



Meeting Summary
Wednesday, January 27, 2021
1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

| Time* | Agenda Item (Action items are marked with "!") | Reference Materials | Presenter(s) |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1:00 (10 mins) | Welcome, Introductions, Review Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Opening remarks • Introductions • Review agenda • Review and Approve December Meeting Summary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • December Meeting Summary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Gulick, Facilitator • Tom Tebb, Ecology • Judith Johnson, WWMP |
| 1:10 * (15 mins) | Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Strategic Plan (Streamflows & Groundwater Topic Area Drafts) • Update on Working Groups | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Burney |
| 1:25* (90 mins) | SPAC Discussion: Habitat for Critical Species <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of habitat for critical species • Discussion Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fish passage at Bennington Lake diversion dam on Mill Creek ○ Fish passage at Nursery Bridge Dam ○ Little Walla Walla River flow issues ○ Providing sufficient flow below Milton Freewater in the mainstem and in the Touchet Basin ○ Floodplain reconnection below Milton-Freewater on the mainstem and in the Touchet Basin ○ Finding a remedy to the South Fork WW cabin access road problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat for Critical Species Discussion Guide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda Cronin • SPAC Members • Susan Gulick, Facilitator |
| 2:55* | 10 MINUTE BREAK | | |
| 3:05* (10 mins) | Review Strategy Development Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review process and work plan • Reminder of Operating Principles • SPAC Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Burney • Susan Gulick, Facilitator |
| 3:15 (1 hour) | SPAC Decision: Strategy Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review draft criteria • SPAC Discussion • Finalize list | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Prioritization Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amanda Cronin • Susan Gulick, Facilitator |
| 4:15* (5 mins) | Review Schedule for Upcoming Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Upcoming SPAC Discussion Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Surface Water Quality (February) ○ Land Use and Cover (February) ○ Other | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Burney, Cascadia • Susan Gulick, Facilitator |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| 4:20* (5 mins) | Public Comment | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Gulick, Facilitator |
| 4:25* (5 mins) | Updates and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action items Updates/announcements Upcoming meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPAC Working Groups | | <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 |

* All times are estimates and subject to change.

Summary of Action Items

- SPAC Discussion: Habitat for Critical Species Strategies
 - Consulting team to add strategy to continue notching through engineered Mill Creek channel to support fish passage and address water temperature issues.
 - Consulting team to add strategy to reconsider WDFW diversion into Bennington Lake.
 - Consulting team to follow up with **Renee Hadley** and **Mark Wagoner** regarding agricultural diversion data.
 - Dale Bambrick** and **Dan Dorrان** to connect about South Fork Walla Walla River Road Cabin Access Challenge.
 - Chris Kowitz** to write up summary of Little Walla Walla River (LWWR) Flow Issues per Oregon Water Resource Department's perspective.
 - Consulting team to add strategy to supplement aquifer recharge with high winter flows in the LWWR system. Prioritize flows in the mainstem in the summer months.
- Strategy Criteria
 - Consulting team to incorporate proposed strategy criteria and refine strategy prioritization process.
 - Consulting team to refine all strategies and implementation details in advance of Implementation Working Group meeting on February 10.

Introductions

Susan Gulick, facilitator, convened the meeting. Tom Tebb, WA Department of Ecology, and Judith Johnson, WWWMP, welcomed attendees and thanked them for their ongoing participation. Susan reviewed the agenda and led roll call. Attendees are listed in **Appendix A**.

Susan asked for approval of the December Meeting Summary. All approved.

Updates

Strategic Plan

Caroline Burney, Cascadia Consulting Group, provided an update on the strategic plan.

- First compiled draft ("Informal Draft") will be distributed to SPAC for review on 2/26.
 - SPAC review period 3/1 – 3/19.
 - Draft will include updated floodplains sections, streamflows, groundwater, and water supply sections.
- Any sections that are not completed in time for the "Informal Draft" will be included in the "Formal Draft", which will be distributed on April 30, 2021.

Working Groups:

Scott Tarbutton, WA Department of Ecology, provided an update on the Ecological Function Sub-Group which met on January 20.

