



Meeting Summary
Wednesday, October 28, 2020
1:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Time*	Agenda Item (Action items are marked with “!”)	Reference Materials	Presenter(s)
1:00 (15 mins)	Welcome, Introductions, Review Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome Opening remarks Introductions Review agenda Review and Approve Meeting Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda September Meeting Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Gulick, Facilitator Brook Beeler, Ecology Judith Johnson, WWWMP
1:15* (10 mins)	Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Report to the Legislature Update on Strategic Plan: Comments on Current Conditions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dave Christenson, Ecology & Chris Hyland, WWWMP Caroline Burney, Cascadia Consulting
1:25* (90 mins)	Floodplain Health and Floodplain Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview: Floodplain Health and Management Issues (30 minutes) Discussion: Potential Strategies to Consider for the Strategic Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies from CTUIR Walla Walla Conservation District Floodplains by Design WSU Landscape Architecture Presentation Update on LIDAR Work 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gary James, CTUIR Gary James, CTUIR Renee Hadley, WWCD Lynn Schmidt, Ecology Michael Anthony Sanchez, WSU Scott Tarbutton, Ecology
2:55*	10 MINUTE BREAK		
3:05* (60 mins)	Strategies to be Considered in Strategic Plan: Floodplain Management and Flood Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term and long-term strategies for development by Working Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPAC Discussion Matrix: “Floodplains: Ecological Function & Flood Control” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPAC Member Discussion Caroline Burney & Amanda Cronin, Working Group Coordinators Susan Gulick, Facilitator
4:05* (10 mins)	Topics for Future Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of Upcoming SPAC Discussion Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamflow and Groundwater (November) Water Supply Needs (December) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is tentatively planned as a joint meeting with the Bi-State Flow Study Steering Committee Critical Species and Habitat (January) Surface Water Quality (February) Land Use and Cover (February) Presentation Ideas from past discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of Irrigators and Irrigation in Watershed Past, current and potential funding sources for basin projects Bi-State Flow Study How is each state addressing the instream flow protections? Basin hydrology, including existing monitoring sites Forest management Existing and future conservation projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWW 2050 WG and SPAC Discussion Topics (<i>to be distributed prior to the meeting</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caroline Burney, Cascadia Susan Gulick, Facilitator

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agency programs and roles in watershed (which agencies?) ○ Other 		
4:15* <i>(10 mins)</i>	Public Comment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Gulick, Facilitator
4:25* <i>(5 mins)</i>	Updates and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action items • Updates/announcements • Upcoming meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SPAC: Updated Dates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 18 • December 16 ○ Working Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological Function: November 4 • Land Use: Doodle Poll to be distributed soon 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Gulick, Facilitator • Caroline Burney, Cascadia Consulting
4:30*	Adjourn		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Gulick, Facilitator

Welcome & Introductions

Brook Beeler, Washington State Department of Ecology, and Judith Johnson, WWWMP welcomed attendees. Brook noted the accomplishments to date, including forming the SPAC and nearing completion of the legislative report. Judith added that she is excited for the presentations and discussions at today’s meeting.

Susan Gulick, Facilitator, reviewed the agenda and led roll call. See **Appendix A** for the list of attendees.

Updates

Update of Report to Legislature

Dave Christensen, Washington State Department of Ecology, provided an update on the legislative report. Ecology reviewed the report last week and communicated to the Partnership that there are no further comments on the report. Chris Hyland, WWWMP, added that the Partnership is working on a cover letter, and the legislative report will be sent on Friday, October 30. Susan will distribute the report to SPAC members after it is finalized.

Update on Strategic Plan: Comments on Current Conditions

Caroline Burney, Cascadia Consulting Group, provided an update on the Current Conditions draft of the Strategic Plan. The purpose of the preliminary review of chapters is to identify where there are gaps. The consultant team is working on addressing the comments and developing a plan to triage the gaps. This chapter is intended to be a technically accurate summary of what is known and unknown about the basin, with citations to source documents; it is not intended to be comprehensive technical assessment of current conditions. The target audience for the Strategic Plan is policymakers and funders.

Please continue to share any specific comments and general feedback on the Strategic Plan with Angela Pietschmann at angela@cascadiaconsulting.com.

Floodplain Health and Flood Management

Overview: Floodplain Health and Management Issues

Gary James, CTUIR provided an [overview of floodplain health](#). A recording of the presentation is available [here](#).

