

**Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership
Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning
Quarterly Implementation Meeting
February 22, 2023; 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Conference Call/Misener Room**

ATTENDANCE

Curt Howell, Dave Johnson (City of Cove), Cole Hendricksen (DEQ), Alexandria Scott (OWRD), Jim Webster (USWCD), Janna Stevens (ODF&W), Joe Lemanski (ODF&W), Donna Beverage, Dana Kurtz.

I. WELCOME

Introductions took place and meeting guidelines were reviewed. Joe announced that he has a new ODF&W position and will continue working with this group.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

Donna is attending a lot of meetings and continuing work addressing key land management issues and help for farmers. Dave will send information about the Cove hydropower plant. Janna is starting work on an in-stream plan. Joe is continuing his participation in projects with the Grande Ronde Model Watershed. Cole is working with his internal team to collect feedback about potential storage projects with respect to Division 33 Rules. Alexandria hopes to have permitting pathways available to this group at the next quarterly meeting. Jim is continuing work on GRMW's Catherine Creek in-stream strategy; farm bill money is now available to producers and allows for improvements based on ag upgrades; the Buffalo Flats design is moving along; the GRMW group is looking at flow conditions and how they act in the valley and affect fish habitat; and in-depth modeling continues with Bureau of Reclamation to develop an existing condition plan.

III. STRATEGY GROUP UPDATES/ACTION ITEMS

a. Project Management

i. ARPA Grant update (Dana)

The last grant is ending and the ARPA grant will start soon.

ii. Legislative update (Alexandria)

A public hearing regarding continued PBP funding is tomorrow; everyone can listen in and testify. The Governor's recommended budget is coming out; PBP is moving forward but in different manner. POP111 (water use supply and data availability) was moved forward and now needs approval by the Legislature. POP115 has complex issues so that funding did not come in.

b. Outreach

i. An implementation poster was developed and is available for distribution.

ii. A presentation was made at the Union County Seed Growers meeting with 54 people in attendance. Joe noted that there are opportunities for outreach and active coordinated efforts at meetings like those to inform the community of available grants. Alexandria agreed and added that a quarterly newsletter would also be helpful. Dana encouraged everyone to inform this group of projects each are working on.

c. Municipal – Goal is to meet this quarter. Dave said cities are working with Emergency Management.

d. Administrative – Goal is to meet this quarter.

e. Infrastructure

i. BOR hydraulic study update (Jim)

Two meetings were held. This is a locally led program to provide easements and reduce pinch points. It takes time to collect and run the data; next steps are to plug scenarios into those models and determine what that means.

f. Public Land

i. Field Trip update (Dana)

Tour will be on Wednesday, April 19 from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. with carpoolers meeting at Hilgard at 2:30 p.m. Sites will include completed or in-process projects: McCoy Meadows, Longley, and Bird Track Springs; dinner at the gun club will follow. Anticipated attendants include the USFS project manager, staff from the Tribes, and, since OWR is really busy this time of year, someone will reach out to the Water Master. Curt suggested that the tour include a site downstream showing the effects of drought and flood; he offered his place as a location. "Chat" comments supported learning more about impacts of flooding in the valley on landowners & initiating discussion to develop creative solutions that would work for everyone.

g. Habitat

i. OWEB SAP development

h. Data

i. IFIM study update – Catherine Creek and Grande Ronde (Janna)

This is in process with hopes for completion by summer. Donna requested a presentation of the information once they are farther into the study.

i. Agricultural Land

i. NRCS local working group meeting summary (see earlier comments from Jim)

ii. Locally led voluntary floodplain easement concept (see earlier comments from Jim)

Dana reported that Federal and State requirements are too restrictive so they're unable to do anything with a floodway easement; people might be more interested in certain type of crops. Donna would like Nick to present information at the next meeting.

j. Built Storage

i. Review of Top four sites (Dana)

#133 Five Points Creek, #124 Bird Track Springs, #4 Grande Ronde Storage Reservation and #169 Mill Creek (Cove). Dana explained each project's water source. Cole said that some things will inhibit these projects, the biggest being the source of water. Division 33 Rules will be triggered for each potential storage location. Upper Columbia Rules under Division 33 Rules will be applied to these as water rights, which does not allow water to be taken out of stream April 15 to September 30. These sites are also on water bodies that have water quality impairments and a TMDL. It is likely that no water could be diverted from April 15 to November 11. Dana said those periods of exclusion were factored in so water availability shown in the table reflect that no water would be taken during those months. There is no extra water during those time periods anyway and the majority of water would be diverted during seasonal runoff periods like early spring. She will add those critical periods and make sure the calculations match. Cole is compiling a holistic report that will be ready at the next meeting.

