

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

**Meeting Minutes**

**May 1, 2019**

**Misener Room, 1001 4<sup>th</sup> Street**

**La Grande, OR**

**ATTENDANCE:** Darrin Walenta, Jesse Steele, Aaron Bliesner, Anton Chiono, Ann Hulden, Cheryl Murchison, Kyle Carpenter, Curt Ricker, Tony Malmberg, Larry Larson, Adrienne Averett, Darren Hanson, Kathleen Cathey, Brett Rudd, Bill Gamble, Tim Bailey, Brett Moore, Dana Kurtz, Donna Beverage, Paul Anderes, Scott Hartell; via phone: Jed Hassinger, Tim Wallender.

**I. Welcome**

Dana called the meeting to order and brief introductions took place.

- a. Dana provided a summary of the last meeting, which focused on potential solutions for natural hazards and discussions about recent flooding. Donna reminded everyone that there is an opportunity to have voting privileges by signing the governance agreement and attending two of the four most recent meetings before a vote.
  - i. Stakeholder Feedback: the new format was well received; there is interest in knowing the next steps after brainstorming and what process can be agreed upon to prioritize strategies. Specific feedback included comments that there was progress, was not stagnant, and it seemed to flow better.
  - ii. Direction for issues/strategies work. Dana provided the natural hazards strategies list generated at the last meeting. The purpose of today's meeting is to brainstorm potential solutions for the watershed as a whole, instead of subwatersheds individually.
  - iii. Dana provided an overview of the project process and reviewed the meeting guidelines.

**II. Step 4 Issues and Strategy Brainstorm**

- a. Dana reviewed the Subwatershed Summary (Table ES-1) that shows surface water deficit or surplus during each biweekly period. It is an annual average based on 30 years of best available data. The demand is calculated for each of the user groups: agricultural is based on transpiration, municipal is based on actual water use, and instream is based on instream water rights. Municipal demand includes cities, rural users, and self-supplied industrial users. The cities' surface water rights were not included in this table because it wouldn't count as demand if it's not being used.

b. Surface water deficit strategies

i. Capture surface water during high flows and use later in the season.

- New above ground or below ground reservoirs
- Combine reservoirs and microhydroelectricity
  - o May not be supported by electric company
  - o Geology may not be suitable
  - o Limited capacity
- Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR)  
(Eliminates environmental issues by not affecting fish)
- Store low elevation snow melt
- Deepen existing reservoirs & ditches
- Raise storage levels in existing reservoirs
- New on-stream and off-channel sites
- Linear storage
  - o Canals
    - Large, around urban basins
    - Easier to build
    - In conjunction with reservoirs (Treasure Valley)
    - Use to avoid slough overflow, then activate when at flood level (Harney County)
  - o Old sloughs (beneficial to wildlife)

ii. Improve agricultural land, grazing land, and forest land practices.

- Forest and grazing
- Water use efficiency
  - o Native landscaping & water reuse
  - o Irrigation improvements
  - o Monitoring and modeling (weather stations)
  - o Plant alternative crops (must be economically sustainable)
- Increase soil organic matter

iii. Utilize laws or policies that govern water management.

- New water reservations
- Cross basin transfers
- Split season leases
- Trade water rights
- Monetize creation of wetlands
  - o Restores water recharge to the water table
  - o Helps floodplains & wildlife habitat
  - o Financial gain for land owners
- Government subsidies for crops that use less water
  - o A lot of farmers don't want to grow crops with subsidies
- Replace surface water with groundwater
- Consider engaging US Army Corps of Engineers
  - o No current flood assistance
  - o Invite them to discussions

- iv. Collect additional data or conduct research.
  - Actual water use versus water rights
  - Demand and supply calculations (forecasting, future estimates)
  - Wetland mitigation bank to encourage and monetize creation of wetlands
  - Talk with older generations to avoid past mistakes

### **III. Conclusion**

- a. Next meeting is May 15, 2019 @4pm at the OSU Extension office
- b. Donna said that Oregon Water Resources provided funds for this project with intentions of including everyone, and it is important that it continues that way. Public input is needed in making decisions. There is a request for additional funds from the Legislature to finish this project and it looks like it will probably be approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cinda Johnston  
Union County Planning Department Specialist