

Walla Walla Basin Advisory Committee (BAC)

Meeting Summary Wednesday, March 23, 2022 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 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 and opening remarks Introductions Review agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Marks, on behalf of Tri-Sovereigns Susan Gulick, Facilitator
1:15* (30 mins)	Overview of Phase 2 Desired Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term actions to implement WWW 2050 Strategic Plan BAC Member Questions/Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary Document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Gulick, Facilitator Amanda Cronin, Project Manager Tri-Sovereigns
1:45* (45 mins)	Legislative Funding Requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview WA and OR legislative processes and key deadlines How BAC can support and refine budget requests BAC Member Questions/Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amanda Cronin, Project Manager Melissa Downes, WA Dept. of Ecology Chris Kowitz, OR Water Resources
There will be a 10-minute BREAK around 2:30			
2:30* (40 mins)	Drought Status in the WW Basin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Supply Forecast WA Water Management Priorities OR Water Management Priorities BAC questions/discussion 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeff Marti, Ecology Jaime Short, Ecology Chris Kowitz, OWRD
3:10* (20 mins)	BAC Administrative Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize operating procedures Review list of alternates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating procedures List of BAC Alternates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Gulick, Facilitator BAC members
3:30* (15 mins)	Updates, Agenda Requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WaterSmart application USGS study Bi-State Flow Study Project and funding updates Upcoming agenda requests from BAC members 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scott Tarbutton, WA Dept. of Ecology BAC Members
3:45* (10 mins)	Public Comment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Gulick, Facilitator
3:55* (5 mins)	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next Steps Closing comments 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amanda Cronin, Project Manager Brook Beeler, on behalf of Tri-Sovereigns
4:00*	Adjourn		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Gulick, Facilitator

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Chris Marks, CTUIR, welcomed attendees and shared his appreciation for all BAC members as we launch into this next phase of work.

Susan Gulick, facilitator, led roll call. Attendees are listed in Appendix A.

Overview of Phase 2 Desired Outcomes

Susan provided an overview of the Tri-Sovereigns' desired outcomes over the next 2 years.

Discussion:

- BAC members suggested that the desired outcomes should include a description of how a federal partner may support the effort.

- Ecology added that they have discussed partnering with the Bureau of Reclamation through the WaterSmart grant. Other federal entities are a part of the planning process. Ecology is looking for a federal partner to support reviewing the strategies and contribute funding.
- BAC members added that it is also important to engage federal land agencies that manage the source waters.
- CTUIR added that this speaks to the importance of engaging other landowners in the development, refinement, and implementation of strategies.
- BAC members suggested adding the need to build support within the Basin as a whole for plan implementation. In order to gain support for an expensive anchor project, it will be important for citizens to understand why the investment is needed.
- BAC members asked how economic analysis of the plan fits into near term desired outcomes (e.g., an economic analysis of the Plan as a whole)? Will this be done in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS)?
 - This information will be prepared prior to the public scoping and comment period of the PEIS, including an analysis of the costs of inaction.
 - Additionally, cost considerations (as available) will be included in the strategy refinement and scoping process.

BAC Administrative Issues

Operating Procedures

Susan did not receive any comments on the Operating Procedures. Minor edits were made to this version to clarify the alternate process.

Discussion:

- BAC members asked who is bound by the decisions of the BAC?
 - The BAC provides consensus-based advice and recommendations to the Tri-Sovereign governments of Oregon, Washington, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation (CTUIR).

Decision: All approved the Operating Procedures.

Alternates Process

Susan reviewed the BAC invitation list and flagged entities that have alternates from the same entity.

Discussion:

- BAC members expressed concern that the Tri-Sovereigns have final approval of the BAC membership. At some point in time, there may be diverging points of view and that could be a point of conflict if there are differences of opinion between BAC members and the Tri-Sovereigns.
 - CTUIR explained that the emphasis was on self-selection rather than the Tri-Sovereigns building the list.
- BAC members asked when the membership changed to include two representatives from CTUIR?
 - In the new Advisory Committee, WA and OR both have two seats so wanted to ensure it was equitable for CTUIR to also have two seats.
 - The Tri-Sovereigns added that part of the reasoning to increase WA, OR, and CTUIR's seats is because they each have experts from different agencies within their state/tribal organization that can be helpful.

Future Meetings

- BAC meetings: Future meetings will be on 4th Wednesdays in the afternoon. The hope is to begin meeting in person in May or June.
- Implementation WG meetings: 2nd Thursdays in the afternoon.
- Policy, Funding, and Outreach WG meetings: Will begin meeting later this spring, likely 4th Thursdays in the mornings (the morning after the BAC meetings).

Discussion:

- BAC members asked if there will continue to be a call-in option?
 - Yes. The meetings will be hybrid.

