

Wood River Water Collaborative Minutes
Wednesday Oct 19, 2016
BWCC Office, Shoshone

Attendees: Mark Davidson, Carl Pendleton, Peter Anderson, Justin Stevenson, Lyn Harmon, Alex Sutter, Steve Miller, Kira Finkler, Kathleen Eder, Sally Toone, Patti Lousen, Brett Stevenson, Wendy Pabich, Pat McMahon, Dayna Gross, Bill Hazen, Keri York

Mark reviewed the purposes of the Wood River Water Collaborative: to create a long-term, practical water management framework providing new tools to help balance the consumptive needs of upstream and downstream users in order to provide water for people, crops and fish both now and in the future. The mission of the Wood River Collaborative is to preserve core community values which include: 1. Safe, clean, drinking water to meet the needs of the watershed; 2. Sustainable water use for farming and ranching; and 3. Healthy riparian habitat for fish and wildlife that rely on the Big Wood River, Little Wood River, Silver Creek and their tributaries.

Tour:

The group toured the North Shoshone pipeline project. There are four north-south pipelines proposed as part of this project that would tie into the North Shoshone canal. All combined, there would be approximately 12 miles of pipeline that would save 40-50% of water delivered. There may be recharge opportunities in the cottonwood slough, E. Burmah Rd., and the river channel around Kinsey Butte.

General Updates:

The Idaho Water Users Association meeting is in November, and there will be a discussion of the ESPA Groundwater Management Area. Dean Stevenson will be describing mechanisms for ESPA users to meet the settlement agreement. See iwua.org for more information.

The WRWC is looking to make an introductory presentation to the Idaho Water Resources Board in January or March.

The NGOs will try to send WRWC minutes in a timely manner after each meeting. Subcommittee minutes will be sent prior to the next WRWC meeting (each quarter). *Subcommittees should try to continue meeting monthly, or as necessary.*

Member Updates:

It would be difficult for the non-profit groups (WRLT, TNC, TU) to keep notice of all water right applications to IDWR, but we can share those that we are aware of. Individuals in the WRWC can comment individually. Forming a common opinion may be something to consider in the future. Patti described a petition to IDWR for communal well subdivisions to irrigate ½ acre per home, not ½ acre total.

Greg Loomis and Sunny Healey (TNC) attended the groundwater flow model training by USGS last month. The model will not be helpful in looking at individual water rights and flow, but they could run scenarios that look at larger strategies and areas. We could help gain IDWR support for projects if they are run through the model. This may also help us prioritize projects. *Subcommittees should come up with questions that the WRWC can ask USGS to run through the model.*

Subcommittee Updates:

Municipality/small ag/HOA: SVGWD wants to pursue grants for metering, they have match funding; Ketchum also wants to implement metering and efficiency for parks, they have a revolving fund that can be used to fund metering; Bellevue has funding for metering; the HOA's want metering installed as well.

The conservation subcommittee felt that most projects listed thus far will have a conservation benefit by placing less demand on the upper watershed. It would be helpful to understand spatially how water flows through the system based on priority date. TU may be able to assist with this, and OSU may have the data set from their climate change studies. A criteria list would be helpful to select and prioritize projects as well as support grant applications.

The drafting committee reported that the BWCC attorney is reviewing the draft term sheet at this time and then will respond to the SVGWD and GGWD. The collaborative could be helpful in supporting the term sheet in the public and by implementing projects. They would like to implement parts of the term sheet by next spring. Carl Pence indicated ultimate solutions are 3-5 years out. The goal would be to delay the call as steps get taken towards resolution. .

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Grant Opportunities:

We are aiming to have a project list that will gain traction from larger funding streams, such as BOR, IWRB, and the NRCS. The collaborative may pursue projects as a group, and individual members may continue to pursue projects. We would like to create a system to look at large-scale opportunities for the WRWC and a system to evaluate and rank projects. This is helpful in determining grant opportunities and matching funding sources.

A draft criteria list was passed out by Dayna that could be used to help rank projects. This was created using IDWR application criteria, other water banks and markets, and target flows. *Everyone should look at the draft criteria (attached here) and provide comments to Dayna at dayna_gross@tnc.org.*

There will be announcements for BOR grants in November. There are some new grant criteria currently being evaluated, such as contributions to instream flows and less weight being applied to listed species. Support from the NRCS helps with BOR applications. The deadline is before the next WRWC meeting. The GGWD and SVGWD could help provide matching funds for grant applications that include costly projects, such as the Dietrich pipeline. This could be part of the term sheet. *The NGOs will send out grant information and collect information on projects for submission.*

Last year, two BOR grants were submitted that were not funded. The NGOs submitted one for the WRWC to support the collaborative in cooperative water management planning. It ranked well but did not address ecological/environmental factors. Another application by the GGWD was submitted for irrigation efficiencies and metering. The application didn't provide enough water savings.

Silver Creek Highway 93 Project

Before Silver Creek runs under Highway 93 south of Carey, there is approximately 12 cfs lost into wetlands that have expanded over time. Flooding used to take place higher up and on the east side of Silver Creek. Now, flooding takes place on the west side of Silver Creek. There is a culvert that allows overflow water from the wetlands under the highway and back into Silver Creek. Nick Purdy has submitted a permit application to the Army Corps to build up the creek banks, create a maintenance road, and install devices that would allow water to flow into the wetlands to maintain water levels required by the Army Corps. The Army Corps requires some redesign work. This project would save approximately 4-10 cfs in Silver Creek depending on the time of year and annual variability. The group would like to pursue this project because it would save water in Silver Creek and has wildlife habitat elements. The NGOs will try to get together with the Purdy's to pursue the project.

Dietrich 702 Pipeline Project

The current Dietrich canal runs southeast of Dietrich through sagebrush and loses a substantial amount of water. This project would install two 30" side-by-side pipelines running north-south that currently serve 3868 acres. This would save approx. 5-6 days of irrigation water from Magic on the entire system. There are two landowners that want to put in a ¾ mile section this fall for approx. \$300,000. The rest of the \$2-3 million project needs to be implemented at once because of how the ditch is currently configured. Individuals could get Idaho power credits by taking out pumps.

Other funding avenues could be through the RDCP funding program, the IWRB revolving loan program, or as an NRCS special project. There may be complications with the IWRB revolving loan program because it may require a bond, which shareholder companies don't qualify for.

Next Steps:

-Subcommittees should try to continue meeting monthly, or as necessary.

Subcommittees should come up with questions that the WRWC can ask USGS to run through the model.

-Everyone should look at the draft criteria (attached here) and provide comments to Dayna at dayna.gross@tnc.org.

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Next Meeting: Wednesday, Jan 18, 2017 at 1 p.m. at The Nature Conservancy, Hailey