

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group
March 1, 2018
Washington State Farm Bureau
Lacey, Washington
(FINAL 3/15 v.2)

Welcome/Introductions

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

Strategic Planning session

Neil introduced this topic. He explained the process that was used for the December meeting. He also noted this not a document that will be formally adopted by Ecology but will be used to guide agenda-setting for the PAG. A draft was produced and e-mailed out for comment prior to today's meeting.

Neil opened the discussion to comment by the PAG. Lisa is concerned about the small group in December, and the lack of tribal attendance. She wonders about having some sort of retreat and thinks we need all members in the room. Another member also noted the lack of tribal presence and thinks we need more people at the table. The smaller attendance is probably due to fewer dollars being available. Ecology needs to consider water needs over the next 30 years.

Mike Schwisow reminded us that the OCR was created in 2006, it came together quickly during the legislative session. It was a product of the political process. Hirst bill has an aspirational level of \$300 million, this current budget includes \$20 million. A water coalition has been working for 4 years to get more funding for water.

Neil asked for discussion on the category of "other items raised during the discussion". These are comments that were raised during the strategic planning session, but Neil was not sure there was broad agreement about including as priorities. Tom Tebb said there is a section in the capital budget that directs OCR to do some work in the Skagit watershed. They will work with the Department of Agriculture and WDFW and produce a report.

Comments from the PAG:

- Commissioner Stevens noted that there are water problems on both sides of the state
- Lisa Pelly thinks the Office of the Chehalis Basin could be a model and noted some things are best solved locally
- Dave McClure wonders if similar ideas on developing water would be brought to the westside
- Support for this needs to be broader, some landowners around Kachess have not felt included
- Mike Kaputa thinks protocols for decision-making are well developed here, the science is inclusive. Westside needs to know how we got here
- Tom Tebb gave some context for item 2. He wants to consider how we make more realistic decisions
- Commissioner Stevens said some studies are done in basins, e.g. the GWMA studies; needs to be a change in thinking. Evaluation on how to best use groundwater.
- Mike Schwisow thinks the continuity question is dependent on location. Groundwater is always an OCR central focus.

- Craig said it is not always about decline in groundwater
- Jeremy noted fixes are not quick with declines

Neil asked if others in the room would like to comment:

- Some issues with how to use reclaimed water; and should revisit the strategy for storing water
- Should establish a more permanent groundwater monitoring program
- There has been some progress on ASR for municipal use; need to consider this for agricultural use
- Cathi Read from the Small Communities Initiative at the Dept of Commerce said they have been asked by the state Dept of Health to provide outreach and education to the more than 100 Group A water systems in the Mid-Columbia region that are potentially impacted by declining aquifer levels. So having as much information as possible on the topic of groundwater decline would be helpful as they reach out to water systems
- Issue of basin by basin planning – this is situational, Walla Walla basin was doing this before OCR was created
- Some of this idea of basin by basin planning came out of the watershed planning effort created in 1998

At the conclusion of this topic, Neil said the next step will be to discuss with the Executive Committee.

Initial conversation: Hirst bill (ESSB 6091)

Carrie Sessions and Dave Christensen from Ecology’s Water Resources Program were introduced. There are three main components to the bill:

1. Homes are allowed to use permit exempt wells, with some restrictions
2. Counties may rely on Ecology information in their decision-making about water availability, and the GMA and Subdivision Acts are amended to address this
3. \$300 million is provided over 15 years for watershed enhancement (including preparing or updating watershed plans)

Carrie reviewed a map that displayed the requirements for different counties. Wells drilled prior to January 18, 2018 are grandfathered in and don’t need to meet the requirements for water mitigation. A \$500 fee is imposed, based on when the well is drilled. The fee goes partly to counties and partly to Ecology. Metering is not required in affected basins, but a pilot metering program is created for Dungeness and Kittitas basins. Requirements for basin planning are discussed in sections 202 and 203 and applies only to specific counties. For the specified counties with approved watershed plans, the planning units will be re-convened by the counties to update the plans. For other counties, Ecology will convene and staff a planning group. The goals for plans are to identify actions to offset impacts of permit exempt wells, and to address the “net ecological benefit”.

