

Wood River Water Collaborative Meeting Minutes 12/6/17

Next Meeting: January 16th at 1 pm at The Nature Conservancy

Attendees: Pete VanDerMuelen, Pat McMahon, Brett Stevenson, Justin Stevenson, Mark Davidson, Chris Johnson, Richard Carr, Patti Lousen, Kira Finkler, Bob Simpson, Greg Loomis, Bryan Wood, Josh Johnson, Carl Pendleton, Rod Hubsmith, Donna Pence, Mariel Miller, Rusty Kramer, Kevin Lakey, Peter Anderson, Sally Toone, Jim Phillips, Larry Schoen, Michelle Stennett, Doug Megargle, Sharon Lee

The Wood River Water Collaborative (WRWC): The goal of the Wood River Water Collaborative is to create a long term practical water management framework that balances the consumptive needs of upstream and downstream users in order to provide water for people, crops, and fish both now and in the future, while preserving community values which include:

- Preserving safe, clean drinking water to meet the needs of the watersheds.
- Ensuring sustainable water use for farming and ranching.
- Conserving riparian and river habitat for fish and wildlife that rely on the Big Wood River, Silver Creek, and their tributaries.

Groundwater Model Update 1.1

- Model 1.0 used data from 1995 – 2010 but there was some missing well data and did not analyze temporal changes
- Model 1.1 includes data from 2010-2014; additional data would be helpful but IDWR is going to run the new model
- IDWR will run the 100% curtailment model run using version 1.1 and compare the results to the previous model run using version 1.0
- IDWR is allowing the WRWC to request two additional model runs for free; it is costly for staff to complete model runs (Pete estimated at least a few thousand dollars)
- Pete suggested that defining the inputs is more important than the outputs – there is no control over the outputs of the model. It is also important that the WRWC model runs will answer questions for the pertinent parties involved in the water call.
- A subcommittee will be formed to work with Jennifer Sukow at IDWR to create draft model run scenarios. These will be brought to the WRWC in Feb. before submitting to IDWR in the spring. Volunteers for that subcommittee include: Jim Phillips, Carl Pendleton, Mariel Miller, Justin Stevenson, Brett Stevenson, Pat McMahon, Greg Loomis. Patti will coordinate this subcommittee.

Water Rights and Municipal Review for Land Use and Annexations

- Lisa Horowitz and Mariel Miller from the City of Hailey gave a presentation from Hailey's perspective.
- Annexations and developments are a negotiation, and how they are handled varies for each city or county
- Hailey created a cost structure in 2016 that was based on comparable water right values, city costs of annexations, water rights, and infrastructure. More detail is attached.

- When an annexation is proposed, the City lists the potential items for negotiation and chooses priorities to negotiate. These can include water rights, transportation, parks, etc. Water rights may not be a priority depending on the City's needs and the property's rights.
- Hailey is not limited in irrigation rights (some are in the water supply bank), but it will be limited in groundwater rights after a certain amount of growth
- With the recent Colorado Gulch annexation, water rights didn't rise to the priority of negotiation points for that particular annexation
- Within Idaho code, properties need to provide their own irrigation rights if the previous land use has irrigation, it is not the City's responsibility to provide
- Negotiations are evaluated in public hearings at City Council and Planning and Zoning
- As water use changes in the Wood River Valley, these types of issues may become more important as City growth reaches its available water supply
- There is a question as to what happens with any water that the developer keeps and if it could be used for purposes of the WRWC
- There was discussion around the interest and role of the WRWC in proposed annexations. It may be desirable to have a watershed management plan with clearly defined goals so that proposals can be evaluated in a similar framework.
- Members of the WRWC could review annexation applications and make recommendations on best use of water that the City will not require or help Bellevue (which has less planning resources than other cities) review water rights and mitigation and/or conservation opportunities in this context. Mark will coordinate this effort.
- Patti reported that the municipalities and Blaine County have been working on a non-binding resolution that would define best management practices for landscaping in the Wood River Valley. This is a huge step in consistency regarding water conservation in residential and commercial landscaping.

Surface Water Forecasting

- Last spring, Ron Abromavich (NRCS water supply specialist) gave a presentation to the WRWC using surface water supply indices to help forecast the year's surface water supply; however this information was available in March and April and it would be more beneficial to have in January or February
- Also, Pat Purdy and Kevin Lakey have indicated that it would be helpful to have a prediction of when certain surface flows will occur at the Hailey gauge, and maybe other gauges throughout the system
- Last month, the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts approved a resolution to support staff resources that would assist Ron and the local conservation districts and producers in answering these questions. Members of the WRWC provided a support letter.
- Keri has been working with Ron, Kevin, and Jim McNamara (BSU) to see if we can help provide information to surface water users above Magic and the Little Wood Reservoir this winter so that producers can better plan crop choices and conserve water. This may also have additional conservation benefits if and when water transactions, such as partial season leases, are implemented.
- Keri, Chris, and Kevin will continue to work on this with Ron and Jim. Ron will give a presentation at the January WRWC meeting.

Bureau of Reclamation Grant Opportunities

1. Comprehensive Watershed Management Grant

- The CWMP grant would provide resources to the WRWC to continue its work, implement projects, and develop watershed management plans
- The WRWC applied for this grant in 2016 (see attached application) and was not successful; however comments were given to Patti and the NGOs feel that we could update our application relatively easily
- This grant would provide resources to the NGOs to continue, and increase, their efforts on the WRWC; there is no cost share necessary
- Project implementation grants are also available through the CWMP program once you receive a watershed management planning grant
- The Boise River Enhancement Network could be a good example of this type of group and process
- **The NGOs will update the application and submit in mid-January**

2. Drought Contingency Planning Grant

- These grants provide up to \$200,000 (50% cost share required) to create a drought contingency plan, over two years. Cost-share can be provided by in-kind time.
- Elements of drought plans include: vulnerability assessment, monitoring, identification of drought prevention actions and response actions, operational and administrative framework, and a plan update process
- Benefits to the WRWC would be a clearer identification of drought and water conservation strategies and opportunities for implementation
- Project implementation grants are also available for drought projects once you have done a drought contingency plan
- There may be some intricacies with the potential formation of a GWMA advisory committee and how that committee would interact with this process
- Blaine County is looking at bringing the Langdon Group here to have community discussions around climate response scenarios, this could possibly be included as cost-share
- Rod, Rusty, Bryan, and others need to bring to respective boards or groups before supporting
- **Keri will send out more information and reach back out by the end of December to see if the WRWC wants to pursue this grant**

NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grants

- The state has received an RCPP grant for areas included in the ESPA for \$5.2 million to be spent over 3 years or sooner
- The program funds: ground to surface conversions, end gun following at \$220/acre for three years, and flood irrigation enhancements
- **The announcement should come next spring; the program is run through NRCS**
- Permanent or longer-term following projects will need additional funding
- Larry commented that Blaine County signed a Army Corps Section 22 grant agreement yesterday for a Big Wood watershed management planning program