- Floodplains are dynamic and complex. They need room to create benefits for habitat, water quantity, and water quality.
- CTUIR has a River Vision Statement to describe a healthy floodplain:
 - “A healthy river capable of providing First Foods that sustain the continuity of the Tribe’s culture. This vision requires a river that is dynamic, and shaped not only by physical and biological processes, but the interactions and interconnections between those processes.”
 - River vision deals with touchstones, or categories of river health, including:
 - Hydrology
 - Geomorphology
 - Connectivity
 - Riparian vegetation
 - Aquatic biota
- Benefits of healthy floodplains:
 - Natural flood and erosion control.
 - Surface water quality maintenance
 - Groundwater recharge.
 - Direct relationship between channel complexity and temperature.
 - Biological productivity.
 - Harvest of wild and cultivated products.
 - Provide cultural, aesthetic, and recreational use values.
- Current Conditions: Floodplain Health
 - About 75% of streams in the basin have been channelized which reduces stream length and floodplain connectivity.
 - The Endangered Species Act (ESA) recovery planning efforts determined that the “watershed function” for subbasins ranged from 25-50%.
- Eras in the Walla Walla Basin
 - Pre-development Era
 - Walla Walla means land of many waters.
 - Lewis and Clark’s journals noted abundant fish and thriving indigenous communities in the basin.
 - Development Era
 - Development in floodplain meant that streams were straightened so water could be made available for towns, agriculture, and other uses.
 - Water rights exceeded instream flows.
 - Instream flows, floodplain health, and salmon went extinct.
 - In many ways, stuck in the ‘development era’ mindset.
 - Partnership Era
 - Collaborative solution to create multi-purpose benefits.
- Problems in floodplains:
 - Wrong management emphasis:
 - The priority management goal is flood loss reduction. This should be one of many purposes.
 - Encouraging natural processes in broad floodplains has been a lower priority.
 - Development-centered uses have taken precedence over floodplain function.
 - Physical changes:
 - Reduced floodplain area and channelization.
 - Armoring banks to control erosion creates incising.
 - Reduced stream length, increase in gradient, and increase in water velocity.
 - Loss of instream and substrate habitat diversity.

- Disrupted geomorphic processes (channel migration, side channels, islands, sediment transport and sorting, and large wood transport.
 - Over appropriation of surface flows and shallow groundwater.
 - Construction of dams – disrupt fish passage.
 - Instream flows:
 - At seven locations in the basin, not meeting the targets from the Bi-State Flow Study.
 - The only location that meets the target is above Milton Freewater.
 - Nursery Bridge is a straight ditch-type reach, contained by levees.
 - After flood, the levees were built higher to keep the stream in place.
 - This is a straight reach where we lose a lot of water through the bottom.
 - It also creates habitat and passage bottlenecks.
 - Concrete lining and channelization: Weirs in Mill Creek
 - Currently: Mill Creek’s primary purpose is flood control.
 - Identified five reaches in Mill Creek to do channel improvements.
- Floodplain issues in 2020
 - Post 2020-flood response was reactionary and did not consider the multi-benefit approach.
 - For example, large wood and gravel removal to maintain flood capacity is not an ecologically beneficial or cost-effective action.
 - Some actions taken by landowners were not necessary for flood risk protection and there was a lack of regulatory presence and compliance.

Strategies from CTUIR

Gary summarized potential strategies to improve floodplain health. He noted that many of the strategies include policy recommendations because physical changes to the landscape cannot happen without upgrading the rules and regulations.

- 1. Floodplain alteration and development regulatory statutes
 - Halt or minimize new development in the floodplain.
 - Strengthen land use regulations to prohibit further development in floodplains, springs, and wetlands.
 - All entities who have impacted natural floodplain health via channelization must fund multi-purpose strategies.
 - All entities implementing floodplain modifications must employ rules that promote natural ecological processes.
 - Improve regulatory processes to ensure post-flood alterations are guided by existing plans/assessments for multi-purpose floodplain benefits.
- 2. Reconnect streams with floodplains.
 - Complete floodplain assessments to inform work to reclaim natural floodplain habitat and function. Note that FEMA is adopting this approach. CTUIR has completed several Floodplain Assessments.
 - Promote removal or set back of dikes and levees.
 - Increase riparian conservation easements and other incentive programs.
 - Promote relocation of flood damaged development.
 - Implementation of floodplain restoration actions.
 - Increase education and outreach.
- 3. Improve post-flood floodplain processes and actions.
 - Develop a local flood-response that is informed from existing plans and assessments. Coordinate response amongst landowners, regulatory, and resource agencies.
 - Replace ‘flood risk only’ project approaches with multi-purpose project approaches.
- 4. Strengthen surface water regulatory statutes.
 - Increase opportunities or incentives for development of strategic conservation and restoration projects such as irrigation efficiency, water transactions, shallow aquifer recharge, and floodplain restoration.
 - Strengthen water laws to protect increased instream flows.
 - Quantify and protect ecological flows.

