

**Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership**  
**Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Planning**  
**Stakeholder Meeting**

**Meeting Minutes**

**September 25, 2019, 4-7PM**

**OSU Extension Meeting Room**

**La Grande, OR**

**ATTENDANCE:** Robb Rea, Dave Johnson, Leonard Flint, Rodger Huffman, Tony Malmberg, Curt Howell, Steve Parrett, Shad Hattan, Jim Webster, Tim Bailey, Jed Hassinger, Cheryl Murchison, Tucker Billman, Bill Gamble, Curt Ricker, Margaret Matter, Mike Burton, Darrin Walenta, Donna Beverage, Ann Hulden, Jim McDonald, Jesse Steele, Dave Johnson, Randy Jones, Brett Moore, Dana Kurtz.

**I. Welcome** included introductions with homework reports:

a. Recap of July 17, 2019 Stakeholder meeting: Major strategies overview, spreadsheet information, filled out one strategy category together. Homework from last meeting: completed spreadsheet and ranking (recommended, considered, not recommended).

Homework results/comments from stakeholders included: some points are invalid and not feasible, there are some conflicting possibilities; water problems are more than a nuisance; flooding is the worst we have seen and it will only get worse; we need immediate solutions instead of monthly meetings; all strategies are viable, some come first and others build on that; spreadsheets are helpful; it was hard to rank and lump together a wide variety of strategies; some descriptions are too vague.

b. Place-based planning recap: Established as a collaboration between stakeholders planned as a two-year effort, now extended to three years; we are currently on step two of five. Governance agreement is available for everyone to review and sign onto for voting rights.

c. Meeting Guidelines: Respect all ideas, one speaker at a time, offer solutions.

**II. Step 4 Major Strategy Review**

a. Overview of next steps: brainstorming sessions for major and sub strategies; purpose of today's meeting is to get general consensus from the full stakeholder group about Major Strategies; next step is detailing major strategies, and last step is implementation (Step 5).

b. Major strategy categories review and ranking: (see attached)

c. Discussion points and opinions included:

- Stakeholders new to the partnership are encouraged to be involved and share their ideas. Reports are available to everyone better understand the process and how we arrived at this point.
- Goal is to bring in diverse interests during this process so that project

implementation represents priorities as decided by the diverse group, not just one or two interest groups. Projects are more likely to be funded when they've been vetted and chosen by a diverse group.

- We want to know where we can get the biggest bang for our buck and which strategies represent the group's interests.
- There is an immediate need to mitigate flooding, not 8 years from now.
- Union County is the last place in the state that does not have water control and we need to find a way to fix it.
- Flood damage to ag producers and not having enough water other times of the year is a high priority; flooding continues to worsen.
- The state ditch needs to be fixed; off-channel solutions need to be considered and may be more important than research.
- Forest Management practices (opening ditches and monitoring logging operations) would help mitigate flooding.
- The question is what to do about flooding; it is a priority and it's going to take work and money. We need to determine which ideas will have the most impact and are most feasible.
- Are there any government-funded instream storage projects in the west to mitigate flooding, provide irrigation, and recreational opportunities? Wolfe Creek was done without a lot of data gathering and all the additional steps we are listing.
- Curt, Donna, & Darrin are interested in joining a flood mitigation working group to develop short time frame ideas to be brought back to the partnership.
- Data collection & research are both important; research studies the data.
- Research informs us; we can use that to address issues in the next couple years, not 100-year projects.
- We may need to determine how long research would take.
- Above ground storage and off-channel storage should be considerations.
- Some stakeholders were curious about why infrastructure was opposed.
- Smaller working groups may be helpful in this process to for other issues.
- It would be helpful to see specific areas where the partnership has disagreements, with details from stakeholders listing strategy priorities, why one would not be recommended, and what changes could be made to get to yes.

