

Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership *Partnership Board Meeting Minutes*

Date: March 2, 2010

Type: Regular

Time: 7:00PM–9:00PM

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

Meeting was called to order 7:00 P.M.

Board Members Present: Jim Barrow (City of Walla Walla), Mike Buckley (Water Right User), Ed Chvatal Jr. (Columbia and Walla Walla County Conservation Districts), Greg Farrens (Citizen at Large), Judith Johnson (Environmental Representative), Dick Jones (Columbia County), Greg Tompkins (Walla Walla County), Mark Wagoner (Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13).

Staff Present: Cathy Schaeffer and Matt Rajnus.

Others Present: Fred Bennett, James Brower, Terry Bruegman, Bernie Buday, Gerri Coleman, Nichole Curet, Robert Gordon, Rick Jones, Greg Kinsinger, Paul LaRiviere, Kevin Lindsey, Chris Marks, Kay Mead, Bill Neve, Grant Pfeifer, Eric Quaempts, Tom Reilly, Roland Schirman, Craig Sivley, Jennifer Svobada, Mark Wachtel.

A quorum was established.

Introductions:

Those in attendance provided introductions.

Public Comment Period:

Grant Pfeifer, Department of Ecology Eastern Regional Director reported that Ecology continues to support the Partnership and sees it as a success.

Paul LaRiviere, commented that it may be beneficial to have time for public comment later in the meeting.

Reports:

Cathy Schaeffer presented the January Financial Statement, and noted that there was a need for some budget planning to account for the upcoming end of the State Fiscal Year.

Matt Rajnus reported that the Water Resource Panel (WRP) met February 23, 2010 to discuss a filed Local Water Plan and aquifer recharge. The next meeting of the WRP will be March 31st at 2pm at the Water and Environmental Center.

Cathy Schaeffer reported that the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) did not meet in February and proposes that they meet March 24th at the Water and Environmental Center.

Consent Agenda:

The consent agenda included consideration of the minutes from the February 2, 2010 Partnership Board meeting and approval of vouchers 64 through 78.

Action 1: A motion was made by Judith Johnson “to approve the minutes.” Jim Barrow seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

Action 2: A motion was made by Greg Farrens “to approve the vouchers.” Greg Tompkins seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

Action Items:

A Strategic Action Planning Project Plan that included convening the Policy Advisory Group was discussed.

Action 3: A motion was made by Ed Chvatal “to approve the Strategic action planning project plan” Judith Johnson seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

Amendments to the Operating Principles and Procedures and Personnel Policies Manual to be consistent with new State regulations were discussed.

Action 4: A motion was made by Greg Tompkins “to approve the amendments to the Personnel Policies Manual and Operating Principles and Procedures” Jim Barrow seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

A grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology for Planning Unit administration of \$30,000 for March 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 was discussed.

Action 5: A motion was made by Dick Jones “to approve and authorize the Board Chair to execute the Ecology grant agreement for planning unit administrative support” Greg Farrens seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

Discussion Items:

An update on the budget was presented by Cathy Schaeffer. The current operating funds were outlined, and it was suggested that a working group be created to review the details of the budget and bring back a proposal to the next meeting to address the necessary budget amendments. Jim Barrow and Mark Wagoner volunteered to serve on the working group.

An update on the Local Water Plan (LWP) process was given by Matt Rajnus. A LWP Proposal has been filed, and is currently out for public comment. The 30-day comment period runs through March 24, 2010 and information is available at www.wallawallawatershed.org/comment. An overview of the received LWP Proposal was given identifying Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 as the applicant and summarizing the projects main components: providing flow for fish, utilization of bypass flows, increasing aquifer recharge and shortened irrigation season. One of the elements involved the “bypass flows” which are flows that are bypassed by three irrigation districts since 2000 due to a settlement agreement with USFWS related to the Endangered Species Act. The proposal presented is to recapture a portion of these bypass flows lower in the basin below the confluence with the Touchet River, after those flows have served their function to augment passage flows. The water right involved in the proposed plan is a class 30 water right with a priority of 1892.

The difficulties of regulating water rights through the existing Trust Water Right program were discussed, including the differentiation between protection on paper and regulation on stream, the former being easier and the latter having proven difficult to impractical. Information showing flows at the Touchet USGS gage were presented, which showed that flows leaving the Basin in the current decade have decreased when compared to the previous decade. The wide number of factors affecting stream flow were then outlined and it was noted that flows at a gage may not be the best measurement tool for the success or failure of programs.

A schedule for review and approval of the filed LWP was introduced and discussion ensued. It was noted that due to potential drought conditions this year, it may be especially useful to have this LWP in place for this irrigation season. The Board suggested that it must be completed correctly first and foremost, as well as moving expeditiously both through the Partnership and through Ecology. It was noted that a timely WRP effort could be a key to meeting the timeline. It was also noted that we need to remember that this program is meant to pilot new ways of

managing water to enhance flows, recognizing that there will be some mistakes and we won't necessarily find all the mistakes until we complete the review; we need to get something out there and expect to learn from this, and run it through our process to learn from our mistakes. A question was raised concerning the future role of the Board with regard to funding the implementation of a LWP.

An update on the process of seeking funding through the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program was given, with Matt Rajnus updating the group that staff is planning to complete a proposal with scope of work and budget for Board approval in April. Funding from this program could help to fund implementation of LWPs in specific situations.

The current status of the exempt well mitigation program under the Walla Walla Instream Flow Rule (WAC 173-532) was discussed. Since adoption in 2007 an exempt well mitigation program has been established and currently has 6.95 ac/ft in the bank, with one more water right currently being processed to add to the bank balance. The discussion centered around research done by staff in preparation of the Board taking over operation of the program. Specific comments focused on areas where the process can be improved, including notification of persons subject to the rule, as well as the appropriate level of local operation of the program. It was noted that this is a sensitive issue that we need to make sure is working correctly. Grant Pfeifer commented that this program is an elegant solution to a difficult problem, and he will look into ways to improve the notification process.

Other Business:

None.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53 P.M.