- 5. Groundwater withdrawal impacts to surface flows.
 - Strengthen the legal connection and co-management linkage between surface water rights and groundwater rights.
 - Identify problem areas and promote strategically targeted aquifer recharge to reduce impacts.
- 6. Monitor, protect, and enforce instream flows.
 - Strengthen state and local monitoring and enforcement of quantified instream water rights.
- 7. Integrate land and water management functions
 - Entities should integrate management of floodplain lands and surface or groundwater.
 - Coordination between groundwater and surface water management entities to limit the impact that groundwater withdrawals have on surface flows.
 - Coordination of regulatory provisions across land and water management entities.

Examples from CTUIR:

- Meacham Creek floodplain restoration: Removed channelization and expanded floodplain.
- Grande Ronde Valley:
 - Previously: All streams were channelized as per the property boundaries.
 - Worked with landowners to create plan to re-meander streams.

Walla Walla Conservation District

Renee Hadley provided an [overview](#) of the Walla Walla Conservation District's (WWCD) programs. Many of their programs work with private landowners because 90% of the land in the basin is privately-owned. WWCD partners with USDA, NRCS, and landowners to install stream buffers under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

WWCD uses several strategies, including:

- Technical assistance: WWCD works with landowners to discuss BMPs as well as opportunities for cost-shares.
- Outreach and education: The goal is to ensure that people growing up the basin understand the science behind watersheds, aquifers, and other topics.
- Irrigation efficiency: The goal is to increase water instream by reducing water use by irrigators.
- Fish screens: Allows water to flow through while keeping fish out of irrigation systems.
- River restoration.
 - Challenge: Helping landowners understand impacts to their property when they are thinking about property values.
 - Projects are designed by engineers and vetted by fish and habitat biologists.

Challenges:

- Permitting
 - Many entities that landowners need to get permitting from.
 - Permitting takes time:
 - Walla Walla County (2-3 months):
 - Critical Area Ordinance
 - Shoreline Master Plan Compliance
 - State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)
 - Washington Department of Ecology (2 weeks to 18 months):
 - Part of SEPA review
 - Clean Water Compliance Permit
 - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (45 days)
 - Hydraulic Project Approval

- US Army Corps of Engineers (8-18 months)
 - May exert authority on any waterway that drains to navigable waters of the US.
- Many of the projects are time sensitive.
- Invasive reed canary grass:
 - Encroaches on stream channel.
 - Forces water outside of stream banks.
- Costs: \$500K per river mile to complete a project plus \$50K per river mile for permitting costs.
 - **Lessons learned:** Need to factor in landowners' concerns.

Floodplains by Design

Lynn Schmidt, Washington Department of Ecology, provided an [overview](#) of Floodplains by Design (FbD), a grant program that represents a new paradigm for floodplain management, emphasizing a multi-benefit approach. FbD is a public-private partnership with the Nature Conservancy and Puget Sound Partnership. Funding comes from Legislature with the State Capital Budget. FbD relies on local programs and partnerships to understand the local needs.

As a part of its multi-benefit approach to floodplain management, each project must include the following components:

- Flood risk reduction.
- Habitat plan.
- Partnerships (e.g. with agricultural community, local salmon entity leads, and Tribes).
- Resilient communities

Example projects:

- Dungeness River: Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
 - Background: Historic agricultural area that is under development pressure.
 - Tribe worked with many partners including USACOE, the agricultural community, and the County to develop a reach-scale corridor plan.
 - Projects
 - Setback levees
 - Acquisitions and easements
 - Off channel storage facility
- Yakima County (note that this project emerged from the [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan](#)).
 - Set back levee and installed pilot channels in the Naches River.
 - Results:
 - Right after construction there was a flood.
 - Because the channel is no longer tightly constrained, there was no damage to the levee.
- CTUIR: North Fork Touchet River
 - Set back levees to reconnect the floodplain.
 - Note that the further away the levees are from the river, the shorter they can be.
 - CTUIR is doing floodplain restoration on the other side of the levee.
 - Results: Following the 2020 flood, houses were not flooded.
- 2021-2023: WWCD received funding.

WSU Landscape Architecture

Judith introduced Michael Sanchez, Washington State University. Judith met Michael in 2014 because she was on a mission to consider other possibilities for the ugly situation that is Mill Creek.

Michael and the WSU students coordinated a series of community-oriented design charrettes to get input from the community on what they'd like to see in Mill Creek. Michael highlighted [three students' projects](#). A recording of his presentation is available [here](#).

