

WALLA WALLA BASIN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BAC) MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, February 26, 2025, | 1:00-4:30 p.m.

Room 2023-24 | Water & Environment Center at WWCC | 640 Water Center Drive

Hybrid Meeting ([Zoom instructions below](#))

Time*	Agenda Item (Action items are marked with "I")	Reference Materials	Presenter(s)
1:00 (10 mins)	Welcome, Introductions, Review Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome and introductions Review agenda Opening remarks 	Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larry Mattson, Ecology, on behalf of the Tri-Sovereigns Alexandra Doty, Facilitator
1:10 (20 mins)	Bennington Fish Ladder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates BAC member questions and discussion 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen Robison, USACE BAC members
1:30 (15 mins)	Oregon Legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of Walla Walla Basin legislation in Oregon BAC member questions and discussion 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Marks, CTUIR BAC members
1:45 (35 min)	Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcoming and recent events Draft developed water policy Bi-State Flow Study update Drought Plan project update Other updates? <p><i>We'll test out this new time for the updates during the February meeting and welcome feedback!</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Doty, Facilitator Amanda Cronin, Project Manager BAC members Jaime Short, Ecology Melissa Downes, Ecology and Chris Marks, CTUIR
There will be a 10-minute BREAK around 2:20			
2:40 (80 mins)	2025 Walla Walla Basin Watershed Strategy Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief Implementation Plan and near-term priority overview. Implementors and BAC members to share their 2025 priorities and any key project updates in alignment with Implementation Plan Tri-Sovereign share out about their 2025 priorities BAC member questions and discussion 	Tri-Sovereign 2025 Priorities Implementation Plan Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amanda Cronin, Project Manager Implementors/BAC members Brook Beeler, Ecology, Chris Kowitz, OWRD, and Chris Marks, CTUIR
4:00 (20 mins)	BAC Member Roles and Caucus Vacancies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce discussion and review the roles and expectations of BAC members, to continue discussion in March. Note the current BAC Caucus vacancies. 	WWBAC Member and Caucus Roles Discussion Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Doty, Facilitator BAC members
4:20 (5 mins)	Public Comment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Doty, Facilitator
4:25 (5 mins)	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next steps Rotating BAC Member closing remarks WW BAC Happy Hour! 4 – 6 PM <p><i>Please join us for an optional no-host happy hour at The Green Lantern Tavern.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Doty, Facilitator Linda Herbert, Blue Mountain Land Trust, Recreation/Quality of Life Interest Group

*All times are approximate and may change



Welcome & Introductions

- Alexandra Doty, facilitator, welcomed everyone, reviewed the agenda, and led roll call. Attendees are listed in [Appendix A. Attendees](#).
- Larry Mattson introduced himself as the new director of the Ecology Office of Columbia River (OCR), becoming the third to hold the position as OCR approaches its 20th anniversary next year. He acknowledged the leadership of his predecessors, Derek and Tom, who were known for their creativity, diplomacy, and action-oriented approach. Larry plans to be in Walla Walla regularly, working from the Ecology office in the WEC.
- A key priority for him is meeting people where they are and engaging with the community in person. He is eager to be present with the BAC and collaborate on projects that prioritize practical, less intensive designs. Additionally, he is interested in strengthening the resilience of the energy grid through renewable energy solutions.

Bennington Fish Ladder Updates

Karen Robison, USACE

- The Diversion Dam does not meet current fish passage criteria, so the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has designed a new fish ladder on the north shore. The ladder will feature 15 vertical slots, including one entrance and one exit slot, and meets NOAA Fisheries standards. USACE collaborated with multiple agencies and organizations to develop the design, which is specifically engineered to support bull trout passage.
 - Construction will require removing a portion of the existing levee on the north side.
 - A BAC member noted that building the ladder will take two fish window seasons, because in salmon-bearing streams, in-water work is limited to July–October to minimize impacts to salmon. As a result, construction is planned to occur over two seasons, in 2025 and 2026.

