

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting
March 17, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Board Members: James Baker, Jeff Catlin, Caty Clifton, Jack Ferrise, Joel Huesby, Steve Irving, Ralph Perkins, Vern Rodighiero, Kevin Scribner, and John Zerba

Staff: Troy Baker, Wendy Harris, Sara Harris, Graham Banks, Tara Patten, Eric Hoverson, Cat Garza, and Colin Meister

Guests: Michelle McClellan and Brandyn Chaney

(7:00 PM) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair John Zerba. A quorum was confirmed.

(7:01) Approval of Minutes

Motion: Joel Husby moved to approve the February 2025 minutes.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

(7:02) Endowment Discussion

John Zerba noted receipt of a draft endowment agreement from Kol Medina. John Zerba and Troy will scan and distribute to board members. Members may direct questions to John.

(7:04) Strategic Action Plan Update

An update was shared on the Strategic Action Plan committee. Two recent meetings occurred with strong progress. The next committee meeting is scheduled within two weeks.

(7:06) Flow Conditions & Stream Monitoring – Tara Patten

Tara provided a detailed flow and snowpack update in Luke Adams' absence:

- South Fork: 230 CFS (previously ~115 CFS); North Fork: ~60 CFS; Mill Creek: 200–300 CFS; Pine Creek: 25 CFS
- Little Walla Walla diversion reopened after temporary closure
- Stream measurements and rating curve adjustments continue following high flows and channel changes
- Snowpack: 112% of 30-year median; hydrographs and volume data show above-average water year

(7:20) Limited License & Recharge Discussion

OWRD has requested further information from WWBWC for the recharge license review. Ralph Perkins recapped the discussion with OWRD: up to 15–25 CFS could be allowed to flow through Little Walla Walla for domestic/stock water uses if deemed reasonable. The primary concern remains finding funds for winter maintenance to keep the system operating.

(7:30) ESA Compliance & Pesticide Mitigation Workshop Recap – Cat Garza

Cat summarized the March 4 ESA workshop facilitated by WSDA and NOAA:

- Covered pesticide-use limitations in PULA-designated areas and challenges with EPA's Bulletins Live Two website
- Exercises evaluated mitigation measures and bulletin navigation; highlighted inconsistencies in state and federal systems
- Emphasis on improving accessibility, clarification of regulations, and need for local input on mapping
- Future EPA/NMFS guidance likely shaped by this feedback

(7:45) North Fork Project Update – Eric Hoverson

Eric shared restoration successes:

- North Fork ranked #1 out of 63 applications for a major grant; also will likely receive additional mitigation funding
- Notable habitat improvements include new perennial side channels, complex wood structures, reduced erosion, and groundwater-fed wetland creation
- Positive landowner feedback and increased biological diversity observed; visual monitoring shows significant ecological recovery

(8:00) Dry Creek Open House Recap – Cat Garza & Troy Baker

- Event drew ~30 landowners and stakeholders; excellent community dialogue and multiple follow-up site visits planned
- Some landowners expressed interest in restoration projects; several provided written access permissions for assessments

(8:08) Outreach Update – Sara Harris

- Upcoming Water & Wine: March 26 @ Echolands Winery (speaker: Brian Rudin); Pub Trivia: April 9 @ Beer Parlor
- Cultural Pest Management workshop postponed due to presenter conflict; rescheduling underway
- WWBWC submitted a well-reviewed OWEB Community Engagement Grant; includes funding for website overhaul and bilingual ArcGIS StoryMaps

(8:13) Executive Director Transition Announcement

Troy Baker announced his resignation effective April 18, 2025. He has accepted the Water Resources Program Manager role with CTUIR. Board members expressed support and appreciation for his two decades of service. Succession planning will be addressed in the coming weeks.

(8:20) Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.