

## COLUMBIA RIVER-UMATILLA SOLUTIONS TASKFORCE

### MEETING NOTES

June 18, 2012 – Port of Morrow, Boardman

#### **I. Charge to the Solutions Taskforce**

After introductions, co-conveners Richard Whitman, the Governor's Natural Resource Advisory, presented the Governor's message to the group.

The Governor has asked this group to come together because of the current emphasis on job creation and economic development, and recognizing the importance of the agricultural sector to this part of Oregon.

Secondly, Governor Kitzhaber wants to bring your attention to the important collaborative work already done in the Umatilla Basin with irrigators and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla.

Third, the Governor sees the opportunity to incorporate this work into other efforts including the proposed Integrated Water Strategy, recent work by the State of Washington, and discussions on the Canada Treaty on the Columbia River.

The Governor wants this group to develop a plan to move forward to include:

- (A) Short-term (implementable within 5 years) and long-term options,
- (B) An evaluation of the legal, technical, and economic feasibility of the recommended options,
- (C) The recommendations should reflect a consensus of the gathered stakeholders.

Senator David Nelson then provided a legislative perspective on issues, which he has been personally involved in. Senator Nelson told the group "Better you than the Legislature to resolve this." He also talked about his experience with other Oregon Solutions projects, and has seen that this process can be effective in helping people come to agreements and find real solutions.

Les Minthorn, chair of the Board of Trustees of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, provided a tribal perspective and said that the Basin and Tribe are more together than ever before. In summarizing the group's goal, he said "We've learned that partnerships are the way to go. Everyone will be whole." He emphasized that the actions of the Tribal Water Rights settlement will be a large piece for them.

Minthorn underscored the difficulty of the group's task. "Water is more precious as the world ages." He asked the group to help "get us to the minefield." He ended with this approach to the discussions: "Don't over-promise, don't break promises, and don't burn bridges."

## **II. Regulatory Context**

Phil Ward, OWRD Director, talked about Division 33 Administrative Rules which prohibit any new water rights from the Columbia River from April 15 to September 30.

He also said that water divisions reflect geography of the divisions in the Basin.

Montana – 4.4% of total water diverted from the Columbia system

Oregon – 15%

Washington – 20.4%

Idaho – 59.8%

There are no inter-state compacts regarding Columbia River water – 17 failed attempts in the last 100 years. Ward was asked to bring back additional information about water use, and specifically to clarify water divisions above Bonneville.

Ward also talked about Oregon's proposed Integrated Water Strategy, slated for adoption in August. This strategy puts an emphasis on place-based efforts, and it is anticipated the results of this Taskforce could be plugged into the strategy as a place-based effort.

## **III. State of Washington**

Derek Sandison, Director of the Columbia River Program for the State of Washington, spoke about the genesis and work of Washington's program over the last 5 years.

The 2006 Washington legislature passed a bill, after the work of the Columbia Partnership in 2005 (and the Columbia River Initiative before that, in 2002). The bill called for the state to "Aggressively pursue water supplies for in-stream and out-of-stream uses" and find alternatives to something in the Odessa Aquifer. Among its provisions:

- \$200 million bonding authority, 15 FTE dedicated to the effort,
- Two-thirds of the funds were for assessing and planning new supply and/or storage,
- One-third of newly stored water would be dedicated to improve stream flows for fish, and
- A supply-demand forecast is to be conducted every 5 years.

Washington has engaged in 40 projects since the law was passed in 2006.

- Resulting in 150,000 acre-feet of water from the Columbia River for irrigation, industrial and municipal uses, and in-stream flow.
- They are expecting an additional 100,000 acre-feet by 2015. (Some of these projects take time.)

Major projects to date:

- Odessa Aquifer special study
- Potholes supplemental feed route
- Lake Roosevelt draw-down – 30,000 acre-feet to agriculture
- Water delivery project \$800 million for 70,000 acres (90% paid for by irrigators)
- Conversion of Sullivan Lake hydropower to storage (14,000 acre-feet)

Yakima River Basin potential projects:

- Wymer – 162,500 acre-feet (\$1.1 billion)
- Lake Kachess – 200,000 acre-feet (\$200 million)
- Bumping Lake enlargement – 164,000 acre-feet

Large storage feasibility studies:

- Studied 22 locations narrowed to 4
- Lower Crab Creek – 3 million acre-feet (most viable of the 4)
- Goose Lake – study to be completed in 3 weeks
- Nine-Mile Flat – study to be completed in 3 weeks

Biggest partnership opportunities:

- Above-ground storage
- Aquifer storage
- Canadian Treaty Cooperative

#### **IV. The Umatilla Basin – Background**

JR Cook, Executive Director for the Umatilla Basin Commission, provided background on the basin at lunchtime.