Questions

- A BAC member asked if they know what the height of the ladder steps are?
 - A BAC member responded that 6 inches is typical specification for fish passage.
- A BAC member asked why not remove the old fish ladder?
 - USACE answered that removing the foundation of the ladder will affect the foundation of the dam. It can also be used during high flows to pass some flows.
- A BAC member asked about the total project cost.
 - USACE shared that \$10 – \$25 million was the posted cost of construction at solicitation.
- A BAC member asked about the planned educational outreach for the construction, noting that many recreational trail users could be affected.
 - USACE hasn't begun working with the public affairs office yet, but they've been tracking the project. Once we secure a construction contract, they will begin public notifications.
 - A BAC member noted that discussions with Public Affairs have covered the broader scope of work on Mill Creek, and there are plans to provide a comprehensive update on all related projects once more details are available.
 - Another BAC member highlighted this as an opportunity to educate the public on fish ladders and fish migration windows.
 - A BAC member shared their experience in educating the community about the various partners involved, helping people connect the dots on the work happening in the area.
- A BAC member emphasized that this project is significant for spring Chinook, bull trout, and steelhead, noting that efforts to improve fish passage have been ongoing for decades. They suggested discussing additional fish passage and fish window education with WDFW.

Oregon Legislation

Presentation by Anton Chiono, CTUIR, and Chris Kowitz, OWRD

- Efforts are underway to secure \$2.5 million from Oregon to match Washington's allocation for Walla Walla projects. Work is in progress with legislators in Salem to draft the bill, which would direct funds to the Washington Department of Ecology for project implementation supported by existing legislation in both states. The bill's language will remain broad, but projects will be vetted by the Walla Walla BAC to align with collective regional goals.
- Additionally, the bill includes provisions to grant Oregon the authority to manage pulse flows. A hearing on a placeholder bill was recently held, with several BAC members testifying in support. The finalized language is expected in the coming weeks. Senator Nash and Representative Levee went to CTUIR and asked what they can do to support, so we appreciate their continued interest and engagement in the Walla Walla Basin.
 - Senator Nash is Senator Hansell's new successor this year – Senator Nash has been supportive, and values the collaboration in the Walla Walla!
- Given the turmoil and uncertainty of the federal government, the Oregon Legislature may be very careful about allocating new funds, since it's unclear if the state will need to step in and backfill for critical needs that may have federal funding drop out (like health care or education). While Oregon is in a budget-positive position, they are being cautious due to the federal uncertainty.
- Oregon Water Resources Department was asked by the Legislature to come up with our own funding mechanism, but we decided with Ecology (ECY) to pipe the funds to OCR and work together to allocate those funds and administer the contracts through OCR, since the decision-making and funding process for OCR projects is already in place. Having the states fund these projects differently didn't make sense.
- As soon as we have amendment language posted, we can get a draft support letter and there will be opportunities to testify or provide written testimony. We will share information via email to help provide ways for BAC members to support.

Questions

- A BAC member asked if the full amount could be spent in Oregon, or only the \$2.5 million from Oregon? During the last OCR funding cycle, there were restrictions on how OCR funding could be used for Oregon-based projects.
 - Chris K replied only the \$2.5 million allocated by the Oregon Legislature can be spent in Oregon. The legislation includes the same stipulation as Washington—any funds spent in the other state must provide a benefit to the home state.
- A BAC member asked if they are tracking Bill 2988 about qualitative recharge water?
 - Chris K replied it's been a busy legislative session focused on water. We're actively tracking developments and providing input to the legislature. Chris will connect directly.
- A BAC member asked about the timeline for that Oregon funding?
 - Chris K replied it'd be a 2025-2027 timeline, from July 1 – June 30, to match the OCR.

Decision: BAC approved writing a letter of support from the BAC for the Oregon Legislation.

Action item: Chris and Anton will keep the BAC updated, and facilitation team will send draft letter of support and ways to testify/support via email to the BAC.

Updates

- **Upcoming and Recent Events:**
 - March 25, 2025: Water and Wine Event on Regenerative Vineyard Practices at Echo Land Cellars
 - May 17, 2025: Return to the River, 11 am – 3 pm
 - Previous events included:
 - Two Water and Wine Events
 - Jan 8 (48 attendees)
 - Feb 5 (20 attendees)



