

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group
September 7, 2017
Hal Holmes Center
Ellensburg, Washington

Welcome/Introductions

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. Facilitator Neil Aaland reviewed the agenda. Introductions were made around the room.

Budget Issues

Tom Tebb opened this item and introduced Jim Skalski with Ecology's Water Resources Program budget office. Jim noted that the operating budget passed but no capital budget. He referred to a PowerPoint presentation (posted on the OCR website). Out of the original \$200 million in bonding authority, \$186 million has been obligated. In response to a question, he explained that the funding for the Teanaway Community Forest acquisition was separately accounted for. He also explained that OCR staff was moved off the state general fund in 2012 and is funded by the capital budget.

Mike Leita said OCR was a paradigm shift in how the state dealt with water issues. Previously, there was not a clear strategy.

Jim said OCR did not take any reductions from the Legislature. There were some cuts he referred to as "back of budget" cuts, including a 6% management cut for the agency. They are managing that through vacancies. There are also some unspent funds which OCR has some latitude with. They have re-appropriation authority if the monies were not designated. It is likely that the legislature will wait till the next legislative session to pass the capital budget. Ecology is starting to discuss contingency plans.

Mike Leita is concerned about stopping progress because of political dynamics. He urged PAG members to speak up to representatives. Tom Tebb agreed with that concern, is worried about projects. Rick Miller agrees with Mike and said we need to work with WSAC. He doesn't see this program going away. Wes McCart said we depend on OCR for Sullivan Lake. They have seen other staff in Ecology cut to keep OCR whole, which affects other work. Tom said the WRP also needs to be supported.

Neil Aaland asked if anyone around the table could update the PAG on Hirst negotiations. Evan Sheffels said there have been mis-steps on that. He noted that the bond vote for the capital budget must be a super-majority.

Jim Skalski continued his presentation. For the 2018 session, Ecology is re-submitting the same capital budget for OCR. One new item is \$20 million being requested to address issues posed by Hirst. With this item, Ecology would do some re-assessments, go to each basin. Scott Cave thinks this also helps address Foster; Tom Tebb agreed.

Water Supply Forecast – Update

Melissa Downes opened this topic. In December 2016, the forecast was approved. Ecology then asked WSU, which prepared the forecast, to look at the recommendations and begin helping to prepare for the next iteration. The one just completed identified some big policy issues. They are getting state agencies together to discuss this.

Melissa opened a PowerPoint presentation (available on the OCR website) and introduced Jenny Adam from WSU. Jenny gave an overview of results. In response to a question, she said they are looking for suggestions on how conservation measures should be factored in. She reviewed some recommendations from the state caucus and asked for discussion. Comments included:

- Craig Simpson noted that they have planned development in their area, and that the Columbia River Treaty is a factor in all of this
- He also noted that being sure they have access to reserved water is important
- Dan Haller noted if planting time is earlier, technically permit holders are out of compliance
- Evan wonders if the 2021 report will look at the water budget implications
- Dan noted that for older water rights, Ecology was generous – users might be more efficient and double crop using that same water
- Jenny asked what changes outside Washington State should they simulate?
- In response to a question, she explained how the municipal number of 80,000 cubic feet was arrived at
- Wes McCart said what is going on with the forests can be a factor – may see an increase in water due to fires, may also affect the timing of water
- Mike Leita wonders about the future uses of reclaimed water

Sasha Richey from WSU reviewed some options regarding groundwater; the state caucus had some recommendations and questions (see the PowerPoint presentation). PAG comments included:

- Mike Leita thinks we need to clearly identify the problems and address hot spots
- Melissa says we should develop a more robust groundwater monitoring network; each state agency has a piece and non-state agencies might also participate
- Dan says physical availability is a problem in parts of the state
- Mike Schwisow asked if analysis would incorporate existing groundwater rules that are in place
- Evan thinks some ballpark costs and time estimates for these would be helpful
- Dan thinks it's necessary to look at policies that encourage a move to groundwater, that can be problematic
- Wes says we need to quantify when water is moved out of agricultural production; Tom said they have commissioned a study that will get at that
- Dave McClure asked about the issue of well construction, is the declining water production a wide-spread problem?
 - Tom Tebb noted they are seeing dropping water levels in Lind, Harrington, other areas that was not anticipated
- Jenny said they want to improve the municipal demand forecast

A break was taken at 11:30.

No formal public comment was offered during the public comment portion of the agenda.

Future Organization of PAG

Facilitator Neil Aaland opened this topic. The CR-PAG has been in existence for over ten years, providing advice to Ecology on the Columbia River Water Supply Development Program. OCR wants to begin a conversation about possible re-structuring of the CR-PAG and what that might look like. This is a preview of a focused strategic planning session at the December CR-PAG meeting. Tom Tebb noted that, in the early years, the

PAG provided policy advice on implementing the program. For example, one early question was whether the funding would be limited to a one-mile corridor along the Columbia River. Based on input from the PAG, the program was opened to the whole of eastern Washington.

