

Wood River Water Collaborative Meeting Notes 3/15/2017

Attendees: Mark Davidson, Patti Lousen, Pete VanDerMuelen, Larry Schoen, Brett Stevenson, Keri York, Nick Miller, Lynn Harmon, Carl Pendleton, Chris Johnson, Richard Carr, Donna Pence, Rusty Kramer, Chuck Turner; Ron Abramovich, Chris Corwin, Justin Stevenson, Doug Megargle, Marie Kellner, Peter Anderson, Cathy Tyson-Foster, Kristine Hilt, Greg Loomis, Pat Purdy, John Wright, Bill Hazen, Will Frehling, Kevin Lakey. On phone: Tim Luke, Remington Buyer, Dale Ewerson, and Sharon Lee, Wendy Pabich and Steve Miller could not call in successfully.

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.

Updates:

1. Dave Tuthill of Idaho Water Engineers will be refiling water right permit application for recharge rights on canal systems in the Big Wood basin
2. Water call has been refiled for the shortage in BWCC and Little Wood Water Users footprint, on the groundwater users in the upper Wood River valley

Water Supply Forecasting and Outlook – Ron Abramovich, NRCS Boise

- Tim Luke (IDWR) and Larry Schoen had a conversation in January to discuss how flooding could potentially be mitigated by diverting water into canals. Could this also be used for recharge? May be able to rent IWRB's Snake River recharge right. There is a flood control district statute that can declare emergency. How would the water be delivered and administered?
- Weather patterns in the North Pacific over the past few years
 - El Nino last year, then La Nina developed in mid-Pacific that is fading away
 - Pacific Northwest benefits from El Nino, desert southwest benefits from La Nina
 - The year following an El Nino often shows active weather systems and above-average precip
 - Recent storm track has been through northern California; Siberia's Nov snow pack can also affect our snowfall
 - Last fall, we got 5" of rain, soils are saturated with water – important to consider
- Weather patterns this winter
 - October 2016 had record rain; November was very dry, December and January lots of precip
 - In February we had 5 times the normal amount of precip, and the snow water equivalent doubled

- In March, we have had 61% of normal precip by March 15th; the next couple of weeks could add
 - The most recent years with this much snow were in the 1960s and 1970s
 - So far in March, we have had 61% of normal precipitation already
 - On April 1, NRCS uses snowpack to predict streamflows
- NRCS SNOTEL system – 118 sites in Idaho; 7 sites in the Big Wood basin, have been collecting data since 1981
 - Snow pillow measures snowfall, try to locate so windswept snow does not accumulate
 - Staff take snow core samples
 - Snow density measures; snow starts melting at 40% dense
 - There is a lot of variability around the state, and even within basins
 - Can go to this webpage and download data: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/id/snow/> and https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/id/snow/products/?cid=nrcs144p2_047788
 - Exceedance forecasting
 - There is a 100% chance that there will be surplus water supply in Magic Reservoir this year
 - Magic threshold is 350,000 acre-feet, can release 1,500 cfs from the dam
 - Right now, Magic is releasing the same amount as inflow
 - The demand for the Big Wood River basin is 425,000 acre-feet
 - The Big Wood River has never been at flood stage at Galena summit before
 - The NRCS could create more surface water supply indices to help with forecasting; could look at predictability in the entire basin

Discussion and Additional Questions:

- Want to know previous years' predications and how they relate to current and water call
- The water call also relates to Little Wood, so gathering similar forecasting information about the Little Wood would be helpful
- It would be helpful to better understand the relationship between SNOTEL data and streamflow for crop predictability and curtailment; based on what information is available on April 1 of each year
- Blaine County may be able to help contribute resources for more forecasting through the Blaine Soil Conservation District; the NRCS may be able to contract out some work to the Idaho Soil Conservation District
- Keri and Dayna will set up an agriculture subcommittee meeting to discuss further forecasting questions and scenarios that the NRCS could help with – date is April 6th, there will be an email with time and location

Flooding & Excess Flow

- **Lynn Harmon (BWCC)**
 - They are trying to maintain some space in Magic Reservoir
 - Continue with the release matching inflow right now, or a bit more
 - If it rains, they will have a hard time maintaining the spillway