- Two pub trivia events on Big House Brew Pub
 - Jan 18 (24 attendees)
 - Feb 11 (15 attendees)
 - Oregon Dry Creek landowners outreach event, hosted by Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council
 - 4-6 pm on Friday Feb 28 at Watershed Council Office
- **Draft Developed Water Policy – Jaime Short, ECY**
 - Ecology is currently drafting the developed water policy and plan to release it for BAC review. After receiving BAC feedback, they will proceed with the standard Ecology public comment period. The facilitation team will distribute the draft policy via email when it is ready
- **Bi-State Flow Study update – Melissa Downes, ECY**
 - The Jacobs consultant team has finalized the Walla Walla River Bi-State Flow Study report. This is the final version and is not open for comments. The final report was distributed via email as a link in the February BAC meeting materials.
 - The report will be included in the final Phase II deliverable packet of Walla Walla 2050, which AMP Insights is preparing. This packet includes the Implementation Plan.
 - The Bi-State Flow Study will now be integrated into the USBR Basin Study process, contributing to the solutions and alternatives considered.
 - The USBR Basin Study will feed into a Programmatic EIS process, where a preferred alternative or set of solutions will be selected and advanced. This Bi-State Flow Study design and concept phase is complete, and the USBR Basin Study framework will continue moving the work forward. Our contract with Jacobs/Aspect ends in March.
 - **BAC Discussion:**
 - **Action item:** Mark Wachtel/WDFW had issues accessing the final report. Work with them on email access.
 - A BAC member asked about the USBR Basin Study process for recommending water supply projects.
 - Chris K responded that the USBR doesn't recommend specific projects for funding but instead develops a matrix, outlining potential projects that meet our criteria. We're already coordinating with USBR and Ecology to stay ahead of each milestone. We can re-share the overall WW2050 timeline and milestones at the next BAC meeting.
 - **Action item:** Share overall WW2050 milestone/timeline with the BAC in March.
 - A BAC member asked if Ecology foresees any momentum loss with USBR in this process?
 - Melissa replied that the biggest unknown right now is how funding and staffing changes will impact USBR at the federal level. The Tri-Sovereigns have done a significant amount of work this winter to provide USBR with the water data needed for the RiverWare model.
 - A BAC member asked if there are any issues with funding or staffing, when will we know, and will you notify us?
 - Department of Reclamation had about 10% staffing reduction in this round of layoffs.
 - A BAC member asked if the Bi-State Flow Study is folded into the Basin Study process, will we lose momentum because of USBR?
 - A BAC member stated it's hard to predict from a federal standpoint. There are no normal processes being followed right now.
 - Brook echoed previous BAC member comments, stating that if there are impacts to programs or projects, they will track the situation with federal affairs staff and attorneys. If any recourse is available, they will pursue it. If action is needed, they will develop a plan to respond and move forward, addressing challenges as they arise.
 - Melissa stated OR, WA, and CTUIR meet with USBR every two weeks, and we've continued to do that, which is a good sign.
 - Chris K acknowledged that while the potential loss of federal funding is concerning, reaching this milestone is significant. Many people have dedicated years to the Bi-State Flow Study, and completing this process is an achievement worth celebrating. Now, the focus shifts to engaging the federal government in the next phase, making this an occasion to appreciate and recognize the progress made.

- **Drought Plan Project Update – Amanda Cronin, AMP**

- Walla Walla County Conservation District (WWCCD) received a grant from Ecology to support drought planning and assess the impacts and risks to water users. AMP and Cascadia are assisting WWCCD in this effort.
- We are planning a meeting with agricultural users for March along with recurring workgroup sessions focused specifically on drought. There will also be community events centered on drought.
- Updates will be shared regularly with the BAC, and members are encouraged to participate.
- A BAC member asked that if anyone needs to be involved, they should be notified, as the intent is to gather as much information as possible.
- BAC members interested in participating in the drought working group are Mark Wagoner, Troy Baker, Amy Schwab, and Jeff Dengel.

- **General Updates**

- A BAC member stated they took a field trip to a project on Dry Creek, wanting to see how it was responding to the high water, and we found a baby lamprey taking shelter in the creek!
- A BAC member noted that steelhead numbers in the Walla Walla Basin have been very low, with only about 50 steelhead returning this year, compared to the usual 200 or more. However, the spring chinook estimate is more promising, with 500-800 expected to return to the basin, marking the first significant return from full production releases. Last year, the number came close to 500, and there is hope to surpass that this year. This would be the highest number seen in a long time, with returns typically peaking in May, though some may return in April and June.
 - A BAC member asked if they noticed any bump in in-migration recently?
 - The BAC member responded that we did notice a bump in the Umatilla Basin, but not in Walla Walla Basin. Walla Walla is often about 5-8 days behind of the Umatilla Basin.
- **Action item: Provide an update on fish returns in May or June BAC meetings.**
- Chris K stated on June 12 and 13, the OWRD commission and ODFW commission will be in Pendleton. Chair Quaempts is terming out as a member of the OR Water Resources Commission, and we'll have a Walla Walla agenda item. If you're interested in joining, we'd love to have some folks from the WW Basin come down and engage with the commission.
- A BAC member asked if there is any way to track the smolts released in May 2024.
 - A BAC member responded that the smolts should be well into the ocean by now. Most of the fish observed in the mid-Columbia Basin are four years old, so the smolts released last year will likely return to the Walla Walla Basin in about three years. Survival rates from Mill Creek are typically higher compared to other release locations (Hatchery, Mill Creek, and near the mouth of the Walla Walla). Survival and return tracking helps monitor both survival rates and where the fish ultimately return in the Basin.
 - A BAC member added that from 2008 – 2020, average survival from the Walla Walla just to McNary Dam was only like 30%. We're hoping to have about 1% of that 500,000 release back. Since they've diversified their release strategies, they're seeing about 52% survival now. We can try to bring back some data about the release group that we all watched. We're all excited about the potential of those returns.
 - A BAC member stated that hatchery fish generally don't survive as well as wild fish. A good hatchery smolt-to-adult ratio is about 1%, while wild populations tend to be more resilient, with survival rates ranging from 5-10%, with 10% being considered very high.
 - A BAC member noted receiving many requests from schools to participate in fish releases and visit the Hatchery. They also mentioned that Troy captured great underwater videos of the release, which are posted on the Watershed Council website for viewing.