Project 1: Mill Creek Pocket Plains

- Project Goals:
 - Increase density of housing through 'pocket neighborhoods' in order to increase floodplain area.
 - Expand wetlands to allow for multiple levels of flooding.
 - Incorporate floodplain area into recreational activities, such as boardwalks that can be accessed during low flows.

Project 2: Gose Street Gardens

- Project Goals:
 - Control flooding while increasing fish passage.
 - Encourage public interaction with Mill Creek by expanding trail access to water.
 - Terracing to create multi-level flood plains.
 - Forest along southern bank to provide shade and address temperature issues.

Project 3: Terrace on Tausick

- Project Goals:
 - Provide connection to river for people, while providing for natural flooding.
 - Bring in additional soil to build topographic mounds and trail-system.
 - Naturalize reach.
 - Terraced floodplains to allow room for different flood scenarios.

LiDAR

Scott Tarbuton, Washington Department of Ecology, provided an [overview](#) of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data in the Walla Walla Basin from Washington Department of Natural Resources.

There are three main datasets for the LiDAR data in the Basin:

- Columbia/Garfield/Walla Walla Counties
 - Data is from 2017-2018.
 - Data is of lower density and lower quality.
- Walla Walla
 - Data is from 2017.
 - Data is for just a portion of the county.
 - Data is of higher density and higher quality.
- Walla Walla River
 - Data is from 2009.

To view the LiDAR datasets as well as additional information, see the links below:

- [LiDAR Portal](#)
- [State LiDAR Plan](#)
- [Story Map](#)
 - Note that Walla Walla is currently a 'Priority 5' in terms of collecting new data.

Discussion:

- Dale Bambrick, NOAA added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that one reason the restoration projects shown in the WWCD presentation are so expensive is because they are based on a heavily engineered approach. Process-based approaches would be cheaper in the long term and would provide better, more durable ecological benefits. They may not be acceptable from a landowner's perspective, however. It does beg the question whether we should be spending money intended to restore conditions for fish on projects that are very high cost due to landowner concerns.
- Cindy Boen added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that Gary made a good point that there are disconnects across policies and goals. To change some of the policies and requirements of the USACOE (e.g. emergency response policies) will require political will and engagement with Congressional delegations and policy makers. It must be demonstrated that there is political will to consider and protect floodplains and their function, and that current social values support federal investment in these types of benefits.
- Teresa Kilmer, WWRID added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that that she would like to see Gary incorporate the critical importance of the alluvial fan to the ecological function of the floodplain. The sponge that Gary referred to will never be fully saturated if the focus is solely the "main stem". The "space" that Gary says is needed on the main stem, is the purpose of the alluvial fan (the Lower Walla Walla River).
- Non-SPAC member comments:
 - John Foltz noted via the chat function: One comment that CTUIR should clarify -- I believe there is a new LIDAR data set that has just been collected for the WW mainstem by CTUIR
 - Gary responded via the chat function that yes, CTUIR has 2019 (pre-flood) topobathymetric LiDAR from Lowden, WA, to the Forks and upstream on both North and South Forks to near the headwaters.

Floodplain Health and Management Strategies

Susan introduced the discussion around floodplain health and management strategies. The intention of the discussion is to provide input on which strategies the Working Groups (WG) should consider and build out with more technical detail.

Susan added that the Consulting Team is planning to use this format for all of the future topic areas. Please share any suggestions for how to improve the format with Susan.

Amanda Cronin, AMP Insights, reviewed the [matrices](#). Detailed edits are available on the linked document. A summary of the conversation is below:

- Cindy noted that the USACOE's policies limit what can be done in emergency situations. The way to change those policies is to talk to congressional delegation.
 - She added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that setback levees and floodplain restoration will require a commitment to acquire and/or protect real estate by public entities.
 - Additionally, in order to effectively improve floodplains and their function, changes in emergency response policies would be needed, and a change in culture at the COE would allow more integration of long-term planning in emergency actions/efforts.
- Teresa added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that we should use the LWWR as a flood channel, as it was historically. She would like to see the future planning to include a more hands-off approach to Walla Walla River management to get back to a more natural flow regime. She thinks the only way to be successful is to have a thorough water right accounting.
- Mike Talbott, Columbia County, added that USACOE has said they have to remove woody debris during flood events, or they will rescind their permit.
- Mike added that a priority strategy should be levee setbacks. One barrier to is how to fund?
 - Cindy added that USACOE can support funding, but a non-federal sponsor has the responsibility to acquire real estate and pay those associated costs.
- Chris Marks, CTUIR, suggested organizing the strategies by project type. For example, physical versus policy strategies.
 - He added that in the near term we need to focus on the policies, so that over the long term we can make the changes to the infrastructure.
 - He also added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that the CTUIR assessment may provide additional strategies for the Walla Walla River.
- Todd Kimball, Walla Walla County, added that education and outreach is important.

