



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Water Resources Commission

**FROM:** Thomas M. Byler, Director

**SUBJECT:** Agenda Item F, March 17, 2022  
Water Resources Commission Meeting

### **State Recognition of the Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership's Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Plan**

#### **I. Introduction**

The Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership's (Partnership) is seeking state-recognition of their place-based integrated water resources plan. The Commission will be asked to recognize the Partnership's Plan.

#### **II. Background**

Undertaking place-based integrated water resources planning (place-based planning) is recommended action 9.A of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS). This planning is a voluntary, locally initiated and led effort in which a balanced representation of water interests within a basin or watershed work collaboratively and in partnership with the state to complete a five-step planning process to: 1) Build a collaborative and integrated process; 2) Characterize water resources, water quality, and ecological issues; 3) Quantify existing and future needs; 4) Develop integrated solutions for meeting long-term water needs; and 5) Adopt and implement the plan.

In 2015, the Oregon legislature provided authority through Senate Bill 266 for the state to support place-based planning. In 2016 the Department made grants to four planning groups, including the Partnership, to undertake place-based planning using the *2015 Draft Place-Based Planning Guidelines* (Draft Guidelines-Attachment 1). The Partnership's planning effort is convened by Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage and the grantee is Union County.

#### **III. State-Recognition Process**

A planning group can choose to seek state recognition for their place-based integrated water resources plan. The Draft Guidelines call for state agencies review to the plan and make a recommendation to the Commission on whether to recognize a plan.

The core IWRS agencies, and others as appropriate, review the plan to evaluate if it is consistent with the Draft Guidelines and IWRS principles. The Department developed the *2019 Planning Step 5 DRAFT Guidance* to aid the planning groups and state agencies through this evaluation process (Attachment 2). The planning group then presents their plan to the Commission with the accompanying state agency recommendation and asks the Commission to recognize the plan on behalf of the State of Oregon. The Commission previously discussed the value of a plan, the value of state recognition, and the process for state recognition in a number of Commission meetings:

- May 2014, [Item H - Place-Based Planning](#)
- August 2014, [Item L - Place Based Planning](#)
- November 2014, [Item C - Place Based Planning](#)
- November 2019, [Item L - Overview of the Process for State Recognition of Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Plans](#)
- February 2021, [Item D - Update on Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Planning](#)
- June 2021, [Item G - State Recognition of Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Plans](#)
- August 2021, [Item I - State Recognition of Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Plans](#)

#### **IV. State Agency Review and Recommendation for Partnership Plan**

From 2016 to 2021, the Partnership conducted place-based planning following the process outlined in the *2015 Draft Place-Based Planning Guidelines* with financial and technical support from the state and other partners. In April of 2021, the Partnership adopted a Draft Plan and submitted it for formal state agency review. A Plan Review Team consisting of representatives from the Department, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board determined by consensus that several improvements to the Draft Plan were required to receive an agency recommendation for state recognition. The Partnership then worked to address the required improvements and on January 5, 2022, adopted its final Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Plan by consensus as outlined in the Partnership's governance agreement (Attachment 3). The Plan Review Team verified that the adopted Plan addressed the required improvements and is consistent with the Draft Guidelines and IWRS principles. Therefore, the state agencies recommend the Commission recognize the Plan. Attachment 4 includes draft resolution language for the Commission to consider as it makes its decision.

#### **V. Summary**

The Partnership developed a place-based integrated water resources plan in partnership with the state and adopted it by consensus. The review team reviewed the plan and determined that the Partnership's January 2022 Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Plan is consistent with the *Draft Guidelines* and the principles of the IWRS. Therefore, the review team recommends the Commission award state recognition to the Partnership's Plan.

## **VI. Alternatives**

The Commission may consider the following alternatives:

1. Vote to formally recognize the Partnership's Plan included as Attachment 3 by resolution of the Commission.
2. Vote not to recognize the Plan.
3. Direct the Department to work with the Partnership to incorporate specific changes and return with an updated Plan.

## **VII. Recommendation**

The Director recommends Alternative 1, vote to formally recognize the Partnership's Plan included as Attachment 3 by resolution of the Commission.

### **Attachments:**

1. 2015 Draft Place-Based Planning Guidelines
2. 2019 Planning Step 5 DRAFT Guidance
3. Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership January 2020 Final Plan
4. Draft Commission Resolution

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