Legislative Funding Requests

2022 Legislative Updates

Ecology provided a summary of the supplemental WA session:

- Nothing new for the Office of Columbia River this session.
- The Water Resources program did not receive funding to support drought emergencies.
- The Water Banking Pilot funds were shifted to the Capital Budget.
- Other topics:
 - A bill (Lorraine Loomis Act) to support large riparian and floodplain restoration projects did not pass but provisos were given to certain programs and agencies including Commerce, Ecology, and Fish and Wildlife.
 - This includes improved data gathering for shoreline photos, GIS mapping, channel migration zone mapping, and increasing staffing for shoreline and wetland compliance work.

2023 Legislative Funding Requests

Amanda Cronin shared that a short-term priority is to prepare budget requests for the OR and WA legislatures. In March, the BAC agreed to the strategy categories. At the March 10 Implementation WG meeting, the Consulting Team gathered further detail on near term funding actions and additional work to refine these details is ongoing. Over the next few months, the Implementation WG and BAC will work to prioritize strategies for these near-term State funding sources.

WA Funding Request:

- Ecology is in the early stages of budget development for the 2023 Legislative Session. They are preparing a budget request for the program as a whole in the ballpark of \$45-\$48 million.
- Some federal infrastructure funds have match requirements, so the hope is to request at least what was requested this last biennium plus a small increase.
- Out of the large dollar amount, anticipate a line item for Walla Walla Basin as a whole, roughly \$4.3 million (up from \$3 million from this last biennium).
- \$2 million will be for strategy implementation so looking for guidance from this group as to where that funding should be directed.

Discussion:

- BAC members asked whether there is any opportunity to increase the \$2 million for strategy implementation?
 - Ecology added that we need to be able to spend the money within the time period. Anticipate that the budget will be higher in the 2025-2027 session.
- Do we anticipate working with other state agencies for the legislative requests?
 - There will be other funds in existing grant programs besides the legislative request. If folks have additional funding ideas those should be brought to the Policy, Funding and Outreach workgroup for discussion.
 - CTUIR added that the other agencies have similar timelines for submitting their budgets. We may not be able to integrate for the 2023 cycle but will need a more robust funding strategy to understand how we can leverage funding from other agencies.
- CTUIR added that there are other funding streams available related to the Loraine Loomis Act which did not pass but some funding was appropriated. There are opportunities to connect with other agencies, including WDFW, to take advantage of funding in this biennium.
 - WDFW added that they are well positioned to support this group. Looking forward to the Policy, Funding, and Outreach WG to consider how we can leverage other agencies' funding streams.

OR Funding Request:

- OWRD is exploring opportunities to leverage funding across OR agencies.
- For this upcoming funding cycle, have an existing placeholder in their agency budget request.
- OWRD needs a list of projects that the Basin would like the state of OR to move forward during the next funding cycle by end of April or early May.
- The intention is to spend time at the April Implementation WG discussing OR-specific projects where state funding is needed.

Discussion:

- BAC members added that it will be important for the Basin to have clearly defined and readily available projects. There are a lot of competing priorities so need to be very prepared to have projects that show benefit in OR.
- BAC members asked if the state of OR and/or CTUIR can contribute to the administrative fees including the facilitation of this process?
 - CTUIR and OR will continue to contribute project dollars and capacity to move this project forward including bringing in federal dollars.

Prioritization Criteria

The Implementation WG is developing prioritization criteria as funding becomes available. The draft criteria include:

- **Project Ripeness:** Is the project ripe for implementation in 2023-2025 (has sufficient planning, design, permitting etc. been completed) so funds can be used to advance project?
- **Funding Urgency:** Are there unfunded near-term actions? Is the project a good fit for state funding? Does the strategy/project heavily rely on state funding and would likely not move forward without it?
- **Project Support:** Is there support for the project in previous planning document, studies and plans? Does the project have broad community support?

Discussion:

- Ecology added that the funding urgency gets at the need for phasing. Additionally, the reliance on state funding points to whether there are other funding streams available.

Drought Status in the WW Basin

Jeff Marti, Ecology, provided an overview of the drought status in WA.

- In 2021, had a good snowpack but melted quickly due to warm weather in June, among other factors.
- March 2021 – Feb 2022 represents the 3rd driest year since 1895. There has been exceptional dryness in southeast WA.
 - We have seen lower than normal snowpack but temperatures have been lower so have been able to maintain the snowpack.
- Walla Walla is at 91% of normal snowpack which poses a challenge for drought this year. Even in normal years, the Basin is challenged with over appropriations.
- The forecasted runoff of the Walla Walla River for upcoming months is below normal.
- Based on forecasts, likely to fall further behind on precipitation. The likelihood of recovery of long-term precipitation deficits before the summer is 14%.
- Seems likely that Walla Walla system will meet the criteria for drought this year.

Ryan Andrews, OWRD provided an overview of the drought status in OR.

- Long term drought metrics show water stress.

