

Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership
Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Planning
Stakeholder Meeting

Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2019

OSU Ag Extension Office

Island City, OR

ATTENDANCE: Winston Morton, Jeff Oveson, Shad Hattan, Darren Hansen, Larry Larson, Susie Snyder, Steve Parrett, Matt Insko, Tony Malmberg, Peter Nilsson, JD Cant, Jim Webster, Rodger Huffman, Curt Ricker, Adrienne Averett, Kathleen Cathey, Kyle Carpenter, Brett Rudd, Mike Burton, Jed Hassinger, Tim Bailey, Margaret Matter, Aaron Bleisner, Scott Hartell, Dana Kurtz

I. Welcome Scott called the meeting to order and brief introductions took place.

- a. The Imbler High School FFA Chapter made a presentation about the impact of water reallocation on the agriculture industry.
- b. Dana recapped the January 16 meeting: solutions presentations, groundwater memo discussions, and Step 3 Report updates.
 - i. Feedback included comments that the solutions presentations did not answer specific questions about our basins, and that the benefit matrix was too project-based and not strategy-based.
 - ii. Scott explained that the solutions presentations will be paused for now; the group will focus on subwatershed strategies to resolve critical issues.
 - iii. Scott reviewed meeting guidelines. This session is to review critical issues, suggest additional issues, or note if some need further review, and to brainstorm strategies to address critical issues. The goal is to identify as many potential strategies as possible.
 - iv. January 16, 2019 minutes were not discussed or approved.

II. Step 3 Report Update

- a. Dana shared that a vote to adopt the Step 3 Report will be delayed in light of some feedback wanting to clarify qualitative and quantitative data, and ranking systems.

III. Step 4 Critical Issues and Strategy Brainstorm Dana said that the group will use the following definition of a critical issue: "a water related problem or challenge that, if not resolved, will inhibit the ability of the community and other interests to meet instream and out of stream water needs."

A suggestion was made to list the primary function next to each subwatershed.

Step 3 Report Subwatershed 8 Critical Issues:

1. Surface Water
2. Instream Demand
3. Natural Hazards
4. Surface Water Supply data
5. Groundwater Sustainability
6. Lack of Adaptive Management

Sub8 – 1: Surface Water

There was a consensus to keep Surface Water on the critical issues list. Larry did not see it as a critical issue since the increase is small when considering 500AF is spread out over 120 days. Adrienne said that it is a critical issue because there are species listed under the Endangered Species Act in this watershed.

Sub8 – 2: Instream Demand

Rodger noted that in referencing the graph, instream demand does not appear to be a critical issue in subwatershed 8. Tim disagreed and said there are a lot of fish in those streams; steelhead and salmon swim upriver to spawn. Scott said that if the accuracy of the readings is a concern, then a sub group of interested parties will meet at a later time to work through that.

Larry said that the standard of instream water rights may need to be looked again because the model being used is from the 1970s. There is equal chance of having data in the background that is not accurate that is driving a high instream demand. He agrees with Rodger, in that there is question about Catherine Creek having a high instream demand if it boils down to one CFS difference.

Scott suggested that revising the term from “critical issues” to “issues” may be helpful. Rodger suggested removing the low – high rankings. Dana noted that making those changes, and not prioritizing issues, would allow them to move forward in recognizing that they are all issues, but not necessarily ranked in order.

There was lengthy discussion about instream demands, producing varied opinions and points of debate:

- Actual numbers of excess and deficit are unknown.
- Good data is needed before looking at other qualitative things.
- A map of water deficits & surplus throughout the entire water basin is needed.
- Focus needs to be on the amount & location of water, and location of potential excess water.
- Instream demand doesn't appear to be a critical issue in Sub8
- The issue is the deficit; the 39,000AF is an opportunity
- There are ESA-listed species in Sub8.
- There are instream flow water studies that indicate that there are flow deficiencies.
- Water storage is the first function, water delivery is secondary.

