

Walla Walla Watershed WRIA 32 Planning Unit
Planning Unit Meeting
Meeting Notes

Date: April 30, 2007

Time: 7:00PM – 9:15PM

Location: Dayton Memorial Library – Delaney Room, Dayton, WA

Attendees: Amanda Cronin (Washington Water Trust), Bob Hutchens, Cathy Schaeffer (WW County Watershed Planning), David Karl (Washington Department Fish Wildlife), Don Howard, Eric Myers, Erin McMahan, Gene Warren, Greg Farrens, Harmony Paulsen, Janet Howard, Judith Johnson (Kooskooskie Commons), Kevin Scribner (WW Community College), Larry Hooker (WWCCD), Mark Wagoner, Matt Rajnus (WWCWP), Roland Schirman, Steve Martin (Martin Consulting), Stuart Durfee (Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13), Susie Carlin, Terry Bruegman (Columbia Conservation District), Tom Page, Yancey Reser.

Handouts: Agenda; prior draft meeting minutes (January 22, 2007); Memo - Matt Rajnus to Planning Unit dated 03-10-07 entitled “Steering Committee’s Recommendations for updating the WRIA 32 Planning Unit Ground Rules;” Memo – Cathy Schaeffer to Planning Unit dated 04-25-07 entitled “Staff Report: Update on the process for integrating Water Management in the Walal Walla Basin;” Memo - Matt Rajnus to Planning Unit dated 04-26-07 entitled “DOE Watershed Planning Project Application;” One Page Summary Table of Project Recommendations; Watershed Planning and Columbia River Management Workshop Handout; PU Update April 30 Integrating Water Management in the Walla Walla Basin.

Action Items:

- Matt Rajnus will draft comment letter concerning the Dissolved Oxygen (DO) TMDL; submit it to Water Quality Subcommittee for review; and then have the Co-chairs sign the final letter.
- Planning Unit approved by consensus the changes to the Planning Unit ground rules as written in March 10, 2007 Memo.
- Planning Unit approved by consensus the process outlined in the April 26, 2007 memo to address the 2007-9 Ecology request for project applications, with the Smolt application being changed from the mainstem Walla Walla to the Touchet River.

Housekeeping: A potluck supper was held just prior to the meeting. At 7:00pm, the meeting began and a quorum of Planning Unit voting members was identified. The previous meeting minutes (January 22, 2007) were reviewed and the sign-in sheet was passed around. Comments on these meeting minutes should be emailed to Matt Rajnus, mrainus@co.walla-walla.wa.us by May 7, 2007 after which time the minutes will be considered final.

Subcommittee Updates:

Steering Committee: Cathy Schaeffer updated the Planning Unit on the events of the March 07, 2007 Steering Committee meeting. One action coming from this Steering Committee meeting was some deliberation on updating the Planning Unit Ground Rules. The Steering Committee’s recommendations are summarized in the March 10, 2007 Memo to the Planning Unit, and were presented to the Planning Unit later in the meeting for review and approval. The Planning Unit was invited to register for the 2007 Workshop for Watershed Planning, hosted by Ecology in Moses Lake on May 17, 2007.

Water Quality: The TMDL’s for pH/Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and Temperature were in a comment period from April 18, 2007 until May 21, 2007. Water Quality subcommittee members noted that they

have a concern that there is a ten-year schedule to achieve water quality standards for the pH/DO as opposed to the 50 year timeline for Temperature. A Planning Unit member made a proposal that the Planning Unit make an official comment to Ecology stating that the timelines should be the same for the two TMDL's and that they should both be for 50 years (*Note: Original paper notes record that this discussion was for 25 years for both TMDL's but after the meeting it was clarified that 25 years was not the timeline for the Temperature TMDL and that 50 should replace 25 in the official comment*). Further musing on the long-term goals and systematic operation of the TMDL continued at this point. One major concern was the apparent disconnect between the Ecology Water Quality goals and the USDA goals for farming practices which appear to have different ideologies motivating them. Along those lines is an awareness of EPA's tendency to take enforcement actions. Water Quality subcommittee members postulated that it may take going to no-burning and no high-intensity tillage unilaterally to achieve EPA/DOE Water Quality's goals. This was discussed as a contrast to USDA's goals which appear to be more politically motivated and less ecologically driven. While these were not issues causing short-term impact to local agriculture it was suggested that we are headed down a path that will result in significant impact in the near future over these issues, that will not be easy to solve. A proactive step that we can take is to ask for EPA and USDA to discuss these issues jointly so that consistency in standards can be achieved.