2050 Walla Walla Basin Watershed Strategy Priorities

- Amanda Cronin, Project Manager, reminded the BAC about the Implementation Plan for Tier 1 strategies of Walla Walla 2050. The Plan includes several summary tables highlighting the status of Tier 1 strategies, phasing through 2029, and the lead and support roles for implementing each strategy. These tables are intended to



serve as an easy reference point to help with coordination on implementation and provide a snapshot of the status of the Tier 1 strategies from the 2050 Strategic Plan.

- A BAC member asked can these tables be combined in any way? It'd be helpful to see the strategy, who's involved, and what phasing are we looking at?
 - Amanda agreed and will add the implementers to the phasing table.
 - **Action item:** Add implementers/support role to the phasing table.

Implementer Share Out – 2025 Work & Updates

Walla Walla County Conservation District - Annie Byerley

- The Conservation District focuses on riparian buffers and instream work for Tier 1 strategies, while also implementing more feasible Tier 2 and 3 strategies like irrigation efficiencies. WWCCD tracks progress on the biennium (2023-2025), with completed projects including four instream projects, 49 acres of riparian buffers, and five irrigation pivots saving 190 acre-feet. A new instream project and five acres of riparian work are scheduled for this summer. They also assisted NRCS in installing a bridge over Coppei Creek. The Touchet Levee Group is addressing levee and sediment issues near Dayton Bridge.

Questions

- A member of the public asked what kinds of implementation would you like to see for Strategy 2.01 if there were willing landowners?
 - If there were people who didn't want to work with the Fire District, we could fill in those holes. They didn't find any landowners who weren't already engaging with the Fire District, so I passed through the money to the Fire District. That work is focused on fuel reduction – thinning and limbing.
- A BAC member asked if they have applied for Floodplains by Design?
 - Yes, the Mill Creek project pictured on the slide was funded through Floodplains by Design.

Washington Water Trust - Nina Lottsfeldt

- Our overall strategy goal at WWT is to identify and secure projects that restore instream flow to priority reaches. And support strategies 1.04, 1.08, and 1.12. We're trying to expand our project base into the Oregon side of the Basin and expanding our outreach efforts as well.
- Our project focused on source switch with the City of Walla Walla is currently on hold, but hoping to explore the potential of a water lease next year.
- Currently pursuing funding to expand and improve capabilities of our Walla Walla Decision Support Tool – this is a GIS tool that helps us prioritize instream projects based on [missed] and salmonid recovery.
 - Would like to present the WW Decision Support tool to the BAC at some point this year and get BAC feedback on the tool itself.

Questions

- A BAC member stated that Sarah Dymecki (formerly of WWT) was piloting a project on the Touchet with a dashboard on flow – is that possible to expand?
 - Originally, our goal with the WW DST was to have it encompass more modeling and account for streamflow, but that would be useful for future phases. Opportunity to partner with you on this!

Tri-State Steelheaders – Brian Burns

- All ongoing design projects are focused on Mill Creek. The 3rd Ave to Colville St section is funded by OCR, and USACE has requested a model study of the design due to concerns about flood stage hydraulics. RCO is funding the physical modeling, with a target for complete design by February/March 2026.
- The 6th Ave bridge, like the 5th Ave bridge project completed this year, presents similar challenges with an old bridge that lacks sufficient space for fish passage and waterworks access. The City has funding to remove and replace the bridge, and there's an opportunity to combine the 6th Ave Passage project with the bridge replacement project.
- The Roosevelt to Tausick design is targeted for construction starting in 2027.



