



Water Rights Committee Report
September 19, 2020
Karl Davis, Committee Chairman
karld@bigelkmeadows.org

Charter: To protect the water rights decreed to Big Elk Meadows.

Committee Members: Karl Davis as Chairman, Members as Bob Forsberg, Victoria Darling-Orth, Roy McCutcheon, Bill Tolle, Paul Flanagan, Alan Hatfield, and Patrick F. Gill.

- Our contract with River Glen will end at the end of December 2021. We will need to begin work on a new contract by July 1, 2021. We have the option of renewing our contract for another 10 year period. Our contract with Osborn Caywood auto renews every 10 years. The fees adjust every 5 years.
- Meeting with Lake Health
Water Rights had an initial board level meeting on August 21st with Lake Health to discuss how we can help them. They asked that we bring down the lake levels together in years where we have to release water from BEM. This will create some needed water movement through the lakes in July and August. It will also keep the water level higher in Meadow Lake which provides water for Meadow Well. We noticed drops in Meadow Well as water was released from Meadow Lake.
- Roy adjusted a formula in our accounting spreadsheet which will keep us from losing our excess return flow water at the end of each month. We accrue or owe about 1 acre foot each month but we only release water to payback our deficit in June through August of the irrigation season. If our releases exceed the deficit we owe, we need the remaining water to carry over to the next month.

Water Year and Irrigation Year Summary, November 1st 2019 to August 31st 2020

- November
 - 1 Water year starts.
 - 10 We closed the gate on Meadow Lake and moved 16 acre feet of water from Rainbow Lake into Meadow and away from the Sunset Lake Dam Site.
 - 10 Total Storage was 68 Acre Feet.
 - 20 Our Water Rights went into priority and we started storing water.
- February
 - 29 The Old Ish Annual Meeting was held and we received 24 acre feet of water for our 12 shares. I plan to use 12 acre feet for Return Flow and 12 acre feet for Augmentation. I will also need to release 5 acre feet from BEM For Augmentation. Our natural evaporation will drop the lake levels enough to cover the 5 acre feet.
- March
 - 21 The spring runoff started. It is showing to be a large volume of water.
 - 22 Total Storage is 93 acre feet. We stored 25 acre feet since November 20th.
 - 22-31 Our water rights went in and out of priority a few times and we were able to increase storage to 101.5 acre feet.
- April
 - 1 Irrigation season starts.
 - 22-25 We were in priority for a few days and we increased our storage to its maximum of 108.98 but we did not have the gate installed on Sunset Lake so the lake emptied.
- May
 - 1-23 The volume of water running into the upper and lower flumes is too great so water is running over and



around them.

24 The runoff has slowed a lot. It now runs through the upper flume but its too risky to drive the bulldozer across the river to fix the lower flume.

- June

1 The runoff has dropped to about 4 acre feet per day.

8 The runoff has slowed to the point where I could start draining off the water we have stored out of priority along with the water running over our spillways.

15 The runoff is less than an acre foot per day and we were not getting rain. It started to look like we will need to help Pinewood Springs.

15 I am storing 5 acre feet of water out of priority in our lakes and I was asked by the state to release it. I was able to get permission to keep storing water.

1-30 Instead, I was releasing our stored “return flow” water in the Thompson Valley as fast as possible to keep our out of priority water in check. This follows our decree and the state agreed.

- July

1 The runoff was a trickle in the upper flume and was decreasing.

3 Our district water commissioner is in agreement that Pinewood Springs is going to be in trouble.

6 Our district water commissioner, Jean Lever, and her staff started analyzing our decree and our spreadsheet. I provided them with a spreadsheet that shows my plans for releasing water through October.

9 The commissioner started working with Pinewood Springs.

17 After the review, the state agrees it is necessary for BEM to move all Augmentation releases up to our lakes.

1-18 We continued to release “return flow” water from the Thompson Valley.

18 I will soon release water, by order, from BEM. I am able to close the gate on Sunset Lake to capture the last remnants of water.

22 I held onto all the water and need to release it. Pinewood Springs is out of water.

22 Start of water release. I have 9.3 acre feet stored out of priority. The order is to zero out the out of priority water by the end of July. But the plan changed to stretch out the releases through August to also cover all Augmenetation releases.

22 We also found the float in the stilling well on the upper flume is sitting dry on top of an inch or so of mud. It is falsely recording .32 cfs and .04 cfs after the mud is cleared out.

24 Roy and I met with the water commissioner. Our water engineer, Jared, also joined the meeting. We developed a procedure for how we will implement our Augmentation Plan. I am updating the Instruction Manual with the procedures.

24 We have to provide accurate flume data and drain off our water stored out of priority during irrigation season whenever possible. We cannot release water without permission from the water commissioner.

- August

8 All owed to river water has been released. Pinewood Springs has a nice constant stream flowing there.

16-31 The gate on Sunset Lake remains closed. I collected 1.5 acre feet but the water was moved up and out through Meadow Lake following a request from Operations to not further drain Meadow Lake.

22 I stopped sending weekly spreadsheets to the state.

31 I am finished releasing water until next May.

We have 80 acre feet left which is 12 more than we had last November.

We released about 20 acre feet.

All gates are closed and all our water is stored in priority.

We stored 36 acre feet of “free river” water this year.

We will need to store 29 acre feet over winter to get our storage to its decreed maximum.

Big Elk Meadows Association

PO Box 440, 29 Willow Drive, Lyons, Colorado 80540 303-835-7557