- The intention of the sub-group was to fill key gaps in the Ecological Function sections of the Current Conditions.
- The consulting team developed a template to identify additional data and reports needed.
- John Foltz, Gary James, and others are compiling information for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.

The Implementation Working Group (WG) will begin meeting on **February 10 from 1-4 pm**. The intention of this WG is to build out the implementation details for the strategies and conduct a multi-criteria analysis to prioritize strategies for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.

- Please email Caroline Burney at caroline@cascadiaconsulting.com if you'd like to be added to the WG.

Review Strategy Development Process

Caroline reviewed the [work plan](#) to develop the list of strategies and build consensus at the SPAC level. The work plan provides a detailed timeline of all of the steps needed to build out the strategies. A summary of the work plan is below.

- Build out all implementation details for all strategies by Mid-March at Implementation WG meetings.
- Implementation WG to conduct multi-criteria analysis to bring forward refined list for SPAC review.

- Build consensus on priority strategies and approve during March and April SPAC meetings.
 - Anticipate that additional discussion will be needed between SPAC meetings.

SPAC members noted that this document is helpful to communicate expectations to colleagues.

SPAC Discussion: Habitat for Critical Species

Susan and Amanda Cronin, AMP Insights, introduced the discussion around habitat for critical species. They clarified that many habitat issues and strategies have been mentioned in previous SPAC discussions, as they overlap with floodplains, water quantity, water quality and many other issues. The intention of this discussion is to focus on some habitat issues that may not be addressed through other issues, and that have diverse perspectives from SPAC members.

The key habitat issues that have been identified for further discussion include the following:

- Fish passage through Mill Creek
- Fish passage at Nursery Bridge Dam.
- Providing sufficient flow below Milton Freewater in the mainstem and in the Touchet Basin.
- Floodplain reconnection below Milton-Freewater on the mainstem and in the Touchet Basin.
- Finding a remedy to the South Fork Walla Walla River cabin access road problem.
- Little Walla Walla River (LWWR) flow issues.

A summary of the conversation is below.

- Overall Comments
 - Dale Bambrick, NOAA, suggested renaming the discussion guide 'habitat for priority species' as 'important species.'
 - Cindy Boen, USACOE added that we should define priority species. She asked whether it includes species that are of cultural and ecological significance?
 - Yes, priority species incorporates species of cultural and ecological significance. We used priority to refer to ESA listed Steelhead, Bull Trout, and reintroduced Spring Chinook. Other species like pacific and western lamprey and Redband trout and freshwater mussels are also recognized as important.
- Fish Passage through Mill Creek
 - Background & Challenges: Bennington Diversion Dam
 - SPAC members clarified that the main objective of Bennington Lake is flood control.
 - The flow regime in Mill Creek informs the rule set for when water can be diverted.
 - The current Bennington Diversion Dam does not provide fish passage at all flow levels.
 - USACOE has plans for a new fish ladder but has concerns about cost (~\$8.5-\$9 million). SPAC members felt this should be a priority for habitat.
 - The new ladder would be constructed in 2025 at the earliest.
 - Background & Challenges: Engineered Channel Section of Mill Creek
 - A SPAC member asked whether fish can travel up Yellowhawk Creek and come up above the Mill Creek diversion dam?
 - Conceptually, yes, but fish don't currently do this; they tend to follow Mill Creek to natal waters.
 - Fish passage issues at Gose Street are due to downcutting of channel and lack of sediment coming down Mill Creek and bridge constriction. A potential solution is to augment the channel at Gose with a bedload source.
 - Eventually the bridge may need to be redesigned to improve fish passage at Gose Street.
 - Strategies: Summary of Changes
 - **Action Item:** Add Strategy: SPAC members supported continued notching through the engineered channel as a potential strategy to support fish passage and address water temperature issues. There may be opportunities to implement smaller notches to lower the overall cost of this project. Complete low flow channel designs for weired and concrete sections of Mill Creek.
 - Improve fish passage at Bennington Diversion Dam.
 - Implement planned fish ladder at Bennington Diversion Dam.
 - Implement Mill Creek General Investigation Study action related to threshold of diversion to Bennington Lake.
 - Cindy clarified that the non-federal sponsor of a GI Study is responsible for acquiring any real estate or relocating utilities and rights of way for any proposed solution. They receive credit for the value of the real estate during the construction phase.
 - Consider WDFW's recreational flow diversions to Bennington Lake and their impact on critical fish species.
 - Consider threshold for April-June diversion water to Bennington Lake by WDFW (17cfs) to reduce potential entrainment of ESA-listed species into Bennington Lake and flow impacts to Mill Creek during the late spring when streamflow is receding.
 - Bill Neve added via the chat function that diversion into Bennington Lake is also subject to senior downstream water rights, which can kick in prior to June and result in curtailment of that diversion.
 - A SPAC member noted that the catchable trout fishery in Bennington Lake may be part of the Lower Snake Comprehensive Plan mitigation program.
 - Dale asked whether the comprehensive plan specifies a lake level?
 - There is a "recreation pool" elevation for Bennington of 1205' above sea level in the spring, once the risk of flooding is low.