- The bottom two pictures show the proposed 2025 construction for the Gose St passage project, aiming to fix the scour problem, add new channel fill, and modify the fishway to improve jump heights and turbulence.

Questions

- A BAC member noted that Bonneville Power Administration conducted a site visit to the Gose St project and asked if any changes to the design were proposed as a result.
 - Brian stated that the meeting hasn't happened yet but will provide more information to the BAC member once it does. The design is currently at 90%.

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council – Troy Baker

- The Watershed Council is focusing on Tier 1 strategies for 2025, including two floodplain restoration projects with riparian planting and efforts on Couse Creek, an important tributary for steelhead.
- Streamflow gauging is being conducted in the valley, focusing on tributary flow and spring performance, along with monitoring 60 groundwater sites.
- The spring inventory project in the Mill Creek Municipal Watershed will be completed soon.
- Ongoing outreach efforts, including Water and Wine and Pub Trivia, are supporting WW2050 through June.
- A successful pesticide application project is being run with the local ag community to prevent chemicals from reaching waterways.
- New funding has been secured to work with the City of Milton-Freewater on water-wise landscaping.
- The Watershed Council continues to engage the community through education programs like Hydromania, a summer science camp for local kids, with former participants now employed by the Council.
- New funding has been received for outreach on local environmental issues.

Questions

- A BAC member asked if the Oregon Dept of Agriculture is funding the pesticide project with agriculture?
 - Yes!
- The BAC member asked follow up question about what they are studying on Mill Creek?
 - Troy replied that they are identifying the locations of most of the springs and source water for the City of Milton-Freewater. As part of this, we're taking water quality and flow measurements to track the performance of these springs over time. This data will be valuable for understanding potential climate impacts. Some testing has shown that some of this water is relatively young, indicating it hasn't been in the ground for long.
- A BAC member asked what data are you referring to with the pesticide program?
 - Troy responded that they are tracking the findings in the water and providing feedback to local growers to help reduce pesticides in the waterways. They are working on making changes to mitigate this issue. The data shows a decreasing trend in chemicals in the water, demonstrating the positive impact they are having in the Basin.

CTUIR – Jeremiah Bonifer

- CTUIR is supporting ongoing projects in Mill Creek, including Gose Street and Roosevelt to Tausick. They've kicked off the floodplain reconnection component of the Túuši Wána project, which was awarded a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation America the Beautiful grant. This will establish a permanent easement and has the potential to significantly benefit the steelhead population in the Touchet and improve the overall system.
- CTUIR is a co-lead on the Nursery Bridge fish passage GI study, in collaboration with Oregon Solutions and WWRID, with progress being made toward advancing a solution.
- The Walla Walla subbasin salmonid monitoring strategy will continue to track trends in salmon and steelhead populations.
- Upcoming 2025 projects include the Frenchtown floodplain restoration project, which will enter the design phase. Work will continue on the Caps Wier project with the Corps, with up to \$10M allocated for work on Mill Creek, which will remain funded despite federal uncertainty.
 - Cindy Boen, USACE, noted that 40 weirs have been funded, with 10 completed last year and the remaining 30 scheduled for this year. USACE is seeking funding for the final 40 weirs. USACE has funding for the weirs immediately below Diversion Dam, and efforts are underway to secure funding to notch the remaining half of the weirs. This project starts at the Division Works dams and works downstream to



modify the weirs as far as possible, extending towards the softball field park. Cindy emphasized that projects focused on restoring existing structures are much more effective than trying to restore what has already been lost.

- Jeremiah added that there is a growing connection between large, challenging projects that are making significant changes in the Basin, particularly benefiting fisheries resources.

Questions

- Anton Chiono, CTUIR, provided a quick shout out to WWT and BLMT who are partners on the Túuši Wána project – the BMLT will hold that easement and WWT will help with the water transaction.
 - Jerimiah replied they are very grateful for all the collaboration in this Basin. Shows how important collaboration is to achieving progress in the Basin.

WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife – Mark Wachtel and Jeff Dengel

- WDFW supports the passage efforts led by TSS and CTUIR, highlighting the importance of partnerships with the Tribe, the Corps, and other stakeholders. These collaborations are the result of relationship-building over the past 10-20 years. Jackie McCool will take the lead on the assessment that Jerimiah mentioned. Two geomorphic assessments have been completed on the Tucannon River and one on Mill Creek, focusing on identifying areas to access the historic floodplain, reduce river energy, and create more habitat for fish.
- The geomorphic assessment on the Tucannon River has made significant progress in bringing order to recovery. Many projects on Mill Creek have been undertaken in partnership, and WDFW will participate in the Gose Street meeting tomorrow.
- WDFW has been collaborating with the Corps on all the weir notching projects.
- For the WDFW Monitoring project, they are exploring ways to leverage existing and potential work, including a partnership with ODFW's Water Program, which deploys live streamflow and water right tools within the state. This could serve as a foundational element for the monitoring and adaptive management plan, integrating it with a biological data clearinghouse, similar to the Touchet Decision Support Tool. The goal is to have the scope of work finalized in the next 8-10 weeks, with an RFQ expected by the end of April or early May.

City of Milton-Freewater – Steven Patten

- Troy and Jerimiah covered some of the topics I planned to address. We are currently involved in stormwater work with the Watershed Council.
- Additionally, we are working on the Nursery Bridge Project. The Oregon Solutions process is just beginning, with the City helping to fund this effort to develop an MOU for the Nursery Bridge.
- We're looking for design funding and partnering with various organizations to move bar forward on fish monitoring.

Tri-Sovereign 2025 Priorities

- Brook Beeler, ECY, shared that the Tri-Sovereigns meet quarterly and assess our priorities for the coming year. Our 2025 priorities include:
 - **Draft & complete WA and OR legislative reports**
 - **Increased engagement across caucuses:** we want to support this group in continuing to further the mission in a collective way. How do we organize ourselves in a way that is effective?
 - **Stateline basalt aquifer characterization:** OWRD and ECY Water Resources working together to characterize what's happening in the basalt across the Stateline. That will tie in with USGS Study as well.
 - **2050 legislative advocacy for future federal funding request:** hoping to get federal reps to Walla Walla Basin this year for a tour.
 - **Fish co-manager long-term planning for streamflows:** work with the co-managers to plan where streamflows would go if we have the opportunity to do a developed water project.
 - **Support the drought work** that the WWCCD and AMP is doing.
- Chris K noted that all of the big studies are ongoing and are baked into our process at this point. We talked about the work of our Tri-Sovereign group, so these are things we want to advance in 2025.



Questions

- A BAC member stated that while there is significant Basin-wide engagement, it often feels like there's minimal return, citing the experience at WWCCD where efforts to engage lead to only a few attendees. Despite this, the importance of continuing outreach and trying to expand participation remains crucial.
 - A BAC member mentioned the Water & Wine series has been successful.
 - A BAC member seconded the engagement point, believing a solution is out there and that continued effort is needed. They suggested collaborating with other implementers to increase outreach and education and recommended forming an ad hoc group to explore new ideas.
 - The facilitation team reminded the BAC that the Policy, Funding, and Outreach (PFO) working group is an existing forum for discussion and collaboration on outreach.
 - Brook has heard positive feedback from the Water and Wine events. There's a need to find creative ways to continue funding this education and outreach work.
 - Amanda suggested that this could be a good topic for the PFO work group to discuss.
 - Chris K stated that OWRD hired Charlotte as a community engagement coordinator to specifically address this issue. He doesn't feel there is a need to create a new outreach initiative—there is already a core group of people actively involved in engagement and outreach, and anyone else interested in being involved can reach out to them.
- A BAC member asked if this list should be characterized as guiding priorities or as a sequencing tool for BAC priorities when discussing them within our own caucuses.
 - Brook clarified that the list is meant to help BAC members understand the Tri-Sovereigns' priorities and what they are focusing their energy and resources on this year. However, if an opportunity arises for BAC members to support something else on the list, please share that information.
- A BAC member asked about the opportunity to have a PFO work group meeting this year?
 - Amanda responded that we should be able to resume regular workgroup meetings once our contract is finalized. This, along with wrapping up the implementation plan, is a priority. We're open to ideas for additional topics or formats for engagement at the workgroup level.
 - **Action item:** Add this to the agenda for the March meeting and discuss scheduling then.
- A BAC member acknowledged the lack of Ecology funding and staff for updating tools like the Metering Database, which was a priority earlier. They expressed concern about it potentially falling off the list and asked about the plan to move it forward.
 - Jaime responded that an internal group at Ecology is working to assess what can be done with current technology and determine the need for new technology. Oregon is also working on bringing in new tech, and they plan to learn from their experience. Although funding for the current biennium was not successful, metering remains a state-wide issue with broad interest in moving it forward.
- A member of the public asked if any entity is planning a trip to DC this year and suggested connecting with Washington Representatives like Baumgartner if possible.
 - A BAC member replied that they attended a trip with the National Alfalfa Association, visiting Senator Murray's office to discuss WW2050 and the Gardena piping project. They also met with Rep. Newhouse to share information about WW2050 and the piping project, and briefly spoke with Rep. Baumgartner about WW2050, inviting him to visit in June or July.
 - A BAC member shared that the county commissioners have been visiting DC for many years; he has been going for the last four years. All local legislators are well aware of the WW2050 group and potential future requests. They have shared general descriptions of potential anchor projects, and every trip to DC includes an update, ensuring that legislators remain informed about WW2050.
- A BAC member noted that early coordination across state agencies and conservation districts is key. They mentioned that the Department of Commerce's Growth Management Act planning updates have faced similar outreach challenges. If state and conservation district efforts could be better aligned, providing a single point of access for the public, it might help address these issues.
 - **Action item:** Please send comments on the Implementation Plan by next Wed, Mar 5.

