

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

Date: July 23, 2007

Time: 6:30PM – 10:15PM

Location: WSDOT Conference Room 1210 G Street, Walla Walla, WA

Attendees: Beth Thiel (Blue Mountain Land Trust), Betty Walker (W-4 Construction Co.), Bill Neve (Washington Department of Ecology), Bob Carson (Walla Walla County Citizen), Cathy Schaeffer (WW County Watershed Planning), Dan Siemann – via phone (Ruckelshaus Center), David Karl (Washington Department Fish Wildlife), Derek Sandison (WDOE), Don Howard (Columbia County Citizen), Eric Myers (Columbia County Citizen, Co-Chair), Greg Farrens (Walla Walla County Citizen), Hal Thomas (City of Walla Walla, Co-Chair), Harmony Paulsen (Walla Walla County Citizen), Hedia Adelsman (WDOE), Janet Howard (Columbia County Citizen), Jean Dolling (Walla Walla County Citizen), Jennifer Hudson – via phone (CTUIR), Judith Johnson (Kooskooskie Commons), Kathy Bergevin (Walla Walla County Citizen), Kevin Scribner (WW Watershed Alliance), Matt Rajnus (WWCWP), Mike Harding (Walla Walla County Citizen), Mimi Wainwright (WDOE), Paul Hartwig (City of College Place), Randal Son (Many Waters Community Development), Rick Jones (Walla Walla County Conservation District), Roland Schirman (Columbia County Citizen), Steve Martin (Martin Consulting), Stuart Durfee (Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13), Tom Page (Walla Walla County Citizen), Travis Burns (WDOE), Yancey Reser (Walla Walla County Citizen).

Handouts: Agenda; prior draft meeting minutes (April 30, 2007); Draft Mitigation Guide Future Outdoor Water Use in the Walla Walla Basin (July 23, 2007); Draft Questions and Answers on the amended Walla Walla (WRIA 32) Water Resources Program Rule, Chapter 173-532 WAC, Draft Application Form- Columbia River Water Management Program Grant Funding Program.

Action Items:

- Planning Unit directed the Steering Committee to work with staff to coordinate and finalize contracts and subcontracts with Ecology and basin implementers for approved projects.
- Matt Rajnus will submit letter to Ecology informing them that WRIA 32 has no new projects to be included in the Water Supply Inventory for the Columbia River Water Mgt Program.
- Planning Unit member will comment to Dan Siemann by July 26, 2007 on the draft White Paper “Managing Many Waters”. Upon completion at the end of July 2007, Watershed Planning staff will provide a final copy of the report to Planning Unit members. Further, the Steering Committee will review options for taking the next steps in integration to include the discussion of interim sharing of staff leadership will be held at the August 6, 2007 Steering Committee meeting
- The Steering Committee will meet August 6, 2007.
- A letter of support for the Instream Flow Rule will include a Planning Unit minority report addressing a voting member’s objection to the Rule.

Housekeeping: Introductions were made and a quorum of Planning Unit voting members were identified. The previous meeting minutes (April 30, 2007) were reviewed and the sign-in sheet was passed around. Comments on these meeting minutes should be emailed to Matt Rajnus, mrajnus@co.walla-walla.wa.us by July 30, 2007 after which time the minutes will be considered final.

Instream Flow Rule Update: Cathy Schaeffer provided a brief overview of the process and then asked Hedia Adelsman (Ecology) to update the Planning Unit on the Instream Flow Rule status. Hedia explained the present standing of the rule. Pertinent points of interest were as follows: the gravel aquifer is closed to new appropriation of water rights, with the exception of permit-exempt wells for residential

use in the higher-density area with Ecology having developed a mitigation strategy for future outdoor water use and a clear structure for the state assisted mitigation program. The Department of Ecology does not have the authority to collect money specifically for the purposes of a water bank in such a way that those costs can be returned to a specific program, as opposed to the State General Fund. As such Ecology has made an effort to work with the Washington Water Trust to collect the money for a two year period to help facilitate the State assisted mitigation program. It was identified that a local entity might be better suited to do this in the future if legislative authority is granted, that is why there is only a two-year commitment from the Water Trust and Ecology to operate under this agreement. If in two years there is not a local entity able to take on this role it will continue to be the function of Ecology. A funding source for the purchase/lease of water rights to start this bank has been identified, and work has begun to seek water either via leases which are quicker to complete or water purchases in order to have water in the bank by May 2008. Documents are currently being prepared and will be available by rule signing, which is expected to occur no later than August 6, 2007.

