Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting Minutes 5-19-08
Guests: Chris Pinney, Zac Pinney, Yancey Reser, John Houck, Larry Boe, Corrie Thorne, Kevin Blakely, Jon Brough,
Staff: Brian Wolcott, Bob Bower, Nella Parks, Bob Chicken, Will Lewis, Troy Baker

Meeting called to order at:  7:00 pm by Vern Rodighiero

Brian informed the Council that Wendy Harris has been hired as the Fiscal Manager.

**Nursery Bridge Fish Ladder Improvements and Sponsorship**
Brian Wolcott discussed the proposed improvements and the Water Control District’s sponsorship of the bridge fish ladder. He also discussed the Corps designs of installing rock weir structures to address channel down-cutting issues below the Nursery Bridge Fish ladder. The concerns discussed included:
1. Would there be an increase in water temperatures due to the placement of weirs.
2. In the past ownership of the fish ladder has been unclear and there’s a concern that it would be the same with the weir structures.
3. Would it be possible to address the levee structural compliance issue at the same time as the building of the weir structures?
The timeline of finalizing designs, public review, and construction as of the time of the meeting is unclear, possibly in 2011. A draft design was completed. Currently there’s funding to address the gravel management issues.

**Eastside Diversion Passage Project Update**
The diversion is holding up to the recent high flows. Brian discussed the plan and design of the 3 gate structures and the rock weir. Concerns were raised that the headgate structure didn’t appear to be working correctly at high flows. After a survey it was confirmed that the headgate and rock weir structure was built one foot too high due to the contractor using a hub with an incorrect elevation reading provided by the contracted engineering firm. The engineering firm will fix the problem at their own cost. Several agencies are now involved with the project and discussing the best “fix” for the project. Currently work is being completed on the electronic automation of the head gate structure.

**Oregon Wildlife Conservation Strategy – Kevin Blakely ODFW**
Kevin Blakely of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife led a discussion on the Oregon Wildlife Conservation Strategy. The strategy deals with “across the board” issues in regards to habitats, species, and the ways to maintain healthy fish and wildlife habitat. The main focus is on habitat. It will be a collaborative process between the agency and individual landowners to implement habitat strategies. The Strategy helps to prioritize projects and increases access to Federal funds. The ODFW will be sponsoring a Workshop and Resource Fair. Farmers, ranchers and private landowners interested in maintaining and enhancing production on their land while improving habitat for native fish, plants and wildlife will benefit from a free workshop to be held Saturday, June 21 in Pendleton. Sponsored by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Blue Mountain Community College, the workshop and associated resource fair will include information on landowners’ assistance programs, invasive species and priority native species and habitats. The Oregon
Conservation Strategy, a blueprint for wildlife conservation in the state, will be used as a basis for discussions. Presenters include representatives from Oregon Department of Forestry, Umatilla Soil and Water Conservation District, Oregon State Weed Board, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Umatilla Watershed Council. (Information taken from the ODFW website)

**Walla Walla Water Management Initiative and the Shared Governance Mechanism Update by Kevin Scribner**

Discussion on the Water Management Initiative Shared Governance Mechanism, discussed the background of the process. The Shared Governance Mechanism is currently developing strategies for protecting in stream flow from the USFWS agreement.

The SGM is currently undergoing the clarification of the “shared governances” term between Oregon and Washington.

1. Authorization to create an entity.
2. Have the Washington State legislators authorize the Washington Department of Ecology to allow the local entity the power to govern.
3. Gain operational status of the local entity.

Deadline marker for progress: Report due November 15th, 2008

What’s being built in Washington will be similar to what we have as a watershed council with the expanded capacity to regulate water issues locally.

Timeline: Request to Olympia in Jan. 09. Any decision could be signed by July 1 2009.

A water law workshop related to bi state water issues will be sponsored by Walla Walla City.

**Proposal to BPA to support Salmon-Safe farm certification program**

Salmon-Safe is a certification process for value-added products.

25 local vineyards along with WWCC declared “salmon safe”

A proposal was submitted to use BPA Fish and Wildlife funds to underwrite the assessments and leverage USDA funding. Kevin asked the council to write a letter of support.

This will be an aide to coordinating programs to get on the ground, and also provide a source of match for other programs. Malcolm Millar: makes a motion to write a letter

Ed seconds. None opposed

**STELLAR updates**

Watershed field Day: Bob Chicken thought it was successful. Teachers did too, but felt there was not enough control of the children at the location. Next year it will be held at the outdoor lab.

**Announcements:**

OWRD asked the council to cosponsor a groundwater workshop this fall. We have decided to help with the process. WA Dept of Ecology will also be involved.

Kevin: Kudos for the meeting with Jay Manning, Director of WDOE, where Bob and Troy presented their monitoring work to date, and, along with Brian, discussed future projects and policy implications of potential findings.

Meeting adjourned at: 8:25 pm by Vern Rodighiero