated acreage mapping programs, collect and report water use and storage data to the parties to the settlement, and accomplish numerous other tasks associated with the settlement. The agency is also continuing to work toward completion of the Big Horn River general adjudication.

The State Engineer's Office continues to work closely with the Wyoming Water Development Commission on basin wide water planning. The Green River, Bear River, Powder/Tongue Rivers and the Northeastern Wyoming basin plans are complete. The Bighorn River basin and the Snake River basin plans are expected to be complete by the end of 2003. The last river basin plan in the state (North Platte River) started in 2003 and is expected to be completed in 2005.

A major focus of the support services division has been to consolidate the multitude of water rights databases into a single, reliable, relational database. While much work is needed to complete this task, the division has clearly defined the scope of issues and is moving forward to resolve the simpler concerns in-house. A comprehensive proposal is being developed to seek outside services to design and construct one truly relational database. As the databases and the respective tables are consolidated, they are being made available to the public through the agency's website. To facilitate greater public use of the website, a new in-house website has been constructed. The final details are now being resolved and the new website should be operational in the fall of 2003.

Records preservation is a continuing process within the office. Many of the water right records of the office date back to territorial days. As these records are accessed daily by our water rights analysts and technicians, they are showing much wear. The records preservation project has prioritized these documents to address the most vulnerable records first. An effort to scan agency records to create electronic images of the records continues. The goal is to allow records to be accessed via computer, eliminating the need to handle original documents.

As downstream states continue to grow faster than Wyoming, additional pressures are placed on the water supplies allocated to Wyoming by interstate compact or court decree. The needs of declining species populations listed under the Endangered Species Act also place demands on already short water supplies in many parts of the West. As no one protects Wyoming's interests like Wyoming, it continues to be imperative that the state be represented at the various water basin commissions and organizations. The interstate streams division is responsible for representing Wyoming's interests and forging cooperative relationships with adjoining states.

During this last year, the agency has endeavored to produce a service to the water users of that

state that is compatible with the outcomes established in the agency's strategic plan dated September 1, 2001. The following is a reporting of the numeric results of the outcomes. It should be noted that these results are from water year 2002 (October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002). Outcome 1.01: Water shall not be put to beneficial use without obtaining a permit (surface water permit applications received = 1205, surface water permits processed = 661, groundwater permit applications received = 9308, groundwater permit applications processed = 9308). Outcome 2.01: Continued ability to develop and use water allocated to Wyoming through its interstate compacts and court decrees in a manner determined appropriate to Wyoming (North Platte River settlement agreement approved by the U.S. Supreme court, participation in the North Platte River cooperative agreement negotiations, participation in all of the various river commissions involving Wyoming drainages). Outcome 3.01: Publish and provide to the public the best and most accurate technical data possible (2002 Annual Report of the State Engineer published, 2002 Annual Hydrographers Report published for each of the four water divisions). Outcome 4.01: An informed public on basic water rights and resources of the State of Wyoming (agency personnel made numerous presentations to the public gatherings, and conducted an educational event for legislators).

## Strategic plan changes

The current Agency plan (FY05-FY08) contains one goal and four objectives, which are similar to previous years. They are stated as follows: Goal I - Provide for the proper regulation, administration, management and protections of the waters of the State of Wyoming (Wyoming Constitution, Article I and Wyoming Statutes (W.S.) Title 41; Objective 1: Water being put to beneficial use in the state is permitted and is applied to beneficial use in accordance with state law. W.S. 41-4-501, 41-3-905, 41-3-301; Objective 2: Aggressively protect Wyoming's apportionments provided through the various interstate compacts and decrees to which Wyoming is a party. (W.S. 41-12-101 thru 41-12-702); 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.

In looking forward to the next biennium, several new and continued initiatives are anticipated, pending budget approval. They include: 1.) Accelerate the processing of coalbed methane permits with streamlining of internal processes, 2.) upgrade the business practices of the agency, 3.) consolidate all agency databases into one relational database that is accessible via the internet, 4.) continue to play an active role in the River Basin Planning

Program which is now focusing on the North Platte River Basin, 5.) implement all aspects of the North Platte River modified decree and stipulation agreement and, 6) continue the efforts to complete the Big Horn River general adjudication.

## State Engineer organization chart