- Dale suggested supplementing aquifer recharge with high flows or early season flows.
 - Judith added that winter flows present recharge opportunities for springs and the LWWR system. Need to take a systems-approach that is holistic and considers short and long-term opportunities.
 - She added that this strategy has been employed by WWBWC for the spring branches in the wintertime and has been successful.
 - This strategy is important for the short term, while finalizing longer term anchor projects.
 - One challenge that needs to be addressed: funding for construction and O&M of MAR projects.
 - Alli Newhouse added that the more time that we take away flows in the LWWR – the more we are compounding issues throughout the year. For example, invasive species like canary grass come back bigger and stronger. More wintertime flows do not address invasive and riparian issues.
 - Dale added that he is not clear what beneficial use we are trying to protect in the LWWR.
 - Judith added aquifer recharge, water rights, and groundwater pumping (lack of instream flow).
 - Steve added habitat refugia and water quality benefits as the LWWR by providing cooler water.
 - Teresa added via the chat function that LWWR water right users have been disproportionately affected by regulation. Drying up water rights, wells, and springs has resulted in economic harm that is not shared amongst all water users in the valley.
 - Steven added that the LWWR system needs to be addressed in the 2050 process. It is an integral part of our hydrologic system and needs to be incorporated into a broader strategy.
 - He added that ultimately the big storage project will have to divvy up winter water under multiple purposes and the LWWR should be included there.
 - Judith agreed.
 - Chris Kowitz agreed with Dale’s proposal and shared that in the summer months, there is not unappropriated water in the system. As long as that headgate system exists, there will have to be a purposeful decision on how much water to go down the LWWR system. There are tricky legal issues to sort out to supplement summer flows.
- Strategies:
 - **Action Item:** Add Strategy: Supplement aquifer recharge with high winter flows in the LWWR system. Prioritize flows in the mainstem in the summer months.

SPAC Decision: Strategy Criteria

Susan provided an overview of the strategy prioritization process and multi-criteria analysis. The intention of the multi-criteria analysis is to help SPAC members sort, compare, and prioritize strategies for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.

SPAC members provided input on the strategy criteria via the chat function and a [Google doc](#). A summary of the discussion is below.

Draft Criteria for SPAC Consideration:

- Anticipated benefits - Number of DFCs (Desired Future Conditions) addressed.
- Ease of Implementation:
 - In place (already being implemented).
 - Ready to go – agreements in place.
 - Not ready to go but forecasted to be straightforward.
 - Relatively challenging but has been done in the past.
 - Challenging.
- Timeline:
 - Already being implemented; ongoing.
 - Near term.
 - Long term.
- Project Cost:
 - <\$150K.
 - \$150K-\$500K.
 - \$500K-\$1 million.
 - \$1 million-\$3 million.
 - \$3 million-\$10 million.
 - >\$10 million.
- Geography:
 - Walla Walla River.
 - Ralph Perkins suggested further breaking out the geography for the Walla Walla River.
 - Touchet River.
 - Mill Creek.