### **III. Conclusion**

- a. Next meeting is October 9, 2020

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cinda Johnston  
Union County Planning Department Specialist

## Major Strategy Categories

(Organized from lists below: 13 Strategies (in red) to be ranked/reviewed by stakeholders, sub-strategies (in black) provided, but not ranked/reviewed separately)

- **Storage - Aboveground-Off Channel**
  - Existing sloughs
  - New dams/reservoirs
  - Deepen existing reservoirs
  - Raise the storage levels in existing reservoirs
  - Wet meadows
  - Wetlands
  - Enlarge/deepen existing ditches
  - Capture snowpack (store and use)
  - New linear storage
- **Storage - Aboveground-On-Channel**
  - New On Channel dam (storage)
  - Reroute stream flows during highwater for storage and recharge
- **Storage - Underground Storage**
  - Aquifer Storage and Recovery
  - New belowground reservoir
  - Aquifer storage and recovery in confined alluvial aquifers
  - Infiltration galleries (city areas and other areas)
  - Use floodwater, pump it into an aquifer and use it later
  - Recharge of basalt wells
  - Recharge of alluvial wells
- **Research**
  - Reservoir Research
  - Flooding and fire oral histories
  - Use Hampton and Brown study of area geology and pair it with groundwater wells to verify accuracy
  - Collect anecdotal information from users to see what parts of the watershed have issues
  - Are there high mercury levels?
  - Nitrate abatement needed?
  - Reexamine 303(d) standards to determine if we should advocate for them to be changed
  - Review demand and supply calculations
- **Data Collection**
  - Install flow gages
  - Coordinate interagency data sharing
  - Gather data to improve estimates of actual use versus water rights
  - Improve on farm efficiency monitoring and modeling
  - Systematic sampling of groundwater wells
  - Characterize and Understand the Groundwater Resource (rate of change, flow direction)

- Study paired forest plots (30% canopy reduction to allow for water storage – Starkey)
- **Monitoring**
  - Monitoring – groundwater quality (nitrates, arsenic, coliform) in addition to surface water quality
  - Toxic algae blooms (testing, nutrients, temperature)
  - Spatially distributed and long-term data collection (intensively monitored watershed)
- **Policy Actions**
  - Meet with USACE (Levee Strategy) - invite to meetings
  - Utilize new water reservations
  - Utilize cross basin transfers
  - Split season leases
  - Develop a water market
  - Minimum flow agreements (ex: Lostine river, dixie creek - turn water off if below certain point)
  - Voluntary water lease transfers (ex: 15 mile “FAST” program, stop withdrawals when temperatures are predicted to be lethal for fish)
  - Source water exchanges – “bucket for bucket exchange”
  - Point source control
  - Develop a wetland mitigation bank
  - Review the economic sustainability of agriculture, consider advocating for government subsidies for crops that use less water
  - Support collaborative forest partnership projects
  - Replace surface water deficits with groundwater
- **Outreach and Education**
  - Awareness of ECSI listed sites
  - Promote recycle chemical program (for pesticides, ag and municipal)
  - Inform the public about best practices for lawn care (fertilizers flow to the creeks) outreach and education needed
  - Public outreach for toxic algae blooms
  - We get a city water quality report – maybe watershed wide
- **Land Management – Public Land**
  - Raise organic soil content (forest land)
  - grazing management on federal lands (range management of elk)
  - timber management on federal lands (manage forest canopy)
  - Upland land management
  - Road management for allowing runoff to recharge groundwater, locations, culvert sizing, surfaces (decrease sedimentation through management)
  - Monitor uplands for erosion (sediment)
  - Invasive species management
  - Buffer Zones
  - Vegetation management – opportunity and costs for each type of project
  - Fire management
- **Land Management – Agricultural Land**
  - Raise organic soil content (agricultural land)

- Reduce nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) loading through irrigation efficiency
- Improve irrigation efficiency for agriculture uses
- Plant alternative crops to use less water
- Floodway easements for farmers
- High residue farming
- Prevention of contamination when flooding occurs
- Improve farming practices (no till methods, more organics into the soil)
- **Land Management - Municipal Land**
  - Bioswales (vegetation infiltration)
  - Filter strips
  - Improve municipal water efficiency
- **Habitat Restoration**
  - Reconnect and restore floodplains
  - Enhance riparian vegetation and stream shading
  - Upland restoration
  - Stream restoration (restore channel morphology)
  - Beaver reintroduction and beaver dam analogues
  - Alpine meadow restoration
  - Create new wetlands and reestablish old wetlands
- **Infrastructure/Land Modification**
  - Open up the valley
  - Construct Levee System
  - Levee Setbacks
  - Pump flood water for storage
  - Construct a Parallel Flood Channel to alleviate flooding issues
  - Microhydroelectric power
  - Control warm water (thermal refuge in winter, divert for later use)