Walla Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council  
July 20, 2009  
Draft Meeting Minutes

**Present**
Council Members: Ed Chesnut, Stuart Durfee, Malcolm Millar, Vern Rodighiero, Kevin Scribner, Larry Widner, Ray Williams, John Zerba
Staff: Troy Baker, Bob Bower, Wendy Harris, Will Lewis, Brian Wolcott
Guests: Jim Burns, Sue Greer, Judith Johnson, Dale McKain, Walter Powell, Bonnie Roemer

Meeting called to order at 7:00 by John Zerba

**June 15th Meeting Minutes**
Minutes were approved as submitted.

**Upper Watershed Wind Power Siting Update**
The Watershed Council has expressed concerns regarding potential development in the upper watershed. Following the last meeting a letter was sent to County Planning expressing the concerns voiced regarding the need to ensure erosion control. The letter did not express an opinion for or against wind power development but did express the concerns of the Council. Brian followed-up the letter with conversations with Tamara Mabbott about the letter and the Council’s concerns. He pointed out to her that there needs to be a more thorough analysis since this site is located in the upper watershed and that it seems reasonable to expect this project to be required to go through the same environmental review and permitting processes as our projects. Brian indicated that our Council would be willing to be part of a task force to develop appropriate wind project site guidelines.

There is currently discussion regarding The County Land Use Plan’s Goal 5 and whether it pertains to the wind turbines planned for the Lincton Mountain area. There may need to be an amendment in order for it to have jurisdiction over the wind turbine projects. The county is still becoming aware of newer ODFW wildlife information that they did not know existed.

During his efforts to gather additional information, Brian spoke with the Governor’s office regarding what siting and permitting processes would be most appropriate for these companies. There is a huge amount of interest from wind farm companies to construct wind turbines from Hood River to Ontario. This demand is turning rules instituted in the 1970’s to protect farmland and timberland upside down.

Jim Burns stated that according to his findings, each turbine requires about 550 cubic yards of concrete per base. Gaelectric is proposing somewhere between 66 and 100 towers. To construct the site, they will need 13 million gallons of water for dust suppression and cement. Jim also cited a story he found about a study showing that wind towers caused sheep to die of sleep deprivation. One of his concerns is that the area is a critical winter range for elk and deer and the vibration will cause animals to leave.

The question was raised that if the study true, does this give rise to any legal action? The state and USFWS have laws to enforce but because the proposed sites are on private land and the species are not
endangered, there is little that can be done based on these reasons. However, in theory, the EESE (Economic, Environment, Social, and Energy Evaluation) would develop a report that would break everything down into dollars, including displaced game animals, and determine if feasible. The EESE currently has the power. It may be advantageous to send a letter to the county requesting they delay their ruling until the EESE has put together their study. The intent is not to provide any new regulations but to eliminate large commercial projects on the mountain ridges.

There are a lot of different smaller companies signing landowners up for wind turbine projects. Then the big companies come in and take over. Ed should have copies of all of the leases between wind companies and land owners. The Council would like a good map of potential sites. The Council would like to be able to give preference of places of sites that would have less environmental impact.

Brian is communicating with the Network of Councils to see if other councils are having similar issues.

Bob and Brian have received a lot of requests to assist in this arena. Because these duties are unfunded and have been taking a large amount of their time, they asked the Council how they would like them to proceed on this project. It is difficult to spend a lot of time on non-funded projects when have funded projects that needed to be completed. The Council staff wants to stay in line with what the board sees as a priority but also in line with what can be supported with science.

The Council would like to remain visible in regards to the wind turbine issues and continue to raise concerns.

**Nursery Bridge Grade Control Project Update**
The Flood Control District, concerned with maintenance obligations and with the existing grade control structure failing, is reconsidering whether to continue as the Corps’ sponsor. This could delay the project and could mean a loss of Corps funds. The Gravel Management Plan may move forward. The Flood Control District is concerned about liabilities, and the gravel wash out and failing concrete needs to be fixed.

The Corps says the current drop structure doesn’t meet standards. They want to put in a new and different drop structure downstream of the failing one. However, if anything happens after its installation, the Flood Control District is likely to be responsible repairs. The grade control project manager asked if the Watershed Council would be willing to step forward to sponsor the project but Brian has the same concerns.

The project is partially funded with stimulus funds but the money could go away because of the delay. The corps could have put the entire cost into their stimulus package but didn’t.

The city and Water Control District received a letter from the Governor stating they were selected for funds to bring all parties together to resolve the issue. A meeting with all vested parties and supported by the Governor may provide the environment for a holistic solution.

**Eastside Diversion Project Update**
The electrical work is complete. The automated headgate is working very well. The agencies are closer to a consensus on a final design for the rock weir that will divert enough water for Eastside but also allow for fish passage. The automation has been a great advantage for Teresa. She says it “works like a dream”. The designs may be ready so that we can move forward next summer. We are finally making progress with federal agencies. We may be asked to be fiscal manager. If additional construction work is required, ODFW will be taking more ownership of the project.
**Washington Department of Ecology project update**

WWBWC will receive $800K-$900K in WMI project phase III capital funds. We are working with Gardena Farms with deal systems. A proposal for an aquifer replenishment program was submitted on the Oregon side but was not initially funded. We can reapply in the fall. There is also a question of budgets. OWEB is down $14M from what was originally projected. Still, nothing is set in stone. The application will be reviewed the first part of August. In September, a pitch can be made at the OWEB Board meeting. The staff will communicate with Sue Greer to get on the agenda. There are not more funds in Washington but we scored higher on the Washington side.

**Walla Walla River Flow Feasibility Study Update**

The Corps and Tribal Fisheries staff are working with the WWBWC, the irrigation districts, and others to work on modifications that could reduce the overall costs of construction and O&M. A technical meeting will occur to discuss these modifications.

**Announcements**

Fish count (preliminary) for the winter 2008/ Spring 2009 run year:
- Steelhead -585 plus 2 days video was down in the peak of the run
- Chinook Salmon – 575 adults and 167 jacks plus a few stragglers
- Bull Trout -138 counted moving up or downstream

OWEB Watershed Restoration Grant deadline is October 19th

**Meeting was adjourned at 8:23.**