

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 both inter-and intra-state 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 citizens 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 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 quality of the agency staff and their commitment to the agency mission. Very low snow pack conditions were once again experienced across Wyoming during this reporting period. In many areas record low stream flow amounts are being recorded. During a dry year, the demands on our field staff greatly increase as many creek systems are in regulation that would not be under normal hydrologic conditions.

The continuing large-scale development of coalbed methane wells in northeastern Wyoming has created a huge increase in the workload of this agency as the wells are permitted under the agency's groundwater statutes. The workload increases not only for the groundwater staff in moving these applications through the permitting process, but also in the number of checks that need to have receipts written and each of these permits need to be microfilmed 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 increased the workload for the surface water division of the agency.

Additional staff will be required in the Cheyenne office and the Division I Field office to implement the Negotiated Settlement of the [Nebraska v. Wyoming](#)

General information

Patrick T. Tyrrell, state engineer

Agency contact

Richard G. Stockdale, deputy state engineer
307/ 777-6150
Herschler Bldg., 4E,
Cheyenne, WY 82002
seoleg@misc.state.wy.us

Other locations

Cokeville, Riverton, Sheridan, Torrington

Year established and reorganized

1890

Statutory references

Constitution, Article 8 and Wyoming Statutes - Title 41

Authorized personnel

97 full-time employees, 25 part-time employees

Organization structure

Administration, Ground Water, Surface Water, Board of Control, Interstate Streams Support Services, Water Division Nos. 1-4, Board of Registration

Clients served

General public

Budget information

General Fund:	\$0
Water Development Fund:	\$8,920,461
Federal Funds:	\$79,297
Other Funds (Private):	\$200,071
Total:	\$ 9,199,829

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 settlement has begun. 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 State Engineer's Office continues to work closely with the Wyoming Water Development Commission on basin wide water planning. The Green River plan was completed in December 2000, the Bear River plan was completed in 2001, and the Powder/Tongue and the Northeastern Wyoming basin plans were completed in 2001. The Bighorn basin and the Snake basin plans are nearing completion.

The water rights database has been converted to a more powerful, relational database, and further refinements are being made to aid in more reliable, more efficient searches for water rights information. An enormous number of water rights have been issued in since the territorial days prior to statehood. Tracking these water rights through a database means real time savings in searching the records for specific water rights. It is envisioned that the agency will place the database on the Internet for easier public access.

Water Resource Mapping training continues in the field offices. Mapping capabilities are now in place in each of the four water divisions across the state, as well as in the Cheyenne office. As water rights are modified and are attached to the land, GIS analyses fit well with the technical work of the agency and are a great help in analyzing complex water right and water resource issues.

Records preservation is a continuing process within the office. Many of the water right records of the office date back to prior to statehood. As these records are accessed daily by our water rights analysts and technicians, they are showing much wear from body oils, tears from tight, cramped filing drawers and general use. The records preservation project has prioritized these documents to address the most vulnerable records first. Additional map cases have been purchased, and the most vulnerable paper records have been sealed. The next phase of records preservation will be to create electronic images of the records such that the information can be accessed via computer, eliminating the need to handle the original record.

All water rights, correspondence, petitions, and other records of the office are microfilmed as the long-term storage and access solution for the

records management of the agency. The microfilm and microfiche continue to be systematically examined and re-filmed as necessary to further decrease the amount of handling of the original water rights records.

The trend toward forging new or expanded cooperative arrangements with other state and federal agencies continues. This agency has joined with the Bureau of Reclamation and continues to identify water gaging stations across the state that are in need of rehabilitation and upgrade of equipment. Agency field personnel are responsible for the rehabilitation and installation of upgraded equipment.

As downstream states continue to grow at a rate greater than the growth rate in 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. To further Wyoming's position in these matters, the state engineer has created a new Interstate Stream Division for administrative purposes to provide greater coordination in the interstate streams areas.

Strategic plan changes

Our current Agency plan (fiscal year 2002) contains one goal and four objectives, which are unchanged from the previous year: 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). All water being put to beneficial use in the state is permitted and is distributed to beneficial use in accordance with state law. Aggressively protect Wyoming's apportionments provided through the various interstate compacts and decrees to which Wyoming is a party. Gather, analyze, and publish data regarding Wyoming water resources for administration, regulation and management purposes. Educate the public and agency personnel in water resources issues and make information from the SEO available to the public.

In looking outward toward the next biennium, several new initiatives are anticipated, pending budget approval. Expand the web presence of the agency and offer additional water right services to the public via the Internet and training classes for water right searching within the agency. Reorganization within the agency has consolidated the technical and computer services into a single administrative division, as well as create a stand alone division for the interstate streams activities of

the agency; implement the provisions of the North Platte Decree Settlement, including initiating the North Platte Decree Committee. Address the additional workload demands due to coalbed methane development by increasing staff in key areas of the agency. Continue to play an active role in the statewide River Basin Planning Program. Examine the potential impacts of new water quality regulations on water quantity allocations. Continue to inform and assist water users and general public on Wyoming water rights, and their practical administration.

Evaluate long-standing agency business practices in preparation for entering into the Enterprise Portal environment for providing services to the citizens of the state electronically.

State Engineer organization chart

