Walla Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council  
May 18, 2009  
Draft Meeting Minutes

PRESENT  
Council Members: Ed Chesnut, Steve Irving, Malcolm Millar, Vern Rodighiero, Kevin Scribner, Larry Widner

Staff: Bob Bower, Bob Chicken, Wendy Harris, Will Lewis, Nella Parks, Brian Wolcott

Guests: Jon Brough, Tim DeRuwe, Dale McKain, Chris Marks

Meeting called to order at 7:01 by Vern Rodighiero

Meeting Minutes  
Minutes were approved as submitted.

Feasibility Study Decision Making  
Chris Marks with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation announced the Columbia River exchange as their preferred alternative selection for the Walla Walla River Flow Improvement Project Study. The three committees reviewing the project were unanimous in their decision. Both the reservoir and exchange reached the goals but the exchange project would do a better job of reaching the goals during the summer. In addition, they felt the exchange would provide the needed water without “hamstringing” the basin’s other water needs. As the data developed it became more and more unlikely it would be possible to fill the proposed larger reservoirs. They wanted to make sure the basin had the water it needed. The exchange provides more flexibility. Chris was in attendance to answer questions regarding the decision and ask for a letter of support from the Council.

Since the decision for the exchanged project was made, the Tribes have been reaching out to stakeholders in Oregon and Washington to determine the levels of support for the project. At a subsequent May 7th meeting with various groups of interest, the decision was mostly met with support yet there were some concerns. The majority centered on the costs of the operations and maintenance of the project.

Chris answered questions:

Q: Was the temperature of the water once it arrives to irrigators further discussed to insure it could still be used for cooling of orchards and that there would be no issues with E coli?
A: The temperature of the water once it arrives at the diversion was investigated. There was not a significant difference in the temperature of the exchange water and the water at the diversion. For the concerns regarding the water being used for cooling, Margie contacted CH2M Hill. They indicated there shouldn’t be any issue since the process relies more on the evaporation and not cooling temperature. In addition, they could not come up with reasons why there would be any E coli.

Q: What is the travel time of the water from the Columbia to the Frog?
A: Chris did not know the answer but he promised to look into it.

Q: What is the plan for the O & M costs?
A: There is not yet a clear plan for these costs. There are a lot of avenues to investigate. On the Umatilla project the BPA was willing to pay costs but that is unlikely for this project. They will also be looking into getting the funding from the federal government. There are just several different possibilities to look at. In addition, during the design stage they will look at ways to make the operations more efficient. There is discussion about bringing in suggestions from the community but Margie is concerned it would slow down the progress of the project. However, Chris is working on putting together a group that could help consult.

Q: If the Council provides a letter of support it would have to stipulate that the districts and irrigators could not be responsible for the costs of the O&M.
A: Chris indicated that they expect those kinds of provisions. The Tribes know that if those costs are placed on the basin or the Tribes the project can’t go on. They are also looking into the states (OR & WA) buying in a little as well.

Q: How soon is the letter needed?
A: The letter is needed as soon as possible. It helps broaden the support in the basin and from the states. Once they get the word the final project study has been authorized, the next step is for the Corps to finish up. Washington still has to buy off on the project. There are still concerns with the Columbia River water rights in exchange for Walla Walla River water rights.

Q: Council members expressed a concern that they would give up their Walla Walla River rights for Columbia River rights and then potentially not receive their Columbia rights and end up with nothing.
A: The current law does not allow for the way CTUIR wants to run the water right exchange. Just the way they want to operate will require changes in the existing laws.

Q: If one of the issues with the exchange should end up being insurmountable, will CTUIR and the Corps then revisit the reservoir project?
A: Yes

Q: Can the letter of support be used to leverage the Corps into listening to the suggestions of the people in the basin about efficiency.
A: The letter of supported is targeted towards the Tribes. It really wouldn’t create pressure for the Corps.

Q: It was suggested that two letters be prepared. One would be a letter of support for the Tribes. The other would be a letter of concerns for the Corps.
A: Brian will develop a draft of both letters and bring to the next meeting. Chris will continue to attend council meetings and keep the council in the loop.

Q: What will the Tribes consider as success for this project?
A: Gary set goal of 5000-5500 fish up the Walla Walla River—that is the goal he’s shooting for.

Over last few months Gardena and Hudson Bay have expressed a desire to participate in water efficiency. The Corps is still not convinced they want to participate. The Corps thinks they don’t have any water to give up. It is required that water savings from public-funded efficiency projects have to go in stream and districts are still working on the paperwork. However, the tribal fisheries had to rescue fish a couple of years ago in June when there were low water flows. This could happen again if WWRID is the only district participating. If you look at flow gauges out of context you don’t see the districts putting water in the river and then having to play catch up with recent efficiency work. All the districts want to do efficiency.
Kevin suggested that the districts move forward with their own efficiencies and leave the Corps out because he’s afraid it will continue to hamper their efforts.