Questions were taken at this point in the discussion and the first one concerned the monitoring efforts that Ecology would be conducting to assure compliance, this was addressed by saying that spot checks and aerial photography will be utilized to achieve monitoring and compliance. A second question was asked, will this rule encourage more basalt wells, and the response was: no the Department is not encouraging that and the measures in place in this rule are not anticipated to cause that to happen at an increased rate. Concerning mitigation zones and the term "drainages" questions were asked relating to equity between zones and consideration of existing conditions. Ecology will focus on securing mitigation water in certain priority areas, and a shallow well in hydraulic continuity with surface water would theoretically work as mitigation. The possible effects of this mitigation strategy not considering the unique situation of the Walla Walla river tributary system were also discussed. When the question was asked to the Planning Unit if they see this rule improving existing conditions, some members said no, and some said the reason had more to do with keeping things from getting worse as opposed to making improvements, thirdly some members see both sides of the question. Regarding transfers, it was stated that due to the over-appropriation of the area the river is already so allocated that transfer are very restrictive and it is not anticipated that this rule will be the reason that a transfer is not allowed. The Planning Unit considered submitting a letter of support for the Instream Flow Rule and the draft letter handout was reviewed.

The Planning Unit was unable to draft an agreed upon letter of support and the topic was tabled for later in the meeting. When the issue was revisited later in the meeting, discussion of PU member concerns continued. Various proposals for changes in language that had been suggested by the members earlier in the meeting were finalized to include storage of runoff and restoration of stream flows in springs and small creeks. At this point the group was unable to reach consensus due to one dissenting opinion. The PU ground rules were reviewed and it was noted that a possible outcome allowed if a group can not reach consensus is to attach a minority report to the letter, if consensus could not be reached. The party dissenting from consensus agreed to draft a minority report and return it to staff for incorporation into the letter and review by PU members via email. Upon approval by the PU, the letter will be sent to the Department of Ecology with the minority report attached.

Ecology Budget for 2007-2009 Watershed Planning: The process was reviewed to date, It was expected that Ecology would be able to provide the results of the Watershed Plan Implementation Funds prior to the meeting, but final decisions had not been made. Ecology is currently reviewing the information they collected, and it has been prioritized at the regional level and has been reviewed once at the State level, decisions are expected early August. The Planning Unit took action to direct the Steering Committee to work with staff at the Monday August 6, 2007 Steering Committee meeting to conduct next steps and take future action.

Columbia River Water Management Program (CRWMP): Derek Sandison, Ecology Central Regional Director, provided a review and update on the CRWMP. In addition to outlining the format and functions of the CRWMP an overview of the funding timeline for submitting projects to the program was discussed and the Application Form – CRWMP Grant Funding Program packet was passed out. It was clarified that projects having both tributary and mainstem benefits will rank highest. That is the pump exchange would probably only be a medium priority since it does not have mainstem benefits as proposed. There would be ways to make it have mainstem benefits. A storage option that improved flows in the tributary and then allowed for a new water right to be issued out of the Columbia would on the other hand be a high ranking proposal. There was discussion concerning the equity of tributary systems “giving up” there water so mainstem users could use it.

The Planning Unit was made aware that Ecology had requested a WRIA 32 update on projects for the Water Supply Inventory that the provide to the Legislature on a yearly basis and that staff would be submitting a letter stating that no Planning Unit projects are to be added due to the fact that the extent of relevant projects to the CRWMP have already been included in the 2006 Water Supply Inventory. Multiple requests were submitted to have the USACE/CTUIR present findings on the feasibility study at the next PU meeting.

Discussion of PU Future Responsibilities and Structure: The time upon reaching this agenda item was 9:10 pm, and it was decided that a brief overview sufficient to move the items forward to the Steering Committee or Staff would be considered. A synopsis of the findings and purpose of the report was summarized. It was clarified that the Planning Unit was one of many groups for which the report was written. The report was intended to reflect the perceptions of the people in the basin through a large number of interviews to better show the opportunities and gaps that exist in the Basin. This effort was undertaken voluntarily and is set up to be a conversation starter, and as such also refrains from making recommendations. Some pertinent timelines were identified including the fact that this report was developed to assist the Water Management Initiative level II; another timeline is the January 2008 legislative session for which ideas of seeking authority for a Water Bank, the WMI, or Joint Board of Control options would all need to be prepared and vetted in the next few months. Clarification was given that the main need for PU review was factual errors. At this point questions concerning the PU were addressed including the potential to achieve some of the desired results by reorganizing the PU. However due to multiple factors it became obvious that feedback on the topic would be limited and it was decided by consensus decision that the PU would get any comments to Dan Siemann, report author by Thursday July 26, 2007, that a final hard copy would be sent to the PU the week of July 30, 2007 and that the next steps to include the discussion of interim sharing of staff leadership will be held at the August 6, 2007 Steering Committee meeting.

Other Agenda Items:

Brief notification was given to Planning Unit members that the TMDL letter of response from Ecology had been received, based on the request of the PU that Ecology consider comments from the April 30, 2007 meeting. Follow-up on the TMDL will continue into the Fall 2007.

An announcement was made that the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board funding coordination for statewide SRFB grants is receiving over \$2 million of project funding and that the deadline has been extended for two weeks for applicants. Interested applicants should contact Steve Martin, Snake River Salmon Recovery Board Director at (509) 382-4115.

Upcoming meeting dates were presented, including an August 6th, 2007 Steering Committee Meeting and a Planning Unit meeting September 24th, 2007. The meeting adjourned at 10:15pm.