- SPAC/WG Member Support

Additional SPAC Member Suggestions:

- Ability to meet multiple benefits.
- Consideration of complexity in terms of number of entities that must be involved.
- Known impact: To what extent has the proposal been proven to work elsewhere?
- Sustainability: To what extent is the proposal compatible with long term expectations with land-use patterns within the watershed?
- Climate resilience.
- Is this overall effort amenable to utilizing ecosystem service market-based approaches where appropriate?
- Are there ongoing O&M costs that will need to be paid for in the future?
- Are there legal or policy criteria that the State or Dept of Ecology use or require to justify or select projects that this group should consider?
- Equity.
- Cost per benefit.

Amanda proposed after conducting the multi-criteria analysis, SPAC members may rank their top 10 projects.

- SPAC members expressed support for this proposal and added the stipulation that SPAC members be required to consider other interest areas besides their own.

Next Steps:

- Incorporate proposed strategy criteria and refine strategy prioritization process.
- Refine all strategies and implementation details. Discuss at Implementation WG meeting on February 10.
- Distribute updated criteria list to SPAC.

Public Comment

Arnold Coe added a public comment regarding the lift structure at Nursery Bridge. In recent years, overextraction downstream accelerated bedload migration. This has been accelerated by change in management upstream by the Flood Control District. He suggested that policy & regulatory strategies need to be set as short-term objectives to protect the rest of the work we do.

Closure:

Judith and Brook Beeler, WA Department of Ecology, thanked everyone for the robust conversation and for continuing to dig into these conversations at the WG and SPAC levels.

Upcoming Meetings:

- SPAC
 - February 24 from 1 – 4:30 p.m. | Land Use & Strategies Part I
- Working Groups
 - Land Use: Doodle Poll to be distributed soon.
 - Implementation: February 10 from 1-4 pm
 - Email caroline@cascadiaconsulting.com if you'd like to be added to the list.

Appendix A. Attendance

SPAC Members in Attendance:

| Name | Affiliation |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bambrick, Dale | NMFS, NOAA |
| Boen, Cindy | USACE |
| Byerley, Annie | WA Irrigation at-large |
| Dorran, Dan | Umatilla County |
| Dymecki, Sarah | WWT |
| Grandstaff, Mark (alternate) | WDFW |
| Hall, Marty | Columbia County |
| 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 |
| Tebb, Tom | Ecology, <i>Ex-Officio</i> |
| Wagoner, Mark | Gardena Farms Irrigation District |

Other Attendees:

| Name | Affiliation |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Banks, Graham | |
| Bealey, Ki | City of Walla Walla |
| Beard, Chris | Ecology |
| Beeler, Brook | Ecology |
| Birdsall, Doug | WWWMP |
| Borgen, Erik | |
| Brown, Ron | WWRID |
| Buelow, Kris | Snake River Salmon Recovery Board |
| Campbell, Jon | DWWF |
| Coe, Arnold | WWWMP |
| Cronin, Amanda | Amp Insights |
| Dengel, Jeff | WDFW |
| Downes, Melissa | Ecology |
| Fagan, Colleen | NMFS, NOAA |
| Gagnon, Aaron | Forest Service |
| Gustafson, Dave | Washington State University |
| Haire, David | CTUIR |
| Hyland, Chris | WWWMP |
| Kernan, Megan | WDFW |
| Kohr, Jonathan | WDFW |
| Kraft, James | WWT |
| Melcher, Austin | Ecology |
| Navarrete, Laura | USFW |
| Nicholson, Frank | City of Walla Walla |
| Poppleton, Tim | Ecology |
| Redfield-Wilder, Joye | Ecology |
| Reid, Molly | GeoEngineers |
| Sater, Chet | US Bureau of Reclamation |
| Schirman, Roland | Columbia County |
| Spangrude, Gene | |
| Tarbutton, Scott | Ecology |
| Taylor, John | |
| Thurston, Sean | |
| Trumbull, Travis | WWRID |
| Walters, Bret | |