

Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership
Place-Based Integrated Water Resource Planning
Stakeholder Meeting No. 44

Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2021

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Teleconference & Misener room

ATTENDANCE:

Steve Parrett, Donna Beverage, Dana Kurtz, Kim Ogren, Dave Johnson, Jim Webster, Joe Lemanski, Peter Marks, Anton Chiono, Brett Moore, Curt Howell, Adrienne Averett, Jesse Steele, Roxy Nayar, Jed Hassinger, Kyle Carpenter, Rodger Huffman, Tim Wallender

I. WELCOME

a. Introductions

Donna opened the meeting and Dana reported attendance.

b. Meeting Guidelines

Use chat function, state your name, speak up, one speaker at a time, and respect differing viewpoints.

II. UPDATES

a. TMDL and solar shading meetings

Dana reported that meetings were held to resolve language around TMDLs and solar inputs.

b. Other comments

Feedback received reflected thoughts about the amount of time spent wordsmithing the plan. No other significant comments were received. Donna said today's meeting will be the last opportunity for feedback; a vote will be held at the next meeting and then quarterly implementation meetings will begin.

III. Step 5 Plan Revisions

a. Comment line-by-line discussion (second half of report)

Changes to the plan are under review today; revisions are as follows.

- 1. Clarified difference between ISWR that were requested and those that were certificated**
- 2. Added clarification of ISWR**
- 3. Deleted the junior nature of most ISWR**
- 4. Added statement about how our partnership calculated aquatic species demands**
- 5. Added clarification that the 30-year period of record was used as a basis (1958-1987)**
- 6. Added more information from Step 3 report about exceedances**
- 7. Added "if met" phrasing to statement about ISW meeting biological needs of sensitive fish species**
- 8. Clarified that no analysis was performed to determine IS flows**
- 9. Restatement of previous phrasing of "likely underestimates..."**
- 10. Quantitative assessment of future IS demand language was moved from another section**
- 11. More details added to climate change and natural hazards section**

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12. Added watershed demand summaries from Step 3 report

13. Restated language: “it should be noted that the instream flow section states that the full range of flows throughout the year have not been taken into account in the formation of the annual basis and instream water rights (which were used as a proxy for instream demands) are not present on all streams in the planning area.”

Jed noted that the water balance calculations took into account data available of the IS demands. Dana said that it is confusing because it makes one think that IS demand wasn't included. Kim said the suggested revision could be removed if other text that provides more detail and clarification is retained. Donna did not agree with the statement, “as a result, the instream flow needs are likely underestimated” because it is adding a lot more than the group decided to do and it could be a problem when we get ready to vote. Anton said their biggest concern would be framing it as a surplus; we don't have all the data so it's hard to call it a surplus. He thought the new restatement was ok because the point was made that we likely underestimated it. Joe said we don't want to limit the full range of flows (as said in “such as” which implies as an example); we don't want to under or over complicate it. He didn't want to remove the last section of the statement and would like the statement to reflect that it is more annually based.

14. Summarized uncertainty; removed comment “potentially obsolete study.” When referring to the basin investigation reports because it is not obsolete; its methods are good, we just have better collection methods now

15. Moved TMDL language, explained goals of recalculating IS demands

Removed, “... need to assess the full range of IS needs throughout the year including the ecological value of higher flows during the winter and spring.”

16. Added statement that our goal is to advance projects that would benefit all needs in a balanced way and seek to develop multi-benefit projects whenever possible

17. Changed statement about water availability, eliminating the word “surplus”

Change was made to use phrasing from section 3.0.

