

Wood River Water Collaborative
Meeting Notes 9/21/2016

Attendees: Jae Hill, David Sias, Barry Beavers, Peter Anderson, Richard Carr, Sally Toone, Kathleen Eder, Kira Finkler, Bill Hazen, Carl Pendleton, Lyn Harmon, Greg Loomis, Larry Schoen, Keri York, Dale Ewerson, Mark Davidson, Brett Stevenson, Pat McMahon, Pete VanDer Muelen, Sharon Lee, Marie Kellner, Dayna Gross

Meetings will be on the 3rd Wednesday of every 3rd month at 1 pm, with the first on Oct. 19th at 1 pm and the second on Jan. 18th at 1 pm.

Prospective legislators were thanked for attending because water issues are important to understand for funding requests and state legislation.

It is important to remember why we are all here – to form solutions to our basin that are comprehensive and will resolve water issues, recognizing that water calls will exist simultaneously.

Pete gave an update on the inclusion of the Wood River watershed in the ESPA GWMA (ground water management area). The director is reluctant to include tributaries, but no decision has been made yet. Management of the tributaries within ESPA would be difficult, and the WRWC should continue to develop basin solutions. Per state code, the Big Wood watershed could be declared a critical GWMA, and then all decisions are made by the Director of IDWR with no review process. The director has indicated his support for a plan developed by the WRWC.

There are questions surrounding the state of the Big Wood aquifer and how curtailment and other actions will affect its status. Understanding these types of questions will help us understand how a term sheet will affect the aquifer. The new groundwater flow model may be able to help answer these questions.

Greg Loomis plans to go to the groundwater flow model training on Oct. 5th in Boise. Dave Shaw, Sunny Healey (TNC), and possibly a representative from BWCC are also attending. We would like a list of attendees so we know who can run the model. It is important for the WRWC to develop a list of questions we would like the model to answer.

There continues to be frustration by surface water users who are shut off in July but more junior groundwater pumpers continue to irrigate. This is the basis for the water call, and is addressed in the draft term sheet. There is a question of when conjunctive management will be administered; Pete indicated that the Director is waiting until the water call is refiled to act. He also indicated that it is important for environmental interests and upper surface water users to be represented in the process. Resolving the call will likely result in increased stream flows. We want to spend less money and less time than was taken in resolving the ESPA water calls.

Subcommittee Reports:

1. Agriculture subcommittee: discussed the Hwy 93 project, which may save 6-8 cfs of water by installing new headgates that would continue to deliver water to wetlands but create less loss in the system. The permitting has started, but there are some issues with the Army Corps. Brockway is consulting on the project, and its projected costs are \$40,000 - \$80,000. It is complicated because it involves jurisdictional wetlands. It would be great to have this project completed before the 2017 irrigation season.
2. Drafting committee: Senator Michelle Stennett is our representative with the State and serves a similar role as Representative Scott Bedke played in the ESPA. It is important that the calling parties discuss what it will take to resolve groundwater and surface water issues within the water call. There is a question of whether or not resolving the water call will create a sustainable aquifer. The GGWD and SVGWDs brought the proposed term sheet to the Big and Little Wood water users associations 60 days ago, and the associations are developing a meaningful response that involves all parties involved and outside counsel. This takes time to develop. Once there is a draft that is acceptable to all parties, the WRWC may comment. The drafting committee wants to be as transparent as possible while still respecting the calling parties and individuals involved.
3. HOA/municipality subcommittee: have developed a list of data needs, which includes questions about a sustainable aquifer and what amount of curtailment will improve the current situation, what techniques will be effective – changing seasonality of irrigation and flows, decreasing lawns, snowmaking as storage, vegetation management, etc.

There are a lot of questions surrounding available information – what is available, where, how to access, etc. At the next meeting, we could develop a list of available data and compile our lists of data needs and questions.

There are grant opportunities with BOR and IWRB. The NGOs can help develop a collaborative proposal that involves projects and input from all subcommittees. Kira mentioned that BOR is editing some of their grant criteria, and we should work with new criteria once available.

The outreach event at The Community Library was successful. People involved in the event and participants felt that it was valuable for the community to hear from people involved in the collaborative and that represent different water interests. Pete suggested making a similar presentation to IWRB in January. That will put us in a better position to submit a grant proposal.

At the next WRWC meeting, subcommittees will present priority projects for a possible collaborative BOR and/or IWRB grant. There will also be organized project tours around the date of the next meeting.