BSWG: Whychus Subgroup
March 5, 2014, 10AM - Noon, Prineville City Hall
Final Meeting Notes

ATTENDING

Kate Fitzpatrick, Deschutes River Conservancy
Ryan Houston, Upper Deschutes Watershed Council
Bonnie Lamb, Department of Environmental Quality
Paul Lipscomb, Sisters citizen and member of Oregon Land and Water Alliance
Mike Riehle, Sisters Ranger District, USDA Forest Service
Marc Thalacker, Three Sisters Irrigation District (Chair)
Pam Thalacker, Three Sisters Irrigation District
Zach Tillman, Deschutes River Conservancy

Also present was Mary Orton, The Mary Orton Company, LLC (facilitator).

AGENDA

The group used the following agenda as a guide during their meeting:

1. Welcome
2. Introductions
3. Overview and approval of agenda
4. Basin Study Context
5. Basin Study Work Group
6. Whychus Subgroup Workplan
7. Meeting Evaluation
8. Adjourn

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND AGENDA

Marc convened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He provided some background on the Basin Study, and identified that we are asking Reclamation for $750K, to be matched by $750K from the State. We have surpassed $100M worth of projects in the basin, and the intention of the Basin Study is keep that flow of money coming to our basin to continue this work. He said that Whychus Creek is more mature in what has been done, including the watershed council's very successful fish passage work.

Attendees introduced themselves and their interest in the Whychus Subgroup. Kate noted she was attending the meeting as the Process Co-Coordinator of the BSWG, not as a representative of the DRC. Mary reviewed the agenda and the group agreed to it as presented. It was made clear that there is an open invitation to participate in this group, and folks should feel free to invite others as relevant or interested.

BASIN STUDY CONTEXT

Kate reviewed the four elements of a Bureau of Reclamation Basin Study:

1. Where is the gap in supply and demand? How does that change with climate change?
2. How do existing water and power perform with changing realities?
3. Development of adaptation and mitigation strategies; i.e., what are the solutions?
4. Tradeoff analysis for feasibility: cost benefit, stakeholder response, etc.

She said that each reach is at a different point in making progress towards answering the above four questions. Whychus has made the most progress to date, followed by the Deschutes, then the Crooked. This group can shape how these questions are looked at with their local input. Marc added that he is very interested in looking at different scenarios with climate change, particularly worst case scenarios where Whychus becomes flashier. He also said he was interested in a feasibility study for an off-channel reservoir to increase instream flow and provide flood control

Basin Study Work Group (BSWG)

Kate described the structure of the Basin Study Work Group with a Steering Committee and five subgroups (Crooked, Whychus, Deschutes, Deschutes Instream, and Groundwater). The purpose of the BSWG is to secure and implement a Basin Study with Reclamation. The group submitted a 20-page consensus proposal February 14 with the Deschutes Basin Board of Control as applicant on behalf of Basin Study Work Group, and expects to hear in May if a Basin Study will be rewarded. In the event it is, the BSWG will work with Reclamation to execute a Memorandum of Agreement and develop a detailed Plan of Study that will lay out the tasks and budget of the Basin Study. If funded, Reclamation will use $750,000 for their internal work and their contractors, and BSWG will bring $750,000 of state funding, with which they can hire their own contractors. If the study is not funded, the DRC will continue to undertake water management planning work, hopefully in partnership with the BSWG or a similar group of stakeholders.

Whychus Subgroup Workplan

The purpose of the Whychus Subgroup is to identify what work still needs to be performed to fulfill the four elements of a Basin Study outlined above. The group recorded the following comments on flip charts relating to the first three elements of the Basin Study (assumed that the fourth element, the tradeoff analysis, will occur in the Basin Study).

