

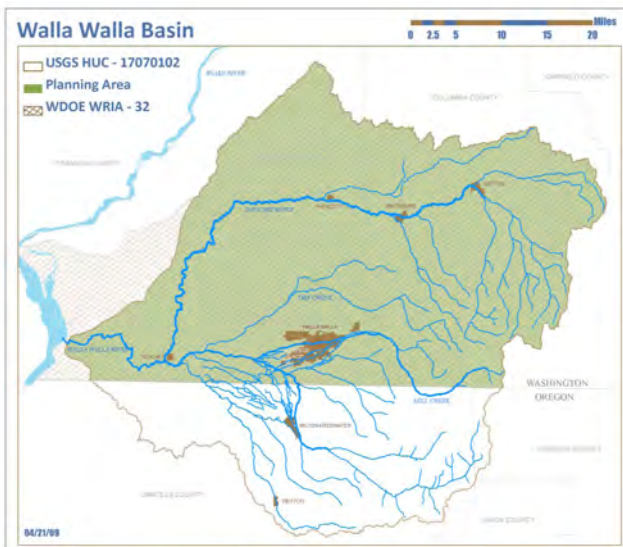
Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership

Why Walla Walla?

Piloting local Water Management

BACKGROUND INFORMATION¹

- The Walla Walla Watershed is a bi-state Basin, bordering Oregon and Washington.
- Approximately 3500 paper water rights and 3300 water right claims for agricultural use.
- Approximately 40,000 irrigated acres in the Washington portion of the Basin.
- Estimated Surface water and groundwater use is split 50/50.
- Irrigated cropping patterns are focused mainly on grass/pasture, alfalfa, alfalfa seed, grains, and fruits and vegetables.
- Dry land wheat is the most significant crop in terms of acreage and revenue.
- Water Rights issued after 1892 (Class 30) on the Walla Walla River are considered Junior.



CHALLENGES²

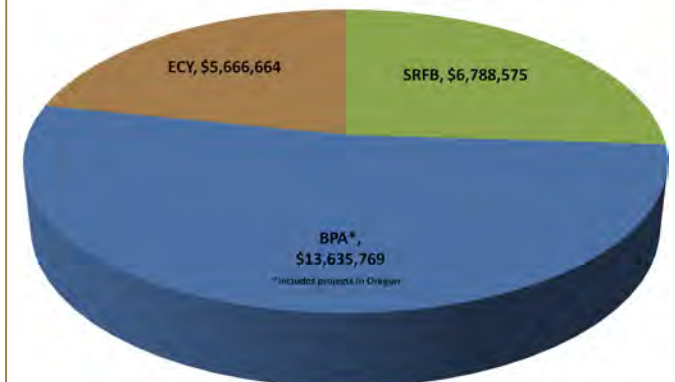
- Over-allocation of water can result in environmental, social and economics costs.
- The lack of management of water across state lines may cause inequities in both the protection and availability of water.
- The listing of bull trout and steelhead as ESA threatened species increases liability risks for water users; Spring Chinook were extirpated, lamprey may be listed under ESA in future.
- Fear of relinquishment creates perceived disincentives to reduce water use.
- Groundwater levels appear to be dropping in some areas, with surface waters in connectivity to the shallow aquifer.
- The Basin may be sensitive to climate change impacts which could reduce water availability during the summer months.
- The hydrologic needs of fish are complex and site specific throughout the basin.
- Gaps in knowledge about water use preclude more efficient management.
- Washington State has limited ability under existing laws to improve water and fish outcomes through regulatory means.

1 Walla Walla County. Walla Walla Watershed Plan Implementation 2005-2009: Forming Partnerships. June 2009.
2 Siemann, and Martin. Managing Many Waters, William D. Ruckelshaus Center. July 2007.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS¹

- Proven track record of success in developing win-win programs.
- Spring Chinook Salmon were reintroduced to the Basin after an eighty year absence, returning 765 adults to Walla Walla in 2009.
- Flow has been improved, water is now in-stream where the river historically ran dry.
- 2007 Instream Flow Rule amended to identify fish flows and limits on new wells.
- Over 230 miles of riparian buffers have been installed and approximately 300 in-stream structures completed.
- Over 350 water meters installed.
- Over 380 fish screens installed.
- 83% of 2005 Watershed Plan projects underway or complete since Plan was adopted.
- Passage of 2SHB 1580 Authorizing "local water management pilot" by unanimous vote.

Salmon Recovery Board, Bonneville Power Administration and Department of Ecology Funding: 2005-June 2009



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MULTIPLE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Basin has participated in and/or completed multiple water and fish related plans and studies:

- Walla Walla Watershed Plan and Detailed Implementation Plan
- Snake River Salmon Recovery
- Subbasin Plan
- Water Management Initiative
- Walla Walla Instream Flow Rule
- Total Maximum Daily Load study
- Walla Walla River Flow Enhancement Feasibility Study
- Bi-State Habitat Conservation Planning
- Irrigation District planning CIDMP
- Individual strategic plans for many entities and organizations

While efforts have been taken to coordinate development of plans, each plan has its own sponsor, purpose, goals and focus. Many include project prioritization tables.

Within the work of the Partnership, strategic actions may be developed building upon the completed efforts and focusing work for the future. This could also contribute to development of a single strategic agenda for the basin.

MULTIPLE ENTITIES PROVIDING LEADERSHIP & COORDINATION

The *Managing Many Waters*² report found that there were at least eight entities that were providing leadership and or coordination of watershed projects in WRIA 32.

- Watershed Planning Unit (County)
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Walla Walla Watershed Alliance
- Snake River Salmon Recovery Board
- Conservation Districts (2)
- Priority Projects Group
- Water & Environmental Center

In 2007 each of these groups had access to funding for watershed projects that they allocated and implemented at their discretion.

Representatives from these eight entities and other local leadership groups are included in the formation of the Partnership as a way to combine entities and streamline efforts to improve efficiency and focus operations. The WRIA 32 Watershed Planning Unit dissolved upon creation of the Partnership, and the Partnership now completes all Planning Unit functions.

INDEPENDENTLY IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS

Entities and organizations within the Walla Walla Basin have implemented a number of voluntary, incentive-based programs:

- Planning and Assessment Efforts
- On-the-Ground Projects
- Science, Monitoring, and Data Management

Historically, many of these projects have focused on single-variable problems, installation of riparian buffers, irrigation efficiencies, shallow aquifer recharge, salmonid monitoring or plan development..

But within recent years, the cooperative approach to project implementation has seen significant successes and is poised to launch even greater efforts, coordinating multiple parties to complete long-term projects such as improving Mill Creek passage and Walla Walla river flows. The Partnership provides an opportunity to improve coordination between entities, projects, and funding sources. This will become more important as projects become more complex, multi-jurisdictional, and long-term.

PILOTING LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT

House Bill 1580 was passed in 2009, incorporating these desired organizational elements and authorizing the development of “water management boards” which are legislatively authorized entities focusing on piloting local water management.

The water management board here was created as the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership, with legislative authority to:

- Create “local water plans” authorizing changes in water use that provide “flow from flexibility”
- Enter into water banking agreements with water holders that:
 - Leave enhanced flows instream
 - Encourage conservation
 - Increase instream flow
 - Mitigate for other uses

The Partnership’s mission, goals and objectives, and vision will guide implementation of our local pilot water management program. Strategic actions will be developed to serve as program priorities and guide benchmarks for success.