- Running some water for recharge at Devil's Headgate. This would recharge in the ESPA
- **Larry Schoen (Blaine County)**
 - Water Resources Board has an ESPA recharge right, but the POD is below Magic
 - IWRB could put the water right into water supply bank, and then it could be rented out above Magic.
 - Concern w/ liability with canals
- **Remington Buyer (Water Supply Bank Coordinator)**
 - Agreed w/ Larry's analysis, but still have to respect other parts of the recharge water right (priority date, diversions, etc.)
 - IWRB's ESPA recharge right only comes into priority when excess flows are being released from Magic, it may not be a priority upstream of Magic
 - Other water rights could be put into the water supply bank and rented for recharge, these rights would have higher priority than the recharge right
 - Larry – Could Blaine County through 'emergency response' measure divert water into canals?
 - Bill Hazen estimated that if the canals moved water, probably wouldn't move out more than 300 cfs. We probably need to move out 2,000 – 3,000 cfs. Need to quickly identify how much water we could move out;
 - Another issue is that the biggest flooding in Blaine County occurs above the bigger diversions, so there is a need to move water out higher in the system
 - Doug (Fish and Game) reminds that whirling disease could be introduced into Silver Creek if Big Wood water is delivered into canals
 - Mark – this is an opportunity to prep for a low-water year – protect areas that can handle flooding.
 - Mark will schedule a meeting to discuss flooding and excess flows with Blaine County, IDWR, and IWRB. This may just be a small meeting.

Blaine County Flood Mapping and Emergency Response

- **Chris Corwin, Blaine County Emergency Services GIS**
 - Where does flood mapping indicate greatest risks are? – Use GIS as tool to inform
 - Base flow elevations, LiDAR, 100-year, and 500-year flood plain info available on Blaine County's website
 - Also want to 'crowd source' data – if you see low-land flooding, provide it to him
 - Keep an eye on areas of previous burns – likely increase flooding and debris flows in that area
- **Kristine Hilt, Blaine County**
 - What helpful actions can operators take to prevent flooding?
 - Levy system was graded recently (7 levies on Big Wood); Army Corps will help assess in the spring
 - Army Corps sees streamside vegetation as possibly undermining stability of levies
 - Per the national flood insurance program, landowners should not push flood water into another location, or it could be a federal concern

- Encourage canal and irrigation operators to clean them out in preparation for high flows because obstructions can cause flooding
- Early April there is a 'closed' emergency response public planning meeting
- Landowners with domestic wells need to think about floodwater contaminating their wells and drinking water sources

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Grant Opportunity for Water Marketing – Remington Buyer, IDWR

- BOR came out with a \$3 Million for **water marketing strategy grants** (50:50 match)
- IDWR pursuing a grant application to develop tools that will increase communication among stakeholders and make water marketing more available for everyone to participate in
- There is a need to reduce conflict and increase water resource management
- Water districts and individual water users need a better understanding of their water rights portfolios and the value of each water right
- Tools that could be used in a water market are the water supply bank, short-term leases, long-term acquisitions, with or without property
- IDWR needs resources to develop the tools that would support water marketing, specifically for the Big Wood basin
- This grant would fund technology development and outreach, not transactions specifically
- Deliverables would include planning, not implementation
- The WRWC could be used to define the local public interest for potential water transactions
- Could be structured like the upper Salmon Basin watershed program, with flow targets and incentives for landowners
- Next week seeking approval for IDWR to go after one of these Water Marketing Strategy Grants. Remington,
- If individuals want to offer support, come to the Board meeting next week (Friday 8 a.m. in Boise), the Collaborative could possibly draft a letter for the grant application.

Potential Model Run Scenarios for Silver Creek - Greg Loomis

- Greg asked IDWR to run some of his scenarios through the groundwater flow model, but IDWR says they don't want 'individual' requests, they want a group to request, like the WRWC
- His questions are based on wanting to keep Silver Creek healthy and meet downstream water needs in drought years
- Greg's scenarios are:
 - o Turn off the four deep wells
 - o Turn off the shallow wells (150 ft and less)
 - o Turn off wells in close proximity to Silver Creek
 - o All of the above combined
- Pete recommends making a request with an offer to support the work, possibly 30-40% of the cost
- Bill Hazen says the model needs to be tested – ask those questions, and find the \$\$\$. This would be a great time to ask the question, because there might be water to put into the Silver Creek system. There is a system in Oakley where runoff water is injected directly into wells.

- Larry is concerned this might be too much to ask in this model, and that more discussion is needed before proposing to IDWR. Other possibilities are to look at priority dates and confined/unconfined layers.
- Greg will email the questions to the group, and would like feedback.
- The NGOs will talk to IDWR (Jennifer Sukow) about these possibilities, cost estimates, and what types of scenarios the model can handle

Next meeting – End of April

- No speakers, just follow up on all of these items
- Items in yellow should happen before this meeting
- The NGOs have asked more questions of Anna Pakenham's social survey, and will go over at the next meeting