In the last 6 years, OCR has focused on projects. Instead of just reporting progress to the PAG, Tom is wondering how to make better use of the PAG. Some things to think about include having a committee structure, and whether the PAG should provide more advocacy. That's not something Tom can direct, but it's a topic for PAG members to consider. The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan committee is more structured, and provides advocacy.

It was noted that the Chehalis office is governor appointed, and has more of a formal structure.

OCR has thus been thinking about how to refresh the PAG. We have a lot of work ahead of us. Tom likes the idea of subsets of people that would work on specific tasks. He is considering asking Senator Honeyford to come to the December meeting.

Questions and comments from PAG members included:

- Craig Simpson said the PAG is one of the more successful groups, and wonders if there is another committee that is more effective
 - Tom said YBIP has a structure that allows them to advocate
- Michael Garrity noted that the Chehalis group has not yet chosen a path forward, and has very specific goals less dispersed geographically than the PAG. Generally, the PAG has done a good job of finding common ground, and we might need to re-visit priorities. He is not sure how formal it should become in terms of an advocacy function – depends on future priorities and level of consensus
- Mike Leita noted the PAG was formed by Ecology to give advice. It always comes down to funding, and we are running out of funding. Groups will need to advocate; perhaps consider linking up with YBIP and Chehalis efforts. A statewide effort is needed about water issues
- Wes McCart cautions about changing the role. When a mission is changed, that can risk failure. Might need to form a new group if the mission changes.
- Richard Stephens agrees with Mike and Craig – PAG has been successful but without funding not much need
- Rick Miller likes the way the PAG has functioned, and thinks it should continue as is
- Craig Simpson has a different perspective than Wes; would be more important to retain PAG if we link up with other groups. As we fight for funding, we need to have an advocacy piece
- Evan says YBIP has a politically effective fundraising group, effective when legislators change. We need to bring to the legislature areas of agreement.
- Michael thinks it will be good to come up with refreshed priority and goals

- Mike Leita wonders if anyone is authorized to deal with the statewide water issues? YBIP had a formative period to form and then devise a workplan; formally appointing a panel to explore the state-wide approach would be good, somebody should be empowered
- Evan said the Chehalis effort had a champion in the legislature; need something that is durable and flexible
- Craig noted that the PAG has over ten years of discussion on the issues, and we don't want to lose this venue. Even without funding, that is useful. Regarding subcommittees, he likes the discussions of the whole group around the table, don't want to shrink down points of view.
- Mike Schwisow agrees with Craig. He noted that the bonding authority has been nice but still must compete with other bonds. He likes a venue to discuss policy in the CR basin.
- Michael Garrity said an example of a policy issue is the vacuum regarding the Columbia River Treaty. Might consider asking the Governor to designate the PAG as a venue.
- Jeremy Weber said he could have someone come out from the COE office and talk about this
- Mike Leita said this has been useful as a venue to interact with other groups

Neil asked if other people in the room had thoughts:

- Mike Krautkramer said this is a great group, and is concerned that if political advocacy is added it might be toxic
- David Ortman wondered if there is authority to change the PAG into an advocacy group
- Dave McClure noted that watershed planning with the connection to citizen groups does still exist in some places, and would be good to connect with that
- Mike Leita thinks PAG should not go away; he's not advocating that
- Dan Haller suggested that a good exercise for the December discussion would be a list of the policy issues discussed by the PAG and implemented

Neil and Tom thanked everyone for the good ideas that can help frame the December discussion.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the CRPAG will be on December 7 in Ellensburg, WA.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates:

Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation

Jon Culp, WSCC

Michael Garrity, WDFW

Mike Leita, Yakima County Commissioner

Wes McCart, Stevens County Commissioner

Rick Miller, Franklin County Commissioner
Mike Schwisow, CBDL/Irrigation Districts
Evan Sheffels, WSFB
Craig Simpson, ECBID
Richard Stevens, Grant County Commissioner
Jeremy Weber, ACOE

Others in attendance:

Neil Aaland, Facilitator
Jenny Adam, WSU
Jim Browitt, Schroeder Law Offices
Scott Cave, City of Quincy
Jeff Dengel, WDFW
Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology
Bernie Erickson, ECID
Dan Haller, Aspect
Sarah Higgins, CBDL
Tim Hill, OCR
Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
Michele Kiesz, 47.5/OGWRD
Mike Krautkramer, Robinson Noble
Chris Marks, CTUIR
Jason McCormick
Dave McClure, Klickitat County
David Ortman, Sierra Club
Mike Poulson, Rep. McMorris Rodgers
Joel Purdy, GeoEngineers
Cathi Read, WA Dept of Commerce
Joye Redfield-Wilder, Ecology
Sasha Richey, WSU
Jim Skalski, OCR
Jennifer Stephens, OCR
Mark Symonds, BPS
Tom Tebb, OCR/Ecology
Jake Wollman, Jr., WHR