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NAME

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Walla Walla Watershed

Management Partnership

Dear NAME,

We are writing this letter to existing and proposed members of the Steering Committee for the Walla Walla Basin Integrated Flow Enhancement Study (Flow Study). For existing members, this is a call to action to renew your participation to this important effort and diagnose whether your current role (i.e. voting, ex officio, or advisory) is appropriate moving forward. For new members, we’re asking for you to consider participating in an advisory capacity to help inform our efforts moving forward, but are open to considering other participation levels if requested.

**What is the Flow Study?**

The objective of the Flow Study is to determine the best package of options for achieving Walla Walla River stream flow targets for native fish species while maintaining the long-term viability and water availability for irrigated agriculture, residential, and urban use. The Steering Committee has adopted the following flow targets that are intended to compliment instream flows adopted by rule in WAC 173-532-030. The flows adopted in WAC 173-532-030 are higher in some cases than the Flow Study Flow Targets, but only apply to new water rights issued by Ecology, not existing water rights. The Flow Study Flow Targets would be used to develop a list of projects that would ensure that the flows will be met while respecting existing water rights. The result will be higher average instream flows and greater certainty for existing water users.

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| **Time Period** | **Flow Study Flow Targets** | **WAC 173-532-030 Flows Range by Gage** |
| **April 1—June 15** | **150 cfs** | **95 cfs to 350 cfs** |
| **June 15—June 30** | **100 cfs** | **95 cfs to 125 cfs** |
| **July 1—November 30** | **65 cfs** | **41 cfs to 150 cfs** |

**Who is the Steering Committee?**

Stakeholders in the Walla Walla River Basin have begun implementing the Flow Study process to determine the best package of projects for increasing streamflow while maintaining the long-term viability and water availability for irrigated agriculture, residential, and urban use. The existing Steering Committee is comprised of Oregon, Washington, and Tribal representatives and have been regularly meeting for several years to collaboratively work towards meeting the Flow Study objectives. The following tables identify current and **newly *proposed*** members (in **bold)** of the Steering Committee and the roles for each category of member.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Voting Members: Attend meetings, review materials, provide feedback, and vote. | |
| Gardena Farms Irrigation District | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife |
| Walla Walla River Irrigation District | Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife |
| Hudson Bay District Improvement Company | ***Washington Water Trust*** |
| Bergevin – Williams and Old Lowden | City of Walla Walla |
| Fruitvale Water Users Association | City of Milton-Freewater |
| Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation | Kooskooskie Commons |

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| --- | --- |
| Ex-Officio Members: Same as voting members but without voting authority | |
|  | Trout Unlimited |
| Walla Walla County Conservation District | Columbia County Conservation District |
| Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council | Umatilla County Soil and Water Conservation District |
| Oregon Water Resources Department | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Washington Department of Ecology | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
|  | Oregon Department of Environmental Quality |

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| Advisory Members: Will be kept updated and can provide input to the level desired but not expected to attend meetings. | |
| Umatilla County Commissioners | Washington Department of Agriculture |
| Walla Walla County Commissioners | Oregon Department of Agriculture |
| Columbia County Commissioners | U.S. Corps of Engineers |
| U.S. Congressional Staff | Bureau of Reclamation |
| State elected officials/ Staff | U.S. Forest Service |
| National Resources Conservation Service | Snake River Salmon Recovery Board |
| The Freshwater Trust | Tri-State Steelheaders |
| ***Washington Environmental Council*** | ***American Rivers*** |
| ***Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation*** | ***Nez Perce Tribe*** |
| ***Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation*** | ***Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*** |
| ***Oregon Environmental Council*** | ***Washington Farm Bureau*** |
| ***Oregon Farm Bureau Federation*** | ***Columbia Riverkeeper*** |
| ***Blue Mountain Land Trust*** | ***The Nature Conservancy*** |
| ***U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*** | ***Oregon Water Watch*** |
| ***Northeast Oregon Water Association*** | ***Oregon Water Resources Congress*** |
| ***Washington State Water Resources Association*** |  |

**Why Should You Actively Participate?**

The Steering Committee understands very well the commitment necessary to participate in complex and sensitive water management planning efforts. This is a critical time in the development of the Flow Study. Below is a summary of some of the key issues and plans currently facing the Steering Committee that your voice can help shape.

* Five (5) Alternatives have been developed to move forward for further feasibility evaluation and environmental review that meet the Flow Study Objectives.
* Environmental review, consisting of SEPA scoping and development of a NEPA/SEPA integration strategy is planned for 2018.
* The 5 Alternatives range in cost from approximately $169M - $338M, which will necessitate significant state, local, and federal funding partners.
* The 5 Alternatives incorporate a myriad of projects including storage, conservation, water markets, aquifer recharge, and pump exchanges. All 5 of the Alternatives include either a major pump station on the Columbia River that will exchange current irrigation district supplied by the Walla Walla River with Columbia River flows, or a new large reservoir in the Pine Creek Basin ranging in size from 33K to 45K acre-feet of water.
* Oregon and Washington are collaborating on ways to help ensure investments in flow improvements can be legally protected in both states.
* We are in the process of revisiting our charter and operating procedures to determine how the Steering Committee can be transformed into a Bi-State Caucus with sufficient authority to meaningfully shape our plan moving forward.

The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council has maintained a robust website to summarize our work to date. The following link contains more information about the Flow Study status and existing products. <http://www.wwbwc.org/assessment/57-wwflow.html>

The Steering Committee looks forward to integrating the expertise, ideas and resources of new members into the Flow Study. Please contact Chris Hyland (contact information below), with any questions and to respond to this important invitation. If possible, an acceptance response by DATE, would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Chris Hyland Brian Wolcott

Executive Director Executive Director

Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council