Joe said that aside from potential mitigation needs, a critical step is being missed by not thinking about whether or not these projects are capable of their intended functions and outcomes. In his review of hydrographs, predicted flows, and annual averages of precipitation, he just didn't see these sites penciling out because the amount of water needed to fill them is not a realistic

number. He strongly encouraged a closer look prior to Kaizen meetings; he doesn't want the group to be disappointed or waste money. Dana said that that is one reason why projects need a feasibility study first. Cole said that there is some simple "back of the envelope" math that would show whether this is even possible; he has done the math and the numbers don't pencil out. Jim supported Cole's comments; this needs a simple hydrology review to see if any of these would work. He used the 70,000 acre foot McKay Creek Reservoir as an example: it has flooded several times, running 3500cfm, peeling 1500cfm off. 2000cfm comes past the dam and they have to release the flow before they can start creating a real high risk on the dam. Those volumes are way larger than any one of the small options this group is considering.

Dana shared that the engineers have been approaching this at a "pre-feasibility" level to see how each site would be filled by reviewing existing water availability data, elevations, and considering components needed to make the design functional. She agreed that Joe's way of looking at it would be a good addition and requested the methodology and calculations from him for comparison. That would help them see if they're using the same volumes and quantities. Joe said he serves from a technical perspective and does not have a whole lot of time to run a full blown analyses that should be a component at this point in the game, but at the very least he can show how he is coming to those conclusions. Dana said the next step would be show how the engineers' calculations were done and then get feedback from the group. Joe thought that would be extremely helpful because he couldn't make the math work despite the other issues like permitting, ESA impacts, mitigation, Division 33, and available water.

Jim asked if the primary goal for each project was storage or mitigating flood effects; the two conflict and create a management situation because one tries to fill for low flow and the other keeps it empty to grab peak flows. Dana said that McKay Creek is not a multi-purpose reservoir and floods because that reservoir management's goal is to provide water to irrigation users, not to prevent flooding.

Curt agreed that none of the sites would do anything for flood control. They may have some stream flow enhancements later in the year, but otherwise there is nothing for downstream interests. His calculations showing 10,000 -12,000 acre feet would not do a heck of a lot in a dry year nor would it control floods. He said there has been all this effort and still some of the basic things they need can't be touched. Donna noted that the Partnership is working on other projects outside of these; the infrastructure group is working on pinch points that are separate from these reservoirs. Dana reminded everyone that a lot of the above ground projects were not pursued because the group decided to stay away from those that are too low in the watershed and would not have enough benefits for all the groups; that decision was a turning point where these were not flood control ones. She added that in response to a question at a previous meeting about the size and location needed to manage floods, she hopes it is becoming more clear as Jim works with BOR on that study; this group does not have the level of confidence to place something and have an effect on flooding.

Joe asked for insight that would be beneficial for the Kaizen meeting. His thoughts were that a cursory hydrologic assessment of the realistic function of these sites would be a bare minimum. Dana said that they have been working on the nine questions for the Kaizen meetings to address each concept and adding those calculations would be a good benefit. Cole said that he had not been to a Kaizen meeting but the purpose is to learn whether the project is permissible prior to work being done. He thought the group's table will be key; it might be worth having information about the four projects, such as total square footage, whether they are in channel or off channel, timing of fill, how quickly they would fill, and sedimentation concerns. The group will learn if the

sites are permittable and if the US Army Corps of Engineers would need to be brought in. More details in the water rights section are needed in order for agencies to provide specific feedback. Alexandria said that OWRD is usually looking for the source of water, water use, dam height, composition, dam infrastructure, and a map prepared by a certified water rights examiner. The water rights team also considers feedback from ODF&W, DEQ, and Department of Agriculture. Listening to that feedback early on and tuning into information about Division 33 considerations and TMDLs can be beneficial in the permitting process because that information is shared with OWRD anyway. Dana said that she has been to a few Kaizen meetings and likes that there is room for continual improvement; actionable feedback is helpful and makes the project better for each agency. This is different though because the four projects are conceptual; the less clear the concept is, the less feedback they can give. On the other hand, it would take a lot of time and money to put together an application as extensive as OWRD would like to have.