18. Reordered statements in Objective 1.1

Adrienne suggested removing the word ‘immediately’ to eliminate creating an order of importance. Dana noted that retaining “immediately” in Objective 1.1 and 1.2 indicates that both can be done concurrently. Joe pointed out that to be congruent, this section needs to be focused on several strategies, not a singular strategy. Brett said it's important to understand the motives of the largest portion of the stakeholders; we went through the process to determine that the objective is to balance significant flooding and water deficits, both of which stakeholders experienced. Understanding that plays into how these words go together so we do something sooner rather than later without studying it to death. Joe said each user group was supposed to be considered equitable in the outcome; an integrated water resiliency plan is one with multiple strategies that are thought through and considered. Brett agreed and added that all stakeholders were invited to participate throughout the process and it's important that we understand how the prioritization was put together so that we don't make modifications that are going to be an issue. Joe suggested moving the language around between objectives 1.1 and 1.2 because the feasibility study is a data gathering process; Brett disagreed and said that is not true in this situation because OWRD's feasibility study is project-related instead of data-related. Dana clarified that 1.1 looks at ways to fill the deficit; 1.2 looks at ways to get better estimates, etc.

19. Clarified type of storage projects

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20. Removed statement, “...need to assess and account for full range of IS needs throughout the year...”

21. Discussion about language saying that the Partnership is committed to updating its IS flow needs assessment using updated guidance from ODFW.

Dana said the language that was added by the plan review team describes how ODFW is wanting to work on updating IS flows; we were updating the basin investigation reports and getting specific IS demands for each tributary. Rodger said it makes it look like this data gap is more important than others and asked if we could add IS flow demands. Dana said the addition of “municipal demand, agricultural demand, and supply surface and ground water data gaps will also be addressed” is elevating the topic of IS demand further, clarifying what they want to do. Rodger said he is not for elevating it, just making it equally important as everything else. Dana read the original language the partnership agreed to; this is a required change so we would have to have more discussion to change it. Kim said the required comment is about clarifying the methodology for how to fill that data gap. She said Dana accurately noted that the Partnership had already noted the priority to address the data gaps related to IS needs as well as other demands; ODFW has the methodology and is excited to work with the partnership to fill the data gap. Dana said to clarify, it is not just the IFIM studies, it is also additional calculations with existing data. Dana said there is more information on this data gap because it is more confusing than some of the other data gap methodologies. The actions in the table identifying what we’re going to do are not very detailed. The original language is not clear; it is not just a study, it is also recalculating the demand. Roger said the demand in current IS water methods that identify the need in July-September is already way more than the whole stream. Identifying it more precisely is not relevant because there isn’t any more quality to obtain; it seems like it’s for little or no benefit because we need more volume for the current IS water rights.

Dana said there is a step we can take in between that is really expensive (IFIM studies); that method is what ODFW is proposing to help us with, which is getting better estimates for each of the tributaries. That is what this clarification is explaining. Anton asked if that was work that would be going forward with the feasibility study, happening while closing this data gap. Dana said the IFIM studies are part of the feasibility study and the calculation task is separate from that; ODFW said they are willing to help us as soon as we are ready. Anton said these are factual statements of something that is already occurring, explaining methodology more to close the IS data gap. To avoid making it seem like one data gap is more important, more could be added about methodologies for closing municipal and agricultural data gaps. Dana said we would have to get more into those details and suggested adding a general statement addressing all data gaps without stressing importance over each other.

Kim suggested adding an ‘open ET’ as a way of potentially addressing data gaps for ag demand. Tim asked which part of the basin the open ET would encompass. Kim said it would be for the whole basin. Tim said there’s a large public land mass in our basin; some of the basin concerns can be addressed under the public land areas, whether Forest Service or otherwise. They are a valuable partner for the group meetings and we haven’t heard a lot from them (USFS and ODF). Dana noted that ODF participated in some original meetings and they are on the email list but decided that the USFS participation is covering their interests. Bill Gamble has been involved and participating in most of our meetings. She didn’t think that this was the place to bring up open ET but would make note of it.