- Longer-term drought metrics indicate stressed water supplies - Water supply forecasts are worse or comparable to last year.
- Expect impacts to arrive earlier and likely more severe than last year.
- Persistence of dry soils, low streamflows.
- The Umatilla/Walla Walla is one of few basins with near average reservoir storage contents (though the Walla Walla Basin does not have storage reservoirs).

Jaime Short, Ecology, reviewed WA's management priorities.

- Ecology processes applications, provides technical assistance, responds to complaints, and gathers and analyzes data.
- Curtailments will likely need to happen this summer – In the event of curtailment, ECY curtails junior surface water right holders and ensure water users are in compliance with their rights.
- Ecology is retooling their approach to be responsive to community feedback:
 - Consistency: Register concerns using the Environmental Report Tracking System (ERTS) to ensure coordination between programs and a prompt response.
 - Striking a Balance: There is a historic emphasis in the Walla Walla Basin on management between water right holders. This has impacted Ecology's ability to monitor water use on a broader scale and pursue compliance activities.
 - Fostering collaborative, respectful relationships between water right holders and Ecology staff.

Discussion:

- Ecology added that if real-time management is something that WA water users in the basin are interested in exploring, they'd be happy to cue up a more detailed discussion.
- WDFW asked for more information on when and where water rights are curtailed due to low flows and asked Ecology to "potentially" consider drought or low-flow contingency plans in regards to fish productivity and/or loss.
- WWCD asked when a drought declaration will be declared for 2022?
 - Last year was really challenging for the state drought framework because we had a good snowpack. Ecology was told that the state's drought declaration would have no bearing on the federal decision.
 - In the last session, Ecology got new tools in terms of how we declare drought emergency. The drought that started last July extends through June 2022 because knew it was going to be a dry year.

Member Updates

- BAC members added need to have a robust conversation on how we develop an outreach strategy and need to start outreach soon.
- BAC members requested additional information on economic analyses in the basin (both in the past and as part of this process).
- John Foltz can provide a brief update on habitat and fish passage project efforts at the next meeting.
- Gary James added that the first salmon release from the Walla Walla Hatchery takes place next week and adults due back in 2024. CTUIR will get more NOAA/PCSRF funds starting next year and are proposing to add more cost share to the Nursery Bridge Reach project and the City of Walla Walla Mill Creek flow enhancement efforts.
- BAC members suggested more time for the drought discussion is regards to funding and project potential.

Closing

Brook Beeler closed the meeting. She acknowledged that we are still in a trust building process.

Appendix A. Attendees*WWBAC Members & Alternates*

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Brook	Beeler	Ecology
Cindy	Boen	USACE
Ron	Brown (alternate)	WWRID
Annie	Byerley (alternate)	WA Irrigation at-large
Arnold	Coe (alternate)	WWBWC
Dan	Dorran	Umatilla County
Sarah	Dymecki (alternate)	WWT
Colleen	Fagan (alternate)	NMFS, NOAA
John	Foltz	Snake River Salmon Recovery Board
Bill	Goss (alternate)	OHA
Renee	Hadley	Walla Walla County Conservation District
David	Haire (alternate)	CTUIR
Marty	Hall (alternate)	Columbia County
Linda	Herbert	Blue Mountain Land Trust
Gary	James	CTUIR
Judith	Johnson	Kooskooskie Commons
Randy	Jones	ODEQ
Todd	Kimball	Walla Walla County
Chris	Kowitz	OWRD
Allie	Newhouse	OR Irrigation at-large
Jerry	Norquist (alternate)	Community Member
Ralph	Perkins	WWBWC
Travis	Trumbull	WWRID
Nicholas	Velluzzi	Walla Walla Community College
Mark	Wachtel	WDFW
Mark	Wagoner	Gardena Farms Irrigation District
Justin	Yeager	NOAA NMFS

WWBAC Members Not in Attendance

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Steven	Patten	City of Milton Freewater

Other Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Ryan	Andrews	ORWD
Adriane	Borgias	Ecology
Barbara	Brooks	
Caroline	Burney	Facilitation Team/Cascadia Consulting
Amanda	Cronin	Facilitation Team/Amp Insights
Jeff	Dengel	WDFW
Melissa	Downes	Ecology
Michael	Fredrickson	Port of Walla Walla
Jamie	Gardipe	DOH Office of Drinking Water
Susan	Gulick	Facilitation Team/Sound Resolutions
Eric	Hartwig	Ecology
Megan	Kernan	WDFW
Teresa	Kilmer	Walla Walla River ID
Jonathan	Kohr	WDFW
Chris	Marks	CTUIR

Jeff	Marti	Ecology
Stephanie	May	Ecology
Frank	Nicholson	City of Walla Walla
Tim	Poppleton	Ecology
Jaime	Short	Ecology
Brian	Steadman	City of Milton-Freewater
Scott	Tarbutton	Ecology
Mary	Verner	Ecology