

**Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership
Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Planning
Stakeholder Meeting No. 37**

**Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2021
Conference Call**

ATTENDANCE:

Jesse Steele, Jim Webster, Bill Gamble, Curt Ricker, Jed Hassinger, Winston Morton, Matt Insko, Kyle Carpenter, Joe Lemanski, Tony Malmberg, Larry Larson, Anton Chiono, Tim Wallender, Steve Parrett, Donna Beverage, Jason Meledy, Darrin Walenta, Curt Howell, Dave Johnson

I. WELCOME

a. Introductions

b. Meeting Guidelines

State your name when speaking, speak up, mute your microphone when not talking, and use chat function to share ideas/comments when others are speaking.

c. Recap of January 13, 2021 Stakeholder meeting

Dana reported that working groups were established and met at least once since the last meeting. The steering committee anticipates moving forward with efforts to meet goals and objectives outlined in the planning process, which includes identification of task purposes.

An explanation was given about this process moving forward. Some agencies will assist with the next step in securing funding. Once a potential Federal partner is identified, a determination will be made to establish a lead for the feasibility study. If a Federal partner cannot do that, then the county will go through a solicitation process. The study will then move forward and projects will be determined.

Jan. 13 2021	Revisions to Step 5
→	Work Groups meet
Feb. 10 2021	Adopt DRAFT Step 5
Mar. 10, 2021	Finalize/approve Step 5 Submit plan to allow 30-60 days for agency review (ODA, ODFW, OWRD, DEQ)
Apr. 2021	Wait/work implementation
May 2021	Wait/work implementation
Jun. 9, 2021	Presentation to OWRD
Jun. 30, 2021	Grant extension expires

II. Step 5 Plan

a. Updates on each work group

i. Built Storage

Brett reported that the current concern is getting support for an underground storage feasibility study around the Catherine Creek area. This group will add a summary to the

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Step 5 report, the purpose of this effort, and then identify milestones for the next few years and beyond. A progress summary will be created with the intention of it being a working document that will ultimately change overtime. An annual report will be presented to the group and posted on the County website.

ii. Ag

Jed reported that focus areas include outreach & education, research, and best practices. There are many existing programs that are not being utilized. There is a potential to bring a core group of producers together to apply for a conservation grant thru NRCS. It is most effective when growers see application of new practices and that they are working. Exchange of best practices, research and results can be shared once periodic meetings are established. This working group will meet again to plan outreach and the steps needed to access the conservation grant. Darrin added that they are exploring other funding sources designed to fill knowledge gaps; this fits in well with research and outreach.

iii. Data

Jesse reported that this group has met twice and recommendations were made to add other members. Their tasks are generated directly from reports; they want to tackle the highest priority projects first. They plan to prioritize data gaps; there are a lot of them and many will be large efforts. They talked about existing data collecting efforts and the importance of maintaining stream gauges. It has been a struggle to maintain funding and keep them operational so that is a top priority. One purpose is to collect data that will inform other sub groups and they want to have good communication with them. Water quality was initially approached as a separate task, but it aligns well with data gaps. Those gaps will be filled as the water study is completed. Brett added that they anticipate funding for a feasibility study (above ground and underground storage). One of its requirements is flow determination so this group will work directly with the data gathering effort.

iv. Habitat

Jim reported that the purpose is to raise awareness of work already being done and the impact of that work. The first task is providing outreach and education. It would be good to mix presentations and field tours to see the full scope of projects taking place throughout the basin. This group will look at the amount of water that could be stored in potential floodplain projects, with outcomes that could affect the goals. Efforts will be made to combine data produced from this partnership with the GRMW Restoration Atlas, prioritizing target fish populations. This effort would also allow for cross-referencing of water deficits, water quality, and natural hazards. Consideration will be given to shift overlapping projects to other areas in sub-watersheds groups. First and second year milestones include field tours to increase involvement and making efforts to find out why some producers are not engaged. A team member will be identified to look at projects, see what is being done, and assess priorities. Funding strategies will be reviewed regularly. In years two through five, this group will look at ongoing projects and their outcomes. 2040 objectives include improvement of water temperature and PH in sub watersheds, and reducing the water deficit through floodplain storage.