BAC Member Roles and Caucus Vacancies

- Alexandra shared that in February and March, the goal is to review the role of the BAC and operating procedures, focusing on how to better support the BAC caucus model. She encouraged members to review the operating procedures and connect with their caucus to discuss what's working well and where more support may be needed before the March meeting.
- Brook asked if there's any support from Ecology or other entities for coordinating and collaborating with the caucus/interest groups, and what that might look like.
- The purpose of the BAC is to provide advice and recommendations to the Tri-Sovereign governments on the implementation of the WW2050 Strategic Plan and the general management of waters within the Walla Walla Basin.
- When there's a vacancy, the caucus meets to discuss possible nominees, reaches consensus on a nominee, and then makes a recommendation to the full BAC. The BAC then approves the nominee by consensus.

Discussion

- **Action Item:** Facilitation team reach out to each caucus to share vacancies and current representation.
- **Action Item:** Caucuses consider discussing within your caucus the current primaries – are they able to fulfill the roles outlined in the operating procedures? Review the operating procedures.
- A BAC member stated their concern that Hudson Bay Irrigation District, the biggest irrigation district in the Valley, isn't represented on the BAC. Hudson Bay is upset that they don't have representation on this board.
- A BAC member asked how we are defining "caucus"? Does the caucus encompass only the names on the BAC, or does the caucus encompass our entire interest group? What's the role of a representative of that caucus?
 - We ask BAC members to represent their interest group, solicit their input on issues, and BAC members should represent the broad interests of their group to the BAC itself, beyond the names on this list.
 - Caucuses are distinct from interest groups, because some caucuses include two interest groups (for example, the Environment caucus includes both the Environment interest group and the Recreation/Quality of Life interest group). Caucuses are intended to provide a structure for BAC members to discuss and nominate new BAC members, whereas interest groups have been the primary organizing/representational framework for the BAC since its inception.
- A BAC member advocated for more social engagement with your caucus, suggesting that people would appreciate it. They emphasized the value of touching base outside of the formal group setting.
- A BAC member asked, regarding the caucus structure and expectations, if the Ag Caucus should solely focus on agricultural initiatives in the Tier 1 Strategies? They emphasized the need to understand more perspectives than just their own when acting as an ambassador. How do the caucuses inform the prioritization of projects in their respective groups?
 - Amanda answered that caucuses should identify the topical issues they are focused on, and bring those items to the BAC for discussion.
 - The BAC member responded, noting that the process hasn't been clear so far. They highlighted that if other parties have needs or wish lists that don't align with Tier 1 priorities or aren't fully developed yet, there's a concern that those interest groups may feel excluded and believe WW2050 isn't working for them if their concerns aren't addressed.
- A member of the public asked about the process to add an interest group to the BAC?
 - A BAC member stated that there isn't currently a process in the operating procedures, but suggested that if individuals can identify which interest group they align with, they should reach out to those members. They emphasized that it's important not to open it up to all interest groups indiscriminately, and instead, focus on vetting which groups are worthy of participation. The goal is not to constrain participation but to avoid creating an overly complicated process.
- A BAC member stated that managing the variety of opinions and conversations from outside the group is already a challenge, but it's part of the job. They emphasized that everyone is welcome, but it's important to find the right channels to bring their opinions to the BAC.
- A BAC member suggested that additional meetings with the caucus should include facilitation and clear goals to guide what's being accomplished.