Janna said that OWRD provides their own review of sites; she has looked at them and their team completed a preliminary review. To determine water availability they either subtract in-stream water rights or the established biological flow target from the water availability at 80% exceedance. Sites #133 (Five Points Creek) and #124 (Bird Track Springs) have no water available all year to meet fishery needs. At site #4 (Grande Ronde Storage Reservation), nobody has ever achieved reserve storage water rights in 20 years and, if it were pursued, it would probably have the same outcome as the other sites because it is on channel and on the Grande Ronde. For site #169 (Mill Creek - Cove) no information is available and they would need to do their own study. All four sites would require mitigation, which is very expensive and difficult to do so she didn't know how it could be done here. She asked who would benefit from this because there are so many obstacles ahead; what is it worth and what is the net gain? This group is working on a lot of good, beneficial projects that would have more success and they would love for those to go forward. Dana asked what they consider when looking at 50% exceedance vs. 80%, the mitigation triggers, and what type of mitigation might be needed. This group has been using the 50% exceedance as a screening tool. Janna said a lot of people don't realize that ODF&W has a different review process from OWRD, and ultimately OWRD makes the final decision. Mitigation is complicated and difficult in this area so she was not sure what would be required.

Joe said that the mitigation process varies between projects, but generally, it is dictated by the category of the affected habitat; it is a matter of quantifying the affected habitat and impacts to aquatic resources. The ODF&W habitat mitigation policy has a range of habitat type categories from 100% critical for an endangered species down to storm water, which is lowest on the list. He couldn't make a specific determination, but areas with impacts to listed salmon steelhead and bull trout would likely be on the upper end of that list. The result for some projects might be in-kind, in-place mitigation, potentially water for water and up to placement of habitat improvement projects. Dana added that there is no formula in determining mitigation; it's a negotiation with both parties drafting a plan together. Dana asked if there was a publicly available map or data source showing how ODF&W determines the habitat type that could be added to the table. Joe said there is no map, but general descriptions of categories can be found by googling ODF&W habitat mitigation policy.

Donna asked Joe if he was saying that storage is always hurtful and never helpful to fish, including low flow times. Joe said no, not necessarily; water instream for fish is always helpful, but what is the net cost benefit? Diverting 80% of the flow for four months straight in order to fill a reservoir would have a negative impact on the fish. That results in a certain amount of cfs being instream during certain times of the year, particularly during low flow because that is when

it would be released and used for agricultural purposes. There would be some positive benefit there as well. It's about weighing those two, and looking at how much they offset one another.

Dana expressed appreciation for everyone looking at the sites and running their own calculations and analyses; she requested that they be sent to her so she could incorporate them into the nine questions and the table. Dana asked Janna to look into the 50% vs 80% exceedance if she has time; she wants to understand the difference between the regulatory authorities because they are doing different things with the 50% and 8% values in the Step 2 Report. Janna said that she couldn't say whether they would use ODF&W's recommendations based on water availability for fish habitat. They are comfortable starting with 80% exceedance to determine if water is available. OWRD's water availability website has natural flow, usage and available flow; that's either at a 50% exceedance rate or 80% value and is used to determine the median flow. In looking at that, they can see that 80% (inaudible) fish need water more than 80% of the time. Then they subtract instream water rights or biological flow target from the 80% exceedance value. It is more on the safe side to protect fish habitat, that's just their policy and standard way of reviewing it. Dana said that the flow targets being used are unclear and it would be helpful to see what they did so that it can be compared to what the engineers are doing. Janna said that their agency determined flow targets across the state, but it is not available everywhere and would not be available for the engineers. She could share what she did and answer questions about what is being done now, but was not sure how much she could provide for the engineers. Dana said she would take whatever she could get and asked that Janna check to see what could be provided; otherwise, they will try to show the group's process and get feedback on that.

ii. Kaizen Meeting scheduled March 15

iii. Stakeholder Feedback and approval process

This group is not voting on every part of this process because they are now implementing the plan. Everyone is encouraged to go to the small group meetings.

Donna acknowledged that this Partnership has put in a lot of work and hopes that the Kaizen meeting will help them figure out a way to make this work. She will be testifying as neutral at the public hearing for PBP funding because she does not want taxpayers to fund planning projects or for partnerships to spend all this time just to be held up. Dana said that the conclusion of the feasibility study could be that none of the sites were feasible.

IV. CONCLUSION

- a. Field Trip: April 19, 2023, 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Meet at Hilgard at 2:30 p.m.
- b. Next Quarterly meeting: June 7, 2023 Misener Room, 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.