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v. Public Land

Bill reported that the biggest tasks are to increase engagement and raise awareness about the ways forest management activities can meet Place-Based Water Planning goals. There are opportunities for collaboration and supporting existing projects, such as the Blues Collaborative. A summary of current projects is available on the USFS website. The USFS and PBP partnership have shared goals; the USFS is responsible for many of them on the National Forests. This group will identify specific National Forest management, assessment and mitigation efforts, as well as how partnership goals can be supported while ensuring water quality. Future plans for this subgroup are to schedule field tours and to provide presentations and periodic updates.

vi. Infrastructure

Jed reported on flood mitigation discussions. This group will establish a natural hazard mitigation plan, beginning with lending support to others and gathering data. They are working on efforts to establish a hydraulic model study (Bureau of Reclamation) based on last year's flooding. The hope is that the Bureau of Reclamation will help with an application of that model. This group hopes to identify causes of flooding. There is question about whether sediment is causing the backwater effect. They are looking into the possibility of securing funds to expand a sediment study currently being performed by GRMW (Kayla), who has recent data from a flyover of the whole valley. A meeting was held with the Union County Emergency Manager to discuss the potential of having an integrated levee system with the help of the Army Corps of Engineers. The reality is that it would require buy-in from landowners and it is believed that unanimous support would be slim. An alternative would be a floodway easement program through NRCS; more information about implementation is needed. This group will also meet to discuss open irrigation to mitigate flood issues.

vii. Administrative Actions

Anton reported that in managing water and water rights, the objective is to reduce the overall water deficit in basin. This would allow water rights holders and users to use and manage water in the most efficient way possible within the law and existing programs. This group will focus on making it easier for others to find information on how to manage water rights, like transfers. The State has terrific program resources, so it will be helpful to have all of them listed in one place with examples of current water rights holders using those resources. This would help them see real-life examples in action and working. A lot of those programs are very useful, but not permanent. This group envisions taking on an advocacy role, such as talking to the Legislature.

viii. Municipal

Kyle reported that cities struggle in different ways and it would be helpful to have a formal agreement between the cities to work together, pool resources, and access grants and funding opportunities. The first goal of a mayors meeting would be to review the FEMA approved hazard plans to see which cities may be interested in an update. Some cities missed out on funding in the past, so putting mitigation efforts in place would help cities access those funds.

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ix. Education/Outreach

Dana reported that this group contacted Roxy who had submitted ideas to the partnership in the past; she may be able to help again, but with limited time. Donna reported that they talked about field tours and creating a clearinghouse website; she would like that to be overseen by GRMW. Information about water usage for lawn care can be provided in city newsletters, water bills, and websites. GRMW (Alex) is creating digital storytelling that would help the group share the valley's water history.

b. Review Step 5 Plan

Dana reported that the Step 5 Plan continues to be revised; today's feedback included:

- Jed: The Plan needs to be as thorough as possible.
- Larry: Quite pleased with where we are. Things are moving in a positive direction. We may find that some actions are realistic and some are not, and some may be in opposition to others.
- Tony: The Subgroup summaries are helpful.
- Anton: We are in a good place to wrap up initial efforts and begin a new phase of work.
- Darrin: Feel good about where are as a team and looking forward to the next phase of implementation.
- Dave: Agree with others, just need to keep momentum going.
- Winston: It's impressive to hear the amount of work accomplished by the group.
- Donna: Appreciate time spent to iron out differences while being respectful to each other and looking at all issues. The purpose is to help all water uses and do no harm to any water users. Appreciate that OWRD asked for our opinion and invited us to the table. Looking forward to implementation ideas.
- Matt: Questions about when this group will move forward with a vote and a plan. It is described as a living document; will that process of constant evolving prevent the group from moving forward with projects?
- Brett- The PBP group needed to meet final document requirement set forth in this process by OWRD. The purpose of the living document is move forward with momentum, increased awareness, identification of deficits, and open communication. We don't want this to be the end of efforts.
- Dana: new updates will be reviewed and voted upon every year, and individual projects will continue on regardless.

III. Conclusion

a. Next meeting is March 17, 2021 (5-7pm)

b. Other Comments

Donna adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cinda Johnston
Union County Planning Department Specialist