Potential solutions were suggested:

- With no irrigated ground, storage during August to November is the solution.
- Managing trees to keep the snow there longer is the only solution.
- The solution is to solve problems below this subwatershed
- Considering locations of excess water, storage has to be the solution.
- Better forest management is needed for better water release and retention.
- Land management is as important as water use management
- If you address surface water, then it addresses instream demand.

Dana asked if instream demand should be combined surface water supply. Adrienne suggested keeping instream demand as a sub issue of surface water. Tim said it is all

surface water. Jed said it could be part of the metric, with more detail about where the water is needed.

Sub8 – 3: Natural Hazards

There was no discussion about natural hazards; the consensus was to keep it listed as an issue.

Sub8 – 4: Surface Water Supply Data

A suggestion was made to change the title to “Surface Water Management.” Discussion included ideas to merge this category with other categories, including Surface Water, and Lack of Adaptive Management.

Points of debate were as follows:

- It is hard to predict what the demand will be from year to year.
- Water data is based on 1950s-1980s data set.
- The bold statement about deficit and surplus is a misnomer; the report says we don't have adequate records.
- This is the best data we have to work with.
- Sufficient surface water data is lacking and it is a critical issue for all of the basin.
- There is a real time gauging station at the bottom of 8 that will give us great history and real time information
- There are streams with fish issues where there are no gauging stations
- We need more stream-specific data (different than a gauging station)
- It is more important to identify the big problems and solutions than finer detail stuff so we can work on them as a large scale group.

Sub8 – 5: Groundwater Sustainability

There was some discussion about relisting Groundwater Sustainability as a subcategory elsewhere, or removing it, since groundwater isn't really being used in Sub8. There was a consensus to remove 5 (Groundwater Sustainability) from the list of critical issues for Sub8.

Sub8 – 6: Lack of Adaptive Management

Dana said this came from Chapter 6 of the report; the concern is that there is so much uncertainty in the data we are using and the 2068 predictions. Tim remembered that the point made was that there is a lack of flexibility in how we deal with management of water in a good year vs. a bad year; when water is abundant, we treat it the same way as when it is not.

Larry pointed out that this could be a parking lot issue. Tim saw potential solutions under this category and Dana said if it remains on the list of issues, then there is an opportunity to identify solutions and advocate for them later. Jed said another benefit to keeping it is to validate the models and make sure we are on the trajectory of 2068 predictions.

Tony thought the function of management should be as close to the soil surface as possible; there needs to be an Adaptive Management section in every tributary and piece of land. You can't manage or deal with complexity because it is self-organizing; the best we can do is influence those self-organization processes.

Jeff said that Adaptive Management has to be based on the evaluation of functioning

hypothesis. Management and Adaptive Management are totally different things. He thinks it should be a parking lot item until strategies are identified. Then Adaptive Management is described because strategies will be hypotheses.

Mike concurred with Jeff, this is what he was talking about earlier: Adaptive Management is a strategy, not an issue. If it's in the parking lot, we can put it somewhere else later.

There was a consensus to move 6, Adaptive Management to the parking lot as a potential strategy.

Dana reviewed the results of discussions:

Sub8 Critical Issues:

1. Surface Water

a. Instream Demand

2. ~~Instream Demand~~ (moved to #1)

3. Natural Hazards

4. Surface Water Supply data

5. ~~Groundwater Sustainability~~ (removed)

6. ~~Lack of Adaptive Management~~ (moved to parking lot)

Mike noted that with 82% of land being National Forests, one critical issue is that the group may not have much to say about solutions on National forests; we can only make recommendations.

Larry noted that one concern about map data remains: Sub7 shows a surplus of 34,000AF, but if a portion of it is in the 39,000AF just upstream, then it is double counted. It would be helpful to have a map showing all the subwatersheds and their demands and surplus. Dana will update the map with annual totals for every subwatershed.

IV. Conclusion

- a. Next meeting is April 17, 2019 @4pm at the OSU Extension Office and will focus on strategies for Sub8.
- b. Makeup meetings from winter will be scheduled
- c. A request was made to provide attendance history; participants must attend two of the four most recent meetings to have voting privilege.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cinda Johnston
Union County Planning Department Specialist