

Wood River Water Collaborative Meeting
Date and Time: Wednesday, December 4 at 1 pm

Attendees:

Ryan Santo, Mark Davidson, Erika Phillips, Keri York, Kristy Molyneux, Greg Loomis, Pete VanDerMeulen, Pat McMahon, Maggi Kraft, David Stephenson, Bob Simpson, Alex Klokke, John Wright, Amy Cassel
Phone: Sarah Lien, Peter Anderson, Cooper Brossy, Larry Schoen, Al Barker, Chris Johnson

Surface Water Prediction Tool RFP –Ryan Santo

- The RFP has been distributed to approximately 40 consultants; Ryan has heard from 4 or 5 that they will submit proposals
- Some have indicated that the budget is too small for the amount of work, but this may depend on the consultants' background with statistical modeling vs. hydrologic modeling
- Proposals are due at the end of Feb; a group will be convened to review applications and determine next steps

Proposed Legislation for Wood River Water Bank –Al Barker

- Al has been working on legislation to appoint representatives to a local rental committee and create a local rental bank for the Big Wood basin to create a local water supply bank and authorize acceptance of donated water rights
- The purpose is to create the local committee that can accept and rent natural flow rights and groundwater rights for the purposes of stabilizing and enhancing the aquifer and to satisfy any requirements of a groundwater management plan
- A rental pool is created for stored water; a rental bank is created for natural flows and groundwater
- A legal description is provided in the legislation and includes the Big Wood above Stanton Crossing and the portion of Silver Creek included in the groundwater model boundary
- For natural flows and groundwater, leases and rentals would go through this local pool and not the state water supply bank; the state water supply bank would still be used for other transactions
- For the time period in which water is not being applied to beneficial use (either whole or partial season leases), there must be a reduction in beneficial use
- These water rights can be used for recharge and/or conversion to surface water
- Groundwater rights can be leased into the bank and not rented out, for the purpose of enhancing the aquifer; this can't be done at the state level
- The committee will have oversight of what rights are rented from the bank
- Any new recharge water rights will have junior priority dates
- If groundwater is leased into the bank, an irrigator would need to secure surface water rights if they desired to continue irrigating the same area of land
- Procedures will be established by the rental committee
- If the committee and water users want leased groundwater to contribute to a recharge right, joint rental and lease paperwork could be filed
- Compensation rates would be consistent with current water supply bank rates

- There were questions about the extent of the geographic area and why lower basin water rights and users weren't included
- There was a question about whether lower basin users should be included on the committee

- AI indicated that SVGWD wanted the ability to have the upper basin managed and this gives the upper basin the ability to make decisions on how groundwater is used
- Sarah stated that this legislation has a very limited use for groundwater and natural flow rights to be leased into the local bank and rented out or left
- In the example of the Cove water transaction, the committee would have determined where and when recharge would have occurred and whether groundwater would have remained unused; unless there was a joint rental/lease application
- The Big and Little Wood do have minimum stream flow rights, and these are rarely met
- There is a concern that groundwater to surface water conversions that the legislation would allow would reduce streamflow in the Big Wood and cause injury to other users
- To date, AI has garnered support from the director of IDWR, Michelle Stennett will possibly be running a print hearing on Monday (2/10) in a legislative committee

Water Transactions in the Upper Salmon and Lemhi Basins – Amy Cassel, IDWR

Lemhi Water Transaction Program

- Created for four listed anadromous fish species
- Funding has been available through BPA for dam mitigation and fish passage
- There are 43 active water transactions, which include source switches, subordination agreements, lease/rentals, and permanent acquisitions
- This includes transactions on 26 streams for a total of 185.5 cfs and passage through 77 stream miles
- In 2000, the Lemhi River below the L-6 diversion became dewatered and NOAA was going to fine water users for three dead Chinook salmon; migration upstream past L-6 is critical for spawning
- In 2001, a house bill authorized IWRB to hold a minimum stream flow right below the L-6 diversion for fish passage
- Short-term agreements were completed between 2004 and 2009; in 2009 the first permanent agreement was completed
- Short-term agreements are not leases, but delivery restrictions when minimum flows are not met
- Short-term agreements are paid \$90/cfs/day for a maximum of 100 days
- Permanent agreements are based on land appraisals; value of land with the water right minus value of the land without the water right = value of water right; payment was \$100,000 per cfs
- These transactions are all run through IWRB and not a local rental pool
- Water is called for only when needed; users retain ownership of the rights
- This program is possible because of financial compensation through BPA and the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund
- Administration and a competent, trained water master are necessary
- Need lockable, controlled headgates and measuring devices; the Lemhi also has fish screens on headgates
- Watermasters are paid: short-term agreements \$120/day for 100 days; permanent \$12,000 for shepherding of water
- All transactions are developed by Amy working with water users, brought to the IWRB streamflow committee, and then taken to BPA for funding
- Measurable, quantifiable results have been documented in the Lemhi, which is important to Chinook recovery efforts

- There is a local Lemhi rental pool because users wanted local input on how surface water was put into the bank and managed; the purpose is not for aquifer stabilization
- The Lemhi has high flow rights and local users wanted to make sure that these were still available so that recharge would continue to occur

Upper Salmon Lease/Rental Program

- This program primarily is used in the Sawtooth Valley, which has different demographics and water use; not primarily for agricultural production
 - For agreements over 5 years, must get approval from the IWRB; lease/rental agreements are run through the WSB
 - Total of 29 MSF in the Upper Salmon; this program rents/leases water to MSF held by IWRB
 - Amy looks at aerial imagery to determine if the water right is valid and has been used within the last 5 years; if not, may not be a valid water right
 - Valuation is based on NRCS value/acre for AUMs for irrigated pasture
 - These are for year-round leases for the consumptive portion of the water right; non-consumptive portion is available for downstream users
 - Partial-season leases not pursued because of the potential for water spreading if other rights used on the same ground
 - Weed prevention and management should be addressed with idled ground; maybe through CWMA
 - Need a monitoring and measuring program to ensure that flows are going to MSF
- Information on these transactions is available; appraisals can't be shared

Next meeting: April, 2020 to review available information on this year's snowpack and flow predictions