Instream Flow: Amanda Cronin of the Washington Water Trust was introduced and the Water Trust's involvement in helping to develop a strategy to implement the instream flow rule mitigation program was explained. The work to date was reviewed and special attention was given to the exempt well provisions. At the June 12, 2007 Steering Committee meeting it is expected that Hedia Adelsman will be there to present new information on Ecology's development of responses to public comment, revised rule adoption documents, and revised rule language. It was commented that these mitigation requirements may force people into the basalt aquifer. A question was asked concerning the amount of change that will occur between the rule language presented to-date and the possible changes that will be made in response to public comment, all changes are expected to be "non-substantive". If substantive changes are made Ecology has to begin the public process over again.

The mitigation section is expected to include language in the final draft that allows for the delay of the mitigation requirements until May 2008. A difficulty that will need to be addressed by the Water Trust in developing their strategy will be the potential of allowing further wells in areas of lowering gravel aquifers while mitigating in another location, further exacerbating the water level decline.

Mill Creek Working Group: A brief review of actions from the April 25, 2007 Mill Creek Working Group meeting included discussion of the delayed Federal Biological Opinion for Mill Creek which is still being reviewed and is expected to be completed in 1-2 months. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) received a Salmon Recovery Funding Board Grant to do an assessment of the physical barriers and model velocities in the Mill Creek channel, the asked for volunteers to help steer this process at the Mill Creek Working Group committee and received sufficient interest. They hope to find some simple cost-effective measures that will improve fish conditions in the process of their investigation.

Planning Unit Ground Rules: The March 10, 2007 Memo was presented to the Planning Unit, and the changes to the Ground Rules were discussed. The Planning Unit voted to change the Ground Rules to include all changes as recommended by the Steering Committee, as written in the March 10, 2007 Memo.

Integrating Water Management: After the April 25, 2007 memo was presented and a summary of work to date was completed, Steve Martin of Martin Consulting Services led the remaining portion of

this topics discussion. He presented a handout entitled “Update to the WRIA 32 PU – April 30 Project Description. Steve reviewed this handout and reiterated some of the common themes that he, along with the Co-lead for this project Dan Siemann of the Ruckelshaus Consensus Center, has noticed. Some of these themes have been that the Water Management Initiative should not be prescriptive, that a new organization is not desirable because there are too many already, that some groups are being stretched thin because of the number of different processes to be engaged in, a unified vision is desired, and that the WMI should integrate vision and coordination. A Planning Unit member discussed a possible contemporary model occurring in the Puget Sound area where the Russell Family Foundation awarded three million dollars for a collaborative proposal involving three entities: People For Puget Sound, The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy these three organizations formed an Alliance which could have some relevance to current discussions.

Ecology Plan Implementation Funds 07-09: The April 26, 2007 memo describing the background of Ecology’s request for project applications was discussed and the outline for moving forward in order to have applications submitted to Ecology by June 15, 2007 was presented. Attention was given to the proposed model of developing the recommendations from April 2006 that Ecology showed interest in by including them in their 2006 Watershed Planning - Report to the Legislature. The one exception to this rule was noted as the smolt trap proposal to fund work on the mainstem Walla Walla which will be redirected to the Touchet trap as the funding situation has changed for the two projects. This deviation from the 2006 recommendations was approved by the Planning Unit. The Planning Unit approved by consensus the process outlined in the memo with the change to the smolt trap proposal.

Other Agenda Items: Susie Carlin noted that she would be moving out of the area and would like to formally notify the Planning Unit that she was stepping down from her voting membership upon her departure in late May 2007. The Planning Unit and Watershed Planning staff expressed their appreciation for her contributions to Tri State Steelheaders and the Watershed Planning efforts. It was noted that an upcoming agenda item would include reviewing and updating voting membership.

Upcoming meeting dates were presented.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.