- “Umatilla Basin” for planning purposes includes Willow Creek Basin in Morrow County and parts of the Walla Walla Basin.

- Groundwater declined in basalt aquifer in 1950s – 1980s. Led to a 500 foot decline in the water table. Critical groundwater area declined in 1976 and 120,000 acres worth of water rights were curtailed to relieve pressure on the aquifer.
- The 1988 Umatilla Basin Exchange was designed to reduce impact of groundwater and Umatilla River.
- Umatilla Basin Coalition and Commission were formed to address water needs in the basin. Resulted in the Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project. A \$750,000 grant from OWRD to support. Using infrastructure from Greenwood Farms. Monitoring a network of 52 wells.
  
- Concerns:
  - a) Due to the shallow aquifer, water does not move uniformly towards the Umatilla River. Some is moving in the NW direction towards the Columbia River.
  - b) How do you get water to water users?
  - c) Cost of pumping and distribution.
  - d) Cost and difficulty of measuring “net environmental benefit” as defined in HB3369.

## **V. Stakeholder interests and Aspirations**

Members of the Solutions Taskforce each were given an opportunity to express their interests and aspirations for the project. Statements of Interest:

- Governor
  - Keep statewide issues separate from these
  - Not re-write ESA!
  - Economic Development opportunity
  - Environmental restoration
  - Balanced Approach
- Port of Morrow
  - Industrial/Municipal use
  - Possible Port related solutions
- Umatilla Electric Coop.
  - Uniqueness of Umatilla Basin
  - Greatest return on public investment
- Craig Reeder
  - Opportunity – “low lift”
  - Economic benefit
  - Renewable focus

- Want to tell economic story
  - Understand Columbia system
  - Understand fisheries piece
  - Water quality
- CTUIR
  - Improve fisheries in Basin
  - Practical alternative
  - Trailblazers for water
- Umatilla Basin Commission
  - Fix basalt agitator problem
  - Build up – use as savings account
  
- John Turner
  - Use water in a sustainable manner
- ODFW
  - “Don’t slide back” (on fish)
  - Look for incremental success
  - Time to “step up” with resource commitments
- ODA
  - Some others feel “left out”
  - Accommodate climate change
  
- NPCC
  - Allay concerns to Idaho, Montana
  - Incorporate fish efforts into NPCC plan, \$
  - Coordinate with power generation
- Freshwater Trust
  - Address inefficiencies
  - Net environmental gain
- BPA
  - Regional scope
  - Power availability and costs
  - Help explain river “system”
- OWRD
  - Agree on a plan
  - Move forward
  - Fish and people
- WA
  - Understand system as whole
  - Need to be persistent

- Water Watch
  - Creative solutions
  - Don't go backward on fish
- BOR
  - Involvement with tribal settlement
  - Like the "prodding"
  - Can't be "just another group"
- OSU
  - Have scientific expertise to help
  - Knowledge of ASR
  
- Umatilla County
  - Don't undermine current efforts
  - Maintain relationships
  - Move forward

## **VI. The Oregon Solutions Process: How we will work together.**

Steve Greenwood presented an overview of the Oregon Solutions Process. Oregon Solutions is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center at PSU, closely aligned with the Governor's network of Regional Solutions Centers.

Oregon Solutions conducted an assessment including interviews with more than 50 people. It found general agreement on goals laid out by the Governor and willingness to try to find mutual gains.

Those mutual gains are likely to come from three sets of actions:

- 1) Taking water from Columbia when fish don't need it, and using it when they do.
- 2) Utilizing water transfers to spread benefits to tributaries, irrigators, and aquifers.
- 3) Using conservation as a saver of water supply.

This Oregon Solutions process will include:

- Monthly meetings of the full taskforce, except August.
- Most work will happen between meetings in sub-committees.
- Initial list of options at July meeting.
- Recommended list of actions by early December, with a signed Declaration of Cooperation.

Steve then presented a proposed list of ten principles of “How we will work together.” This list will be reconsidered as one of the first action items at the July meeting. It can be found on the website: <http://orsolutions.org/osproject/crustaskforce>

## **VII. Next Meeting and Action Steps**

- A project website will be up and running by the first week in July.
- Two subcommittees will be formed, one of which will focus on Oregon-only options. The other one on inter-state options.
- The subcommittees are charged to return with initial project lists by the next meeting.
- Next Meeting – July 26 & 27 with a field trip on the afternoon of July 26. Details will follow.
- Potential agenda items for next meeting:
  - Overview of Columbia system
  - Overview of relationship between ESA listed fish and Columbia River flow.
  - Overview of Agricultural water use in Basin and economics.
  - Partner generation needs and constraints.