

Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership *Policy Advisory Group (PAG) Meeting Minutes*

Date: March 24, 2010

Time: 3:30PM–6:00PM

Location: WWCC Water and Environmental Center, 500 Tausick Way, Walla Walla, WA

Policy Advisory Group Members Present:

Hedia Adelsman, Rhonda Barker, Fred Bennett, Mike Bireley, Andrea Burkhart, Bob Carson, Amanda Cronin, Nichole Curet, Stan Heller, Mark Grandstaff, Kay Mead, Tom Page, Mike Rassbach, Yancey Reser, Roland Schirman, Paul Wemhoener.

Partnership Staff Present: Cathy Schaeffer and Matt Rajnus.

Others Present: Chris Marks, Judith Johnson, Greg Farrens, Amber Larson, Meagan Allan (for Representative Nealey).

Minutes: Introductions were made. The prior meeting minutes from the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) meeting on December 8, 2009 were reviewed, with consensus that the minutes be considered approved allowing any corrections sent to matt.rajnus@wwcc.edu by April 7th.

Cathy Schaeffer gave an overview to commence work on the strategic action planning project plan. The value of defining **Goals and Objectives** for the Partnership was discussed, and draft goals and objectives were presented to the group with comments and questions posed as follows:

- Bob Carson mentioned the need to address water quality and surface/gravel/basalt.
- Roland Schirman asked if the number of goals and objectives were too much, mentioning that all the suggested goals are good, seeing none he wishes to strike; but that there might be too much dilution if we try to do them all.
- Hedia Adelsman said the listed goals seemed to be more like strategic actions; she further suggested that the strategic planning process should be for the entire planning area (WRIA 32) and not just for Partnership goals and vision.
- Paul Wemhoener asked about “piloting” a water management program, seeking clarification from staff that our Walla Walla effort is actually the only pilot program statewide like this.
- Andrea Burkhart commented that she thinks of goals as being general and broad, recognizing that we are trying to work with ecological goals but suggesting that we also need to balance that with the user-oriented goals and emphasis on the value of certainty and flexibility for water rights holders.
- Mike Bireley offered that the Partnership should approach strategic planning by “beginning with the end in mind.” He suggested that the “end-state” that the Partnership is trying to represent is that after 10 years of piloting this program, the Partnership will have developed, tested, and approved proven techniques, procedures and policies for managing water at a basin level, at which time the local water management program would become permanent and could be solidified as a model to be replicated in other areas.

Numerous comments and questions were related to “target water flows” as offered in the objectives, including the following:

- Tom Page questioned if there will be a quantitative amount of water as target flows.

- Judith Johnson suggested the group look at a different way talk about flows, to define flows that would result in “recovery” using published flow numbers and targeting recovery of fish species to ensure that objectives result in quantification of measured flows.
- Amanda Cronin offered that we should compile and compare various groups’ preferred flow numbers, recognizing that there might be holes where no groups have set flows yet. This would enable looking at a range of flows in specific areas.
- Mike Bireley identified some positive outcomes that could occur if the Partnership were to define objectives and measures of success in terms of “delisting species” instead of focusing solely on recovery. Hedia Adelsman suggested the objectives include improvement of flow conditions using other tools authorized by the legislation, including consideration of CTUIR flow enhancement efforts and acquisitions or agreements not to divert. She further said that the Watershed Plan (2005) target flows sometimes range as low as 2cfs better than the existing conditions, so she discouraged the group from referring to these as target flows but instead suggested creating a phrase such as “target improvement.”
- Mark Grandstaff agreed that delisting is a good goal, but also challenged the group to discuss what else could be measured?
- Mike Bireley added to the delisting discussion by offering that *metrics for success* could be measured in numbers of Local Water Plans; that *outputs* of the process could be characterized as the number of banking agreements, with *outcomes* of our efforts defined as percent of flow improvement instream when most critical. Rolling it together, the *impacts* would then be measured in terms of delisting of the species.
- Mike Rassbach asked if the objectives might include consideration of climate change and adaptability, which was affirmed to be incorporated.