Donna suggested moving language to show all demands are equal. Dana suggested leaving the statement and including all the details on the storage study to make it more balanced. Anton suggested adding details about the methodology for closing the other data gaps so it doesn’t seem like IS is more important. Joe said at the very least, the new methodology would continually be assessed and applied when necessary to assess surface water deficits. These are all equally important to fill; we don’t need to set our sights on any single one. Donna wasn’t sure that this language needed to be included here or that

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it fits under this objective. You already know what you're going to do - you're going to use the newest method. Adrienne said she interpreted this as being consistent with the previous section. If we think about how we do have a feasibility study associated with some of this work, then it's just studying that as a next step action because we have objectives and actions associated with those objectives. Dana thought we described that in the update and it may be more appropriate to include it in the sections detailing the strategies. Adrienne supported moving it wherever makes the most sense as far as setting us on a good path describing what we're doing in the next stage. There are key leads on their team that can add one or two sentences about demand data gaps so they're added to the strategic plan. She suggested a summary similar to the instream flow clarifying sentences if we have those for the other sectors. That could be more general for some sectors we are unsure of at this time. Kim said it would be fine to move that language down or remove it from the objective. The suggested language was offered because the original language said that that work was unattainable, and that was incorrect so this is clarifying that it is attainable. She agreed that it is more appropriate further down in the document. It is important that it reflects that there should be immediacy for the first objective and immediacy for this objective to make sure we start filling those data gaps for all of them as soon as possible. The details of the IS methodology would be good to remove here because they are represented elsewhere in the document.

Tim said this is drawing attention to the IS flow and he understood that is the topic of the paragraph but asked about its basis: the needs and recommendations of ODFW from 2018, and anyone else? Donna said this objective addresses data gaps; 1.1 talks about storage and we are making sure that it includes above, below, off and on channel, etc. There are as many agriculture data gaps as there are in IS. Tim asked how that was a known fact because everything he has read says that by 2050 we are going to run out of food for people. If we don't have water to produce more food, then there is a need for agriculture that should be filled. It seems like we are focusing on the IS part of it and that is addressing the low season flows when the real root of the problem is that we have a huge influx of water in the spring and not enough in the warmer seasons. He said he noticed how the sentence was restructured to meet the demands of municipal, agriculture, and other parties involved, but the information being inserted in the document seems to be focused from the perspective of what OWRD and ODFW wants to have in the document. Anton said trying to close all data gaps will be important; the IS data gaps are particularly important because they are the key to what we can do elsewhere, especially thinking about potential storage projects in wintertime. We need to have a better understanding of what those winter IS needs are; that is the big data gap that we are lacking right now. Understanding IS demand data gaps is important; it opens up what we can do when it comes to wintertime storage but we don't want to make it seem like the other data gaps are any less important. Dana said this restatement addresses both topics and covers all the data gaps while emphasizing that IS demand is a big one. Rodger agreed, it covers the full objective without making one more important.

22. Added water quality parameters of concern

23. Clarified who we would be working with; not doing on our own, just supporting other organizations

24. Clarified TMDL

Tim questioned "anthropogenic" in the last sentence; there are natural disturbances that occur as well. Dana asked Roxy if the temperature TMDL specifically say anthropogenic disturbance, or could we say channel disturbance? Roxy thought channel disturbance would be fine. Jed suggested "warming" instead of temperature warming. Roxy was ok with that.

25. More accurately described water quality standards

26. Did not add statement "...high water temperatures, excessive solar radiation..."

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Tim asked if the last sentence, “high width to depth ratios” is contradicting what we are trying to accomplish with some of these side channels and other things. It leads him to believe that it is talking about wanting to deepen and narrow the channel rather than other approaches we talked about as a group. Dana thought this was talking about really shallow areas. Roxy said she read it as wide and shallow, a water channel that has more solar exposure in the shallower depth. Joe said that narrow depth to width ratios result in less solar exposure and warming of waters. You could have multiple side channels and still not have the same summation of width to depth ratios. Tim asked if we are creating larger areas that are susceptible to solar radiation and how that aligns with what we have talked about as a group (side channels, floodplains, off-channel storage). Roxy said it isn’t creating anything; it is describing the conditions that contribute to the excessive periphyton and height growth. Jim said the problem is talking about primary channels; there might be one or two or three, but they are narrower and deeper and have less exposure. You’re talking about at a certain flow level that is a bankable level where you measure that; that doesn’t include when the whole floodplain is activated like at a high flood level. Joe noted that the time of year is also important; solar exposure can be much reduced. This sentence is related to periphyton growth. Kim suggested that the paragraph could be removed if there is confusion or concern about it because the concept is covered elsewhere in the plan.