Information Gaps in Water Supply & Demand

- Whychus Water Bank feasibility study has supply and demand data as well as supply strategies.
    - Pamela will post this on the TSID website and Kate will distribute URL.
- TSID will have piped the district in 6 years – will meet instream flow water rights, more than 30 cfs will be protected instream.
- Do we have agreement on demand side?
    - What objective(s) are we going for and does the instream flow water right get us there?
        - For example, the instream flow water right will not meet state temperature standards.
- Unclear how to increase flow after the district is piped, except through leasing.
- "Stream function" & "species recovery" could be used for objectives.
- Data gap – what is not met with instream flow water right? Riparian function.
    - Need base flow to hold vegetation there.
    - Need data – hydrograph.
- Data gap: timing. Instream flow water right on paper is 30 cfs, but it is junior. We need a buffer for lean times. Strategy for low water years?
    - DRC has these data.
    - When and how will precipitation exacerbate extremes?
- Don't know how much is being pumped outside city pumping (domestic and agricultural wells) – average or actual.
    - Might hurt the creek if farmers increase groundwater pumping
- Wells pumping less than 10 or 15 gallons/day ½ acre are not regulated, do not need a water right.
- USGS study of groundwater use in Deschutes River Basin is a good reference.
- TSID, when done, will commit to DRC 20 cfs instream minimum in town.
- Through leasing program, TSID maintained good instream flow last year. We used to dry up the stream – we will not do that in the future. Very efficient.
- Minimal impact on groundwater from getting rid of seepage at the macro scale; there may be local impacts.
- People are not pumping more because of the piping – it is the inverse.
- There are questions around the impacts of exempt wells.
- Sisters to Alder Springs – concern about temperatures and impact of groundwater pumping there.

- No room for major development in Sisters – growth is limited due to limited water.
- Gap: What are the options for after piping is done to meet water quality needs?
- Leasing is one option.
    - OWRD denied an exchange (to pump instead of using instream flow).
- Data Gap: Remaining conservation potential within TSID (beyond McKenzie Reservoir).
- Data Gap: TSID Hydro Revenue Potential. Revenue sharing has potential to memorialize a portion of the leasing program.

Water & Power Performance

- We understand current operations.
- TSID is building hydropower this and next year – it is building at the capacity of half of the available flow, so drought is covered.
- Questions are about climate change impact on TSID.
- TSID will have a better understanding of hydropower program after June 1 when the turbines start running– the plan is for revenues to help fund leasing.

Strategies/Solutions

- Problem statement needed.
    - Flooding.
        - Buy out.
        - Reservoir feasibility.
    - Keep problem scope big before narrowing to solution.
- Are there needs for more riparian vegetation studies – is water needed to support vegetation?
- Relationship between paper water versus instream actual flow – part of the analysis.
- Farmers are motivated to lease in dry years due to the high cost of pumping and risk of planting crops they cannot water.
- Junior paper water rights need to be cancelled. They have not been used and are outside district in private ditches.
    - Some are within city limits.
    - Identify and catalogue – "zombie" water rights.
    - Can block fish passage and screening.
- Leasing Program
    - If leasing is the only (currently available) option after piping, how can we grow and sustain in the long term
        - Will leasing increase in drought years (as water is less reliable for farms)?
        - analysis of TSID hydro revenues is needed
- GW Exchange
    - Previous application denied by OWRD. Should be looked at again – this option has huge potential to provide supply in Whychus.

Next Meeting and Next Steps

- List of gaps and issues – validate problem statement.
- More brainstorming on solutions.
- What is priority?
- Focus on what goes into Basin Study.

MEETING EVALUATION

Mary Orton reminded the group to fill out their meeting evaluation sheets, which invite one piece of feedback about what they liked about the meeting, indicated below with a plus symbol (+), and one piece of feedback about what they would like to change for the next meeting, indicated with a delta symbol (Δ). Below are the results of this exercise. Each check mark (✓) indicates that someone endorsed a previously mentioned item.

+	Δ
+ Conversation; tenor.	Δ Not enough time spent of "Gaps." More will come out later and cause problems if additional opportunities (perhaps in writing) are not provided.
+ Good dialogue – open exchange of ideas.	Δ Time limit on data gaps discussion.
+ Good discussion, non-threatening.	Δ Help us stay on track more. It would be nice to balance out who is dominating subjects.
+ Great discussion.	Δ Stick to agenda.
+ Facilitation made it possible to have a coherent dialogue.	Δ OWRD needs to be here.
+ Facilitator!	Δ Too bad ODFW, City, Tribes not here.
+ Presence of facilitator.	Δ All good.
+ Mary decided to facilitate.	Δ (Nothing noted.)
+ Explanation of BSWG objectives and structure.	
+ I thought it was a productive meeting. Meetings that end on time are good.	
+ Use of name cards on end to signal desire to speak.	

The meeting was adjourned.