

**Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership**  
**Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Planning**  
**Stakeholder Meeting No. 27**

**Meeting Minutes**

**January 8, 2020 @4-6PM**

**Misener Room**

**La Grande, OR**

**ATTENDANCE:**

Marisa Meyer, Sarah Fesenmyer, Steve Parrett, Larry Larsen, Leonard Flint, Jim McDonald, Curt Ricker, Tim Bailey, Jed Hassinger, Matt Insko, Curt Howell, Maurizio Valerio, Ann Hulden, Adrienne Averett, Bill Gamble, Tony Malmberg, Anton Chiono, Donna Beverage, Dana Kurtz, and via phone: Margaret Matter and Tim Wallender

**I. Welcome**

a. Introductions

b. Recap of December 11, 2019 meeting and voting process

i. Recommended/Considered/Not Recommended results were verbally discussed and it was determined that all strategies should be retained (November).

ii. Top 5 strategies were voted on (December)

iii. Feedback – we need a consensus vote on the high-priority strategies the group wants to focus efforts on (possibly top 6). Feedback from several group members indicated last meeting did not feel like we obtained a consensus on the strategy order so we will work on that tonight.

c. Purpose of tonight's meeting

i. Take a second look at our prioritization of the strategies and build consensus on our top 6 priorities.

d. Meeting guidelines

**II. Target Issues**

a. Water Quality Water quality concerns are present in most of the eight sub-watersheds. The concerns are predominantly high temperatures, low DO, and insufficient flow related.

b. Surface Water Deficit Surface water is limited in late fall when demand is the highest for instream and agricultural needs.

c. Groundwater Uncertainty There is significant uncertainty with groundwater supply. The UGRRW lacks groundwater monitoring wells, long term trend data, pumping data, and it is unknown whether the current pumping rate is sustainable.

d. Natural Hazards/Climate Change Natural Hazards like flooding, fire, and drought impact the UGRRW frequently and we lack an integrated plan to respond to these events.

### III. Twelve Strategies in Order from the December meeting

- a. All strategies were maintained
- b. Top 6 strategies will be the focus of the Step 5 action plan
  1. Built Storage – Aboveground Off-channel
  2. Built Storage – Aboveground On-channel
  3. Land Management – Agricultural Land
  4. Data Collection & Monitoring
  5. Non-Structural Water Storage & Habitat Management
  6. Land Management – Public Land

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  7. Infrastructure/Land Modification
  8. Administrative Actions
  9. Land Management – Municipal Land
  10. Outreach and Education
  11. Underground Storage
  12. Research – review of existing information

### IV. Listening Exercise

- a. Which strategies in the top 6 do you support and why?
- b. Which strategies in the top 6 do you NOT support and why?
- c. Which strategies in the bottom 6 should move up and why?
- d. Which strategies would you volunteer to be on a working group for implementation?

- Anton – Support top 6; would add Research; may be opportunities to combine some. Very concerned about On-channel Storage.
- Steve – Support top 6; would move Outreach & Education up; combine 1 & 2. Hard to meet on-channel requirements.
- Jed – Support top 6; combine 1 & 2; would like to see Underground Storage moved up. On-channel is very limited, but should not be ignored. Land Management strategies could be moved down; hard to see this group impacting those.
- Matt – Support top 6; combine 1 & 2; most return on investment is off-channel; agree not much impact we would have on Land Management; combine Research with Data Collection. Underground Storage should move up.
- Bill – Support top 6; if one had to be moved down, it would be On-Channel Storage. Infrastructure should move up.
- Marissa – General support of top 6; combine 1 & 2; Outreach and Education should be moved up.
- Sara – Agency supports Non-Structural Water Storage & Habitat Management, Land Management, and Data Collection, and Outreach and Education. Would not support Built Storage – On-Channel.
- Tony – Support 3-6; would move Administrative Actions up; Outreach and Education is also very important. We need to think about ag producers and how we got to where we are. Biggest area of impact we could have is Non-Structural Water Storage & Habitat Management.
- Leonard – Key to resolving fall water problems is water storage; seeing consequences of poor land management/less forest cover; flooding is an issue even within city limits of Union.

- Jim M – Support top 6 and agree that Rhinehart Gap should be considered as a solution; we lack water in the fall and need to keep more in the Grande Ronde Valley. We have both extremes: flooding or low water.
- Larry – Support 1 & 2, others are marginal, and against 5. We cannot address shortages. We don't have objectives right now to evaluate strategies.
- Curt H – Support top 6 to some degree; Research should be combined with Data Collection. Ag producers are doing the best they can with the conditions, but we need storage to address major issues.
- Curt R- Support top 6; Infrastructure/Land Modification should be moved up.
- Tim B – Agency agrees with concept of storing water; support Off-channel Storage. Hard to conceive On-channel project that would not impact fish. Underground Storage should be moved up.
- Adrienne – agree with Tim's statements; combine 1 & 2; would move Administrative Action and Outreach/Education up;
- Ann – Combine 1 & 2; Combine 4 & 10; move up Underground Storage and Infrastructure/Land Modification
- Maurizio – All priorities have value. Combine 4 & 12, research informs data collection. Move Outreach and Education up. Crucially important to engage with Land Management as much of forest land is in private ownership.
- Margaret – Agency can best help by supporting the community, and could be helpful with Data Collection and Land Management options.
- Tim W – Would support top 6, except 4 & 5. Capturing water would benefit flood control, tourism, hydroelectric, wildlife, agriculture and recreation. He would not recommend moving any lower strategies up since they all reflect the collective votes of the group. He would be willing to work on 1, 2, and 3. If there are a lot of concerns for on-channel storage, he would like to see more discussion about that and have those concerns addressed.
- Donna – This group could consider providing a letter of support for City projects.

## **V. Discuss Possible Modifications to Top 6 Strategies**

Dana summarized that most everyone wanted to move Outreach and Education up, combine Research and Data Collection; move Land Management – Public Land down. Two people wanted to move Land Management – Agricultural Land down. All strategies would be kept, with the top 6 as a focus in the Step 5 Action Plan. Others can be still supported and moved forward. Steve suggested that this group could be effective in supporting existing efforts in Public Land Management through advocacy, funding, and other work.

Some concerns were voiced about a potential 200-year timeline for projects. Other comments supported that timeline considering there are more than seven generations that have lived here.

Larry shared his concern that objectives are not defined well enough, which would spell out the extent of a problem and how long it would be addressed; we need direction that comes from objectives. Tony shared that objectives would be defined next, but we need goals first.

Adrienne requested that the table show vulnerabilities to each watershed to see which

top strategies supported those. Dana said that would be included in the Action Plan, but we could do more. Curt H. added that a list of pros and cons for each strategy would also be helpful. Anton noted that it may be worthwhile to seek an expert opinion about laws and regulations to make sure we are not spinning our wheels. He added that indirect strategies are just as important and we need to recognize the power of advocacy.

**VI. Next Steps**

- a. Next meeting we will have a consensus vote on our prioritized list of strategies
- b. Next we will finalize our Step 4 Report (will contain action plans)
- c. Then we will begin on Step 5 – which summarizes Steps 1-4 and creates an implementation plan. Step 5 guidance will be sent out after this meeting. We will generally focus on top strategies, with opportunistic work occurring for all strategies.

**VII. Conclusion**

- a. Next meeting is February 26, 2020 @4pm, Misener Conference Room  
Sara will present information on ESA permitting process; Anton will present information on Underground Water Storage.
- b. Other comments (none offered)

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cinda Johnston  
Union County Planning Department Specialist