The group proceeded to review the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)** for analysis of the Partnerships future and strategic planning. It was noted by Fred Bennett that strengths and opportunities are often closely correlated, while weaknesses and threats are likewise related. The group proceeded to offer input on each category as listed below:

Strengths: Authorities under RCW 90.92 are unique; funding and staffing are in place; the Partnership board is diverse; there is local knowledge and high potential for success if our diverse group can agree; Ecology management supports the Partnership; the Partnership is built from strong, established entities; there is trust due to local nature of the Partnership.

Weaknesses: The Partnership has representative leadership, so individual stakeholders may not feel that their priority is being addressed (limiting viewpoints to achieve outcomes); there is lack of messaging to many water users; difficulty in showing value of this effort to general community and not just irrigators or fish concerns.

Opportunities: The CTUIR reintroduction of Chinook Salmon; capability to improve water “climate” with this program; coordination of Oregon and Washington efforts on a bi-state level; possible integration of this bi-state effort with the Columbia River mainstem efforts (national and Tribal) including the CTUIR flow enhancement feasibility study; climate change anticipated to improve wine grape growing conditions in this area, and the shift to grapes could reduce water demand.

Threats: Climate changes could require drought response for crops hurt by changes in hydrograph; lack of education and general water issues among public; fear of change; perception that doing something will negatively impact water rights; it may feel like we’re making progress but if water users are not giving up irrigated land then we may be only managing paper water.

The PAG took a five minute break, and then reconvened.

The PAG then launched into discussing the future that the Partnership seeks to create, the **Vision**. An important function of an organizational vision is to allow others to evaluate if their actions complement or hurt the Partnership by holding up potential actions against the Partnership's vision statement. There was interactive discussion by the group to consider proposed concepts and vision statements provided for review. General comments included recognition that the vision must be focused from the Partnership's perspective, with compatibility toward other organizations' visions but limited to direct where the Partnership operates rather than developing an overall basin vision. Discussion also captured comments from the **SWOT** analysis and **Goals and Objectives**, reflecting the strategic thinking that had occurred earlier in the meeting. The general movement of the group's discussion was to craft a brief and specific vision statement, considering the Partnership's mission statement and reflecting what the Partnership will be concentrating on in this pilot period. While the agenda allowed for breaking into small groups to discuss and craft vision statements for broader discussion, the PAG opted to maintain the large group discussion to settle on the following recommendation for a vision statement:

The vision of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership is to manage water locally to meet the needs of fish, farms and people in the watershed through 2019.

The PAG encouraged members to provide additional comments on the vision statement, but agreed by consensus to move forward with recommending this vision statement in a report by the Chair of the PAG at the April 6, 2010 Partnership Board meeting (7pm at WWCC Water and Environmental Center). Since the PAG was not able to reach consensus on the **Goals and Objectives** due to time constraints, it was requested that Partnership staff distribute the working draft Goals and Objectives to the PAG; staff was asked to also present the two additional areas of strategic thinking that the group was not able to review in the meeting (**Parameters for Focusing Partnership Efforts** and **Metrics of Partnership Success**). The next PAG meeting was targeted to occur in either late April or early May, where both the Parameters for Focus and Metrics of Success would be discussed along with finalizing PAG recommendations for Goals and Objectives. Up to three hours would be scheduled for the next PAG meeting to fully conduct these strategic planning discussions, along with an early introduction to development of draft strategic actions for the Partnership. The project plan calls for interaction by the Water Resource Panel as well as decision-making throughout by the Partnership Board, so the timeline for completion of strategic planning stands at September 2010.

Additional agenda items included updates and discussion of the Local Water Planning effort, with notation that the 30-day public comment period on the first Local Water Plan (LWP) proposed by Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 closes on this day (March 24th), with next steps to include SEPA review and coordination with Ecology, the Partnership and Gardena Farms Irrigation District to move toward finalization and approval. Matt Rajnus provided information on the LWP and contact information for comments to be submitted.

The Water Banking program was reported to be open for applicants, and Matt Rajnus provided application materials and answered questions on the program and process. It was noted that additional information would be provided at the Partnership Board meeting on April 6, 2010 at 7pm.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.