



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

February 24, 2021

### **Current Drought Management Strategies from Working Group and SPAC discussions**

**Introduction:** The intention of today's discussion is to review potential drought management and resilience strategies that the SPAC may want to recommend. There are many cross-cutting strategies that the Working Groups have been discussing as they relate to drought management and resilience that are incorporated in the other topic areas (floodplains and habitat, water quantity, and other issues).

The intention of today's discussion is for the SPAC to identify, refine, and eventually agree to a recommended strategy or suite of strategies for drought management.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- Are there strategies to address drought that are not listed below?
- What strategies do you prefer in the near-term to address drought? Long-term?
- Are there strategies listed below that you oppose or have concerns about?
- Does opting for your preferred strategies change or preclude other strategies listed?

#### **Floodplain and Habitat Restoration Projects**

- **Manage uplands for watershed health.**  
Forested upland soil and vegetation health is critically connected to watershed health throughout the basin. Projects should help manage upland soils and vegetation such as through fire management, road decommissioning, and other strategies. Additionally, implement projects to enhance upper watershed water resources through retiming and infiltration.

#### **Streamflow Improvement Projects + Groundwater Recharge**

- **Expand managed aquifer recharge (MAR).**  
Capture more winter-early spring high flows and recharge MAR sites in the winter-early spring to make more alluvial aquifer groundwater available in from spring through fall. This includes reactivating Washington MAR sites, like Stiller Pond.
- **Increase water rights acquisitions (short-term, long-term and split season) to restore streamflows.**  
Work to acquire senior water rights from willing sellers basin-wide and transfer water rights instream to help meet instream flows using various water acquisition tools such as leases, purchases, split season agreements, and others.
- **Expand basalt ASR by capturing more winter-early spring high flows.**  
Examine and implement ways to drive more widespread ASR, if source water is available. Continue applying water quality standards for injected water ASR source water but find ways to offset costs and increase ASR feasibility.

## Policy & Regulatory Actions

- **Increase coordination of regulation between Counties and water management entities.**  
Floodplain management has critical land use and water use components. Emphasis should be placed on integrating land and water management in regulatory provisions to ensure that floodplain health is adequately addressed in a holistic way. In particular, better coordination with County Planning is needed related to bridge placement after flood events (applies to Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Columbia Counties). The Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (req for FEMA funding) is revisiting that plan now (New Plan forthcoming in 2021).
- **Develop county land use zoning and codes that align with protecting water-dependent ecosystems so rural water development occurs in appropriate areas.**  
Consider creation of groundwater management districts.
- **Decrease City of Walla Walla surface water diversion or substitute for basalt wells during low flow periods.**  
At OR/WA state line Kooskooskie, 25-35 cfs seasonal lease agreement with the City of Walla Walla could double summer flows, allowing downstream areas to approach instream flow targets.
- **Address Legal Implications of Bi-State water management.**  
Further explore and define legislative changes or interstate compact needs to manage water resources in a bi-state basin.
- **Groundwater regulation during times of shortage.**  
In WA, consider ways to better regulate groundwater during droughts. Use USGS study to develop regulatory framework for groundwater. OR regulates groundwater on a regular basis. OR rules may need to be updated eventually.
- **Additional Bi-State coordination on groundwater regulation.**  
Coordinate OR and WA groundwater regulations.

## Monitoring & Metering

- **Develop forecasting tool for precipitation-runoff to develop 'water calendar' to communicate information and manage water use during wet and dry years.**
- **Enforce relevant metering requirements and process metering data in OR and WA.**  
Install additional water diversion metering and telemetry to improve feedback about water use, conservation measures, and irrigation efficiency. Install telemetry (remote-based) on all major diversions in the Walla Walla Basin. Update meters for middle and smaller water users where needed. Ensure that data is processed and reviewed by State agencies.

## Water Supply Projects

- **Encourage native plant landscaping in urban areas to reduce water use.**  
The City of Walla Walla and others have implemented native plant landscaping and rain gardens to reduce impervious surfaces and address stormwater runoff. These programs are consistent with Ecology's stormwater regulations but also reduce overall water use. Examples of specific projects include a Zero-Scape Park used as demonstration project and a conservation newsletter that gives tips on how to reduce water on lawns and plants.
- **Strategically plan to supply water to development outside city limits.**  
Keep development small and compact in urban growth areas and develop associated incentives. Municipal Code requires that if a development wants to connect to city water or sewer it must be annexed into the city

first. Annexation (density) supports infrastructure efficiency. Other zoning changes include requiring development to have a smaller footprint/impact and incorporating filtration of stormwater.

- **Convert from higher demand water use crops to lower water demand crops.**

For example, convert orchards to vineyards, alfalfa to alfalfa seed, and other winter crops.

- **Emergency interties to improve reliability**

The City of Walla Walla has been spearheading this to support smaller systems to provide water in cases of emergency as they are the biggest municipal water system and likely the most resilient.