27. Clarified Objective 2.2, water quality standards

28. Objective 3.1, added statement RE: groundwater study

29. Goal 4 was changed to “prepare for” natural hazards/climate change and clarified where the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan would be written

30. Suggestion removed: improving water supply availability for “irrigated lands”

31. Added statement: The Partnership will simultaneously advance instream and out-of-stream strategies

32. Added statement to show that the vote was unanimous

33. Added statement: Intent to make progress on all strategies and committed to advancing instream and out-of-stream needs

34. Added statement: strategy will include literature review, natural storage opportunity areas

35. Clarified ODA’s role

36. Clarified data collection includes updated instream flow analyses and studies

37. Updated Data Collection Milestone Summary to show the Partnership’s commitment to continue working with ODFW to update in-stream demand

38. Added “develop progress tracking and adaptive management system”

39. Corrected citation about GRMW’s Ecological Atlas

40. Added statement RE: Infrastructure/Land Modification, Step 4 Recommended Action – study potential actions to reduce negative impacts of flooding while increasing retention and recharge potential that will benefit water quantity, quality, habitat, agricultural and municipal lands.

Rodger said ‘habitat’ seemed like an addition and asked if it was part of our charge. Dana said yes, we had habitat-based goals and it is our fourth priority action. Anton said habitat is an important part. We look higher up in the watershed and you’re able to reconnect the floodplain, it slows down water and releases it later in the year. It also creates an important habitat for fish and wildlife. This is a wonderful instance of

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how we can all get what we want; it's important to leave 'habitat' in that statement. Ag and municipal clearly benefit from water quantity, quality and habitat. Kim explained that habitat was added because in looking at quantity and quality, the fundamental principle of water resources planning and aspect of IWS is looking at water in an integrated way. Often we use ecosystem needs but habitat also works. The program through which this is funded emphasizes that triple bottom line and approach. Rodger said he was not opposed to including habitat. Dana said a lot of people want to keep it and asked Rodger if he would be happy if ag and municipal lands were added. Rodger said no because he agrees that habitat benefits everything, he's just not sure it is part of our charge. Dana said that Kim indicated that it is part of the group's charge. Donna was ok with habitat and wanted to add ag and municipal lands so that it includes all of the needs.

41. Describes the feasibility study

42. Other changes made to the reference section

IV. Conclusion

a. Next meeting

Wednesday, January 5 (4-6pm) Conference Call/Misener Room (vote on report)

b. Other comments

A vote for the Plan will be held at the January meeting. Dana will email a list of people that are eligible to vote. Anyone not eligible to vote may submit a letter. If more than two people vote against the plan, that information can be included in the presentation. Donna said that if someone votes against the plan after all this time, then we would be happy to read that statement. We want to represent all, and all have had the opportunity to be at the table.

Kim said they have a placeholder for our group to present to OWR Commission in March. Rodger asked what would happen if OWR doesn't like the plan. Donna said we would still present it; we addressed issues on all sides. It is a place-based plan and we are the place.

Dana said there was good feedback on the 4pm meeting start time, so January's meeting will begin at 4pm.

Action items:

1. Dana will email the plan with final revisions; this is the version that will be voted on in January

Dec.	Draft Step 5 Plan discussion
Jan.	Step 5 Plan vote for approval
Feb.	Step 5 Plan vote for approval
Mar.	Step 5 Plan presentation to Water Resources Commission

The meeting was adjourned.