- Brook asked if each caucus should prioritize projects and strategies within their group, suggesting this as a potential prompt for each group.

Public Comment

- *No public comment.*

Closing Comments

- Linda Herbert, BMLT, provided closing remarks, praising the work done on the Draft Implementation Plan and thanking the consultant team and implementers for their contributions.
- She acknowledged that the group is now operating in a completely different paradigm compared to previous meetings. She raised concerns about the uncertainty surrounding federal funding, particularly regarding federal agencies like FEMA. Blue Mountain Land Trust is facing similar challenges, with exciting conservation projects, such as a state-grant-funded initiative, at risk if federal match funding falls through. She noted that planned projects, including recreation work with federal partners like the Forest Service, have been drastically impacted, leaving many conservation efforts in limbo. This is very disheartening.
- Despite these setbacks, she urged the group to recalibrate in the face of uncertainty, emphasizing that there are still milestones to celebrate, including the group's expertise and commitment to sustainable water planning. We are not alone; we need to press on with our mission and goals.
- She acknowledged the leadership, compromise, and progress made, encouraging everyone to share stories of their work. She has confidence in the group's ability to navigate challenges. Excited for new snow in the Blue Mountains and a slow melt of the region's above-average snowpack.

Appendix A. Attendees

WWBAC Members in Attendance

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Agriculture		
Alli	Newhouse	OR Agriculture / Little River Group
Annie	Byerley	WA Agriculture / Walla Walla County Conservation District
Mark	Wagoner	Gardena Farms Irrigation District
Travis	Trumbull	WWRID
Environment		
Judith	Johnson	Kooskooskie Commons
Ralph	Perkins	Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council
Troy	Baker	Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council
Recreation/Quality of Life		
Jerry	Norquist	Blue Mountain Land Trust
Linda	Herbert	Blue Mountain Land Trust
Economic Development		
Amy	Schwab	Port of Walla Walla
Nick	Velluzzi	Walla Walla Community College
Local Government		
Dan	Dorran	Umatilla County
Jack	Miller	Columbia County
Steven	Patten	City of Milton-Freewater
Todd	Kimball	Walla Walla County
Robert	McAndrews	City of College Place
State Government		
Jeff	Dengel	WDFW
Mark	Wachtel	WDFW
Taylor	McCroskey	ODFW
Tribal Government		
Jerimiah	Bonifer	CTUIR
Federal Government		
Colleen	Fagan	NOAA NMFS
Cindy	Boen	US Army Corps of Engineers
Tri-Sovereigns (Ex-Officio/Non-Voting Members)		
Anton	Chiono	CTUIR
Brook	Beeler	Ecology
Chris	Kowitz	OWRD
Larry	Matteson	Ecology
Melissa	Downes	Ecology
Ross	Deardorff	OWRD

WWBAC Members (Primaries) Not Present

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Environment		
Steve	Martin	Snake River Salmon Recovery Board
Local Government		
Frank	Nicholson	City of Walla Walla
Federal Government		
Justin	Yeager	NOAA NMFS

Other Attendees Present

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Alexandra	Doty	Cascadia Consulting Group
Alan	Hamada	Touchet E.W. Irrigation District
Alle	Brown-Law	Cascadia Consulting Group
Amanda	Cronin	AMP Insights
Brian	Burns	Tri-State Steelheaders
Bryan	Gartland	Aspect Consulting
Charlotte	Whitefield	OWRD
Chris	Beard	Ecology
Dara	Osborne	City of Walla Walla
David	Ortman	Member of the Public
Emily	Tilden	Ecology OCR
Eric	Hartwig	Ecology
Grace	Cooper	WWCCD
Greg	McLaughlin	WWT
Ilene	Le Vee	
Jackie	McCool	WDFW
Jaime	Short	Ecology
Janna	Guzman	ODFW
John		
Jon	Campbell	
Karen	Robinson	USACE
Luke	Martin	OWRD
Mikahala	Waters	Alta Science and Engineering
Nina	Lottsfeldt	WWT
Patrick	Cabbage	Ecology
Rachel	Luther	UW Evans School
Randal	Son	Mill Creek Watershed Landowner
Sara	Harris	WWBWC
Sarah	Dymecki	Ecology
Shane	Cossel	ODEQ
Stephanie	May	Ecology

Tim	Poppleton	Ecology
Trea	Nance	Oregon DEQ
Wisnu	Sugiarto	Whitman College
Unidentified Caller 1		
Unidentified Caller 2		