

State looks at new dam sites

Friday, May 2, 2008 2:06 AM MDT

RAWLINS (AP) -- The Wyoming Water Development Commission is considering construction of three or four small reservoirs in the upper Little Snake River Valley in Carbon County.

Mike Besson, head of the commission's dams and reservoirs division, said the Savery-Little Snake Water Conservancy District has requested the reservoirs because some members need more water.

"I think there's a good likelihood we might come up with something," Besson said.

The new High Savery Reservoir provides late-season irrigation water to ranchers downstream of the confluence of Savery Creek and the Little Snake River. But Besson said there are still about 5,000 acres of land above the creek that don't get enough water after midsummer.

The commission plans to hold a meeting May 9 to consider hiring a consulting firm. Besson said the firm would examine the geology and hydrology of the valley to find three or four sites for reservoirs capable of holding 2,000 to 5,000 acre feet of water. The commission has allocated \$250,000 to pay for the consulting firm.

Besson said the cost of building the reservoirs would be paid mostly by the state, with the conservancy district also contributing.

Jon Wade, planning administrator for the commission, said the consulting firms will mainly look at sites on state and private land. While he said he's not ruling out one or more sites on the Medicine Bow National Forest, he said the lengthy federal permitting process would make them unlikely candidates.

In addition to providing irrigation water, the small reservoirs could provide fishing and recreation opportunities, Wade said.

Three firms have been chosen as finalists for the project: States West of Cheyenne, Boyle Engineering of Denver and Montgomery, Watson, Harza of Denver.