- Judith added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that education for planning departments is critical to stress the importance of floodplains versus development.
- Chris Marks added that it may be helpful to connect Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) to Strategies.
 - Amanda added that multiple strategies will be needed to address a DFC. Consulting team to think how to convey that information visually in the most efficient way

Updates and Next Steps

Upcoming Meetings:

Caroline reviewed the [WG and SPAC Discussion Topics](#) document to review the process to sequence key topics for the strategic plan.

Susan asked for input on topics to discuss at upcoming meetings. Chris Marks and Brook suggested that the presentations align with the SPAC discussion topic. SPAC members discussed who should present at the upcoming meetings:

- November 18: Streamflows and Groundwater
 - Judith added that presentations on instream flow protections, as well as basin hydrology and monitoring sites would be complimentary.
 - SPAC members added that state agencies and WWBWC can speak to these issues.
 - Troy Baker, WWBWC, added via the chat function that WWBWC can pull together a short presentation on their monitoring program.
 - Chris Kowitz, OWRD, and Brook shared that there are staff who are up to speed on these topics. Need to confirm their availability to present in three weeks.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Caroline to email request for hydrology and instream flow presentations.
- December 16: Water Supply Needs
 - This is tentatively a joint meeting with Bi-State Flow Study.
- Other presentations:
 - Cindy added via the [interactive Google slides](#) that she would like to understand more about water rights in the state. For example, how can someone sell the rights to their water to a bottled water company, removing that volume from the basin/water cycle?
 - **ACTION ITEM** Brook to connect Cindy to Ecology staff.
 - Chris Kowitz offered to provide more information on the Basin Study in early 2021.
 - Judith suggested that a forest management presentation should go with the land use and cover discussion in February.

Thank you to Brian Wolcott!

Judith thanked Brian Wolcott, WWBWC for all of his work in the basin over the last two decades. Brian's leadership was instrumental in building collaboration in the basin by ensuring there was diverse participation, while also providing accurate scientific information. He coined the phrase 'Water without war: the Walla Walla way.' WWBWC staff created a [video](#) as a tribute to Brian. Community members shared several quotes about Brian's leadership including that "our community is indebted to Brian's leadership, accomplishment, calm demeanor, and expertise." Thank you, Brian!

Appendix A. Attendance

SPAC Members in Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Bambrick, Dale	NMFS, NOAA
Beeler, Brook (alternate)	Ecology, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
Boen, Cindy	USACE
Byerley, Annie	WA Irrigation at-large
Dymecki, Sarah	WWT
Johnson, Judith	WWWMP, <i>Ex-Officio</i>
Kilmer, Teresa	Walla Walla River ID
Kimball, Todd	Walla Walla County
Kowitz, Chris	OWRD
Marks, Chris	CTUIR
Newhouse, Allie	Little River Group
Patten, Steven	City of Milton-Freewater
Perkins, Ralph	WWBWC
Talbott, Mike	Columbia County
Wachtel, Mark	WDFW
Wagonner, Mark	Gardena Farms Irrigation District

SPAC Members Not in Attendance:

Name	Affiliation
Shafer, John	Umatilla County

Other Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
Agnew, Connor	Washington State Representative Rude
Baker, Troy	WWBWC
Beard, Chris	Ecology
Birdsall, Doug	WWWMP
Burney, Caroline	Cascadia Consulting
Campbell, Jon	DWWF
Christensen, Dave	Ecology
Cronin, Amanda	Amp Insights
Dengel, Jeff	WDFW
Fagan, Colleen	NMFS, NOAA
Fazio, John	
Foltz, John	Snake River Salmon Recovery Board
Gulick, Susan	Sound Resolutions
Hadley, Renee	WWCD
Hyland, Chris	WWWMP
James, Gary	CTUIR
Kraft, James	WWT
Mattson, Larry	
Navarrete, Laura	USFW
Nicholson, Frank	City of Walla Walla
Poppleton, Tim	Ecology
Rakow, Matt	Ecology
Rude, Skyler	Washington State Representative
Sater, Chet	US Bureau of Reclamation
Schirman, Roland	Columbia County
Schmidt, Lynn	Ecology
Short, Jaime	Ecology
Spangrude, Gene	
Tarbutton, Scott	Ecology
Thurston, Sean	
Warriner, John	Aspect Consulting