Carrie and Dave also discussed sections of the bill relating to instream flow rules. Ecology is setting up a task force to address issues relating to the Foster decision, and there will be 5 pilots across the state. Ecology can amend the instream flow rules for Hirst basins under some circumstances and is directed to adopt plans if local governments fail to do so. Ecology can adopt plans by rule at their discretion. Finally, as noted earlier, a metering pilot program is established for the Dungeness and Kittitas basins.

Ecology is issuing interim guidance for the first year of funding. They have asked the legislature for additional funding from the operations budget, \$5 million per year, and are getting good indications for that.

Questions and comments:

- How is hydraulic continuity established? [Modeling]
- What are examples of mitigation? [re-timing of water; retire a senior water right]

A break was taken at 11:30.

Public Comment

Ann Lewis, Friends of Lake Kachess, said it is important for all stakeholders to be involved in these efforts.

Shelly Spalding, Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, said her focus is on bull trout.

Mike Dexel noted this was his final PAG meeting as he will be taking a new position with the Department of Health.

Updates from OCR: Budget and Legislative Session

Tom Tebb and Melissa Downes provided these updates. The 2017-2019 capital budget was finally passed. \$35 million was requested for OCR, \$33.8 million was received. Items not funded were the 508 process; public/private partnership item; and facilitation. Funding for both OCR and the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan was \$65 million. Tom thinks it is important to finish the east low canal; Craig Simpson said the funding will maximize funding for the work ECBID wants to do on the siphons.

Regarding legislation, there are several bills still in play. SB 6125 (Honeyford) is intended to extend the sunset date for using voluntary regional agreements. Currently, there is one VRA in place. No permits for water have yet been issued for it. SB 6279 prohibits levying penalties on owners where the violation was made by a lessee. SB 6123 prohibits the capital budget being used to fund state salaries.

A supplemental capital budget is being considered. This is where the OCR participation in the Skagit is found. The focus is on agricultural use and is based on estuarine flow. This proviso does not relate to the Hirst decision.

Cle Elum Fish Passage and Pool Raise

Teresa Hauser and Julia Long, BOR gave this presentation providing an update on this project (see the OCR website for the presentation). A video was shown on coffer dam construction, guide wall construction, and raw footage of the vault construction.

Questions and comments:

- There are two bills in congress that are authorizing completing the entire basin project; was that the intent? [No, the intent is to have only first phase authorized]
- Does BOR intend to provide water for senior water right holders? {No, this 14,000 acre-feet is for fish purposes only}

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:45 p.m. The next meeting of the CRPAG will be on June 7 at the Hal Holmes Center in Lacey, WA.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates:

Jeff Dengel, WDFW
Lisa Pelly
Mike Schwisow

Craig Simpson, ECBID
Richard Stevens, Grant Co. Comm.
Jeremy Weber, ACOE

Others in attendance:

Neil Aaland, Facilitator
Debbie Carlson, BPA
Scott Cave, City of Quincy
Jeff Dengel, WDFW
Mike Dexel, WDOH
Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology
Ben Floyd, Facilitation Team
Kelsey Green, American Rivers
Tim Hanrahan, GeoEngineers
Cathy Hubbard, Ecology
Al Josephy, Ecology
Sue Kahle, USGS
Liz Klumpp, BPA
Mike Krautkramer, Robinson Noble
Ilene LeVee, Landowner

Ann Lewis, Friends of Lake Kachess
Dave McClure, Klickitat County
Renee Martine-Tebow, RS-COM
Kelsey Mason, Landau Associates
Tom Myrum, WSWRA
Dave Nazy, EA Engineering
David Ortman, Sierra Club
Elaine Packard, Sierra Club
Cathi Read, COM
Joye Redfield-Wilder, Ecology
Rick Roeder, WDNR
Shelley Spalding, FWOC
Jennifer Stephens, OCR
Tom Tebb, OCR/Ecology
Jon Turk, Brown & Caldwell