There were continued concerns expressed over the water quality coming from the Columbia. Chris said they were assured the water being pumped out of the Columbia for the exchange would be of the same quality.

Q: Where is the intake from the Columbia?
A: It is located just below the mouth of the Walla Walla River.

Q: Is the Corps allowed to design for a worst case scenario—like if the climate should change.
A: It would be difficult to design into the exchange program. They have talked about over designing a little because when the project is done the Corps is out of it and would not be there to make adjustments.

Q: The water rights should be considered at the size of the original right, not the smaller amount now provided to farms after what was given up for ESA listed bull trout.
A: The Corps has mentioned they would like to see water provided at smaller amount of water right, not the original amount.

Brian thanked Chris for attending and answering questions.

**Project Proposals**

Brian and Bob submitted two project proposals to OWEB; Fruitvale Water Management and the Aquifer Recharge Program Expansion. The Fruitvale proposal is an $81,425 request to pipe a short section of ditch and provide erosion control rock along another portion of the ditch that connects the West Little Walla Walla to Middle Mud creek. Also the project would install two culverts that do not function properly.

The Shallow Aquifer Recharge Expansion is an $824,400 proposal for funds to expand the aquifer recharge program to seventeen new sites. The funds will be matched with WDOE and BPA dollars. The money will finish out the Hudson Bay site and provide for drywell testing. There is a possibility of ODOT donating two sites that would be put into public trust. This will eliminate the inherent difficulties with leasing land for these projects. Additional sites will be installed along recently piped ditches. The grant will take recharge from concept being tested and make it a basin-wide program.

Last week Bob and Brian toured Sue Greer, our OWEB Regional Rep to show her the project sites. Ralph Perkins assisted with the Fruitvale project tour.

The East-side Regional Review team will be reviewing in early June. Therefore, we should find out the success of the proposals over the next month or two.

**Bureau of Reclamation Proposal for Bi-State Aquifer Recharge & Water Banking**

Brian, Bob, and Kevin have been putting together a proposal over last few weeks. A portion of the grant is for aquifer recharge analysis and design work for Oregon and Washington. In addition there are funds to set up a water banking program in Washington. There is potential for Oregon to also get in on the water banking system but there aren’t currently laws in place to support it. Our proposal is a collaborated effort with several other organizations in other watersheds. If funded, the funds will become available in
October 2009. Walla Walla’s portion is $495,000. If successful, this will develop a good funding source for the basin.

**Columbia Basin Toxics Reduction Workshop; Pesticide Stewardship Project**
The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Pesticide Stewardship Project was featured as a success story at the recent Columbia Basin Toxics Reduction Workshop in Pendleton. The water quality of the Columbia River has been an increasing focus for the Environmental Protection Agency. The toxics of highest concern are PDBEs (flame retardants), PCBs, DDT, and mercury. The workshop featured areas where toxics are being reduced, including the Yakima basin and the Walla Walla basin. In the Yakima, the toxicity of certain fish species living in the river have reduced enough that the Department of Health has stated that they are now safe to eat. A lot of the problem remains in the Snake River plains area.

Troy and Brian presented at the workshop—highlighting the successful events that have occurred in our basin. One of them being the pesticide collection event that brought in over 18,000 lbs. of outdated chemicals that people had no other way of which to dispose, another being the Pesticide Stewardship Program that the Watershed Council implements in cooperation with DEQ and the Blue Mountain Horticultural Society.

**Lincston Mountain Wind Farm**
After the last meeting Gaelectric contacted WWBWC and would like to come to discuss their proposed wind project with the Council. The project is just in a feasibility stage. There was concern raised at the Watershed Council meeting that they do not have to do an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). At a recent hearing in Helix, there was strong support for wind projects having to go through the EIS process. It was decided to ask Gaelectric to come to the next meeting to explain their current plan and it’s permitting process.

**STELLAR Program**
Bob Chicken provided an update on the STELLAR program. Recently a field day was held at Ferndale school that invited two fourth grade classes to participate in an outdoor lab. Nella, Will, Bob and Brian assisted along with Chris Penny-Corps, John Mitchell-Forest Service, and Heidi Hartman from the Conservation District helped Bob put on the event.

The STELLAR program was awarded $2,000 from the Wildhorse Foundation.

**Announcement**
Keith Woods was replaced by Steve Irving as the Milton-Freewater City Council representative to the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council. An ad will be put in the paper for the open seat previously filled by Leonard Brown. The Personnel/Nominating Committee will convene to determine the best fit for the position.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:21.