

Wood River Water Collaborative

Meeting summary: November 12, 2015

The Nature Conservancy Office, Hailey

Present: Pete VanderMeulen, Carl Pendleton, Brett Stevenson, Pat McMahon, Mark Davidson, Kristy Molyneux, Keri York, Dayna Gross, Sharon Lee, Chad Chorney, Karl Nichol, Pepin Corso-Harris, Greg Loomis, Judd McMahon, Michelle Stennett, Donna Pence, Larry Schoen, and Patti Lousen

Phone Callers: David Sias, Laura Gvodais

Meeting Overview: Subcommittee reports, review of mission statement and objectives, sharing of sensitive information and future guest speakers. Underlining in following section denotes action item.

Agricultural Subcommittee report: Dayna, Carl – The group has focused on gaining a better understanding and characterization of the water demand for the five delivery agricultural water user blocks: Bellevue triangle, Little Wood Users downstream of the Silver Creek confluence, water use south of Dietrich, North Shoshone, and south of the Milner/Gooding canal. At the last meeting the group discussed projects that would target ways we can work together to reduce water demand across these various sectors. The main focus of this group is on the areas of water delivery north of the Milner/Gooding canal.

- Bellevue Triangle – the group agreed to focus on improving our understanding of the aquifer and how we may best address aquifer recharge and the effect of recharge efforts on increasing groundwater levels. The focus of the next meeting is to increase our understanding of hydrology and impacts of potential mitigation projects.
- Little Wood River (Silver Cr. Confluence to Dietrich) – focus on project opportunities that may consolidate water use, improve water delivery infrastructure, and structure possible water agreements. We need to focus more efforts on this area to better characterize demand and project development.
- South of Dietrich - A number of large projects have been identified in this area that could improve water availability and delivery. The initial focus has been to work with irrigators and the BWCC to improve water delivery to approximately 5,000 acres south of Dietrich. Irrigators have begun to work on projects that would extend irrigation delivery by ~10 days. Projects are mainly focused on improving efficiencies through piping and pumping projects, plus acquiring and delivering more water through the Milner/Gooding system.
- North Shoshone – the area of focus for this aspect of water demand is focused on project development that would potentially deliver Snake River water via the Milner/Gooding canal to ~2,000 acres.

Overall, they will continue their efforts to characterize how to best deliver large blocks water to downstream callers as well as discreet areas where irrigation efficiency would be most advantageous for implementation/prioritization.

Conservation Subcommittee report: Keri

- This group now consists of the recreational and tourism interests (represented by Terry Ring and Greg Loomis) along with NGO's.
- Due to the reality that recreation interests, and conservation interests to some extent, do not hold water rights, we agreed that protecting existing instream water rights held by the Idaho Water Resource Board

on the Big Wood and Silver Creek is important to preserving fish and wildlife habitat throughout the watershed.

- They will research options for ecological flows that would incorporate annual variability in precipitation. There are examples that Peter Anderson and Doug Megargle have provided to the group which we will work to clarify more specifically for future water collaborative meetings. The group would like to explore more thoroughly how we may realistically establish a water mitigation bank/water exchange that would effectively improve flows for area fisheries while also meeting downstream irrigation demand.

Galena GWD: Pat McMahon

- The Galena GWD (GGWD) was overwhelmingly approved by ground water voters. It has 267 cfs which is small compared to other ground water districts.
- All non-irrigated users (industrial, commercial, fire protection, aesthetic, etc) need to petition in to the GWD. It is easier to join in the next 60 days as after that time period there are protocols and added costs to the petitioner regarding public notice.
- First inaugural meeting of the Galena GWD was Wednesday, Nov 18, 2015 at 10 am at The Community Library in Ketchum
- Assessments will be sent out by the district the first year (Dec, 2015) and in future years it will be done through the county. Discussion on whether to assess by use or by total right illuminated that the South Valley GWD (SVGWD) is charging for the total right since they are defending that amount legally.
- SVGWD will write up a summary about GWD mechanics and processes to help the GGWD.

HOA Subcommittee report: David, Karl, Patti

- This group identified a major need to further educate HOA members, and the public generally, regarding water supply and demand. A major focus of this group in the coming months will be to disseminate information throughout as many HOA's as possible. HOA's represent 20% of overall water rights in the GGWD.
- A meeting for all HOA's regarding their water rights was held on Nov 17, 2015 at 4 pm at Golden Eagle Clubhouse. The goal for this group is to get water issues on the agendas of HOA annual meetings and provide resources for these meetings. Non-profits offered to be a resource with educational outreach and are willing to speak as needed.
- They see that working with landscapers at both the HOA and individual homeowner level will also be a focus of their outreach.
- A grant is available from the state for municipalities, HOA's and smaller water users for water conservation. Grant proposals are due by Dec. 15, 2015. City of Hailey is moving ahead with a water conservation plan and will be applying for a grant. Information is at IDWR website: <http://www.idwr.idaho.gov/WaterBoard/Financial%20program/Financial.htm>

Mission/Goal statement and WR Water Collaborative Objectives: Mark

- The group asked for these documents to be emailed out so that edits could be more deliberate. Please send edits to Patti Lousen at plousen@woodriverlandtrust.org who will collate these for the next meeting.
- For the mission statement we discussed framing this around the opportunities for change, acknowledging diverse community values and ensuring sustainability into the future.

- Senator Michelle Stennett said if the group had something tangible to present to her by January then Pete VanderMeulen and she could start approaching legislators to gain support for the collaborative's approach to addressing water resources in the Big and Little Wood River drainages.

Discussion Topics:

- *How will the group approach the sharing of information on water demand or usage?* We discussed ways in which we can have a constructive conversation regarding water demand across sectors. It was acknowledged that we are beginning to get closer to accurately characterizing overall water demand. Due to the sensitivity of this aspect of the collaborative, the NGO community has agreed to try and produce a map outlining how water is distributed generally with the intention that we will use this information to plan projects and help with prioritization. Senator Michelle Stennett urged the group to share information as openly as we can in order to construct an overall basin agreement. Many participants voiced the need for the upper watershed groundwater model to come out first, which we agreed is important in helping to prioritize. As soon as the model is made available we will begin to develop scenarios to be queried. Eventually the GWD's will need to offer a number to the Little Wood and Big Wood Water Users Association and Carl Pendleton will need to bring this to his boards/users. The group decided to characterize demand and usage at the next meeting and the NGO's will organize this data. The different areas defined are: the Galena GWD, the South Valley GWD, Little Wood River surface users between Silver Creek confluence and Dietrich, south of Dietrich, North Shoshone, and south of the Milner/Gooding canal.
- *Next Steps:* The meeting concluded by discussing various guest speakers who could be invited to future meetings that can provide information on the ESPA settlement and characterization of water demand and water reductions. We will extend invitations to a number of individuals to help provide context and tools we can use in our efforts who include: Jim Bartolino (USGS – groundwater model), Al Barker (water attorney – ground water districts), Dean Stevenson (landowner – Rupert area, division director of Magic Valley GWD), Rob Williams (attorney – city of Jerome, Idaho). It was determined that Patti will ask Peter Anderson to come to the next meeting and share a draft study that Trout Unlimited is considering implementing in our basin. METRIC is a GIS-spatial analysis program which looks at consumptive use and associated impacts when changing irrigated land to dryland in our basin.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 9, 2015 at 10 a.m. at The Nature Conservancy

Location: The Nature Conservancy office Hailey, Idaho, 116 1st Avenue North
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