

Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC) – Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
Meeting of May 13, 2010

Members present: Michael Echanove, George Grader, Jerry Fairley, Mark Loaiza, Jim Mital, Julie Titone, Susan Wilson

Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee representatives present: Steve Robischon, executive manager

PBAC report

Steve reported on the committee's April 15 meeting. Topics included the framework project (survey of aquifer research to date), which has been restored to the \$180,000 funding level with some alterations; tritium monitoring project, for which results are being analyzed; basinwide aquifer testing, which is ongoing. PBAC members approved a solicitation for new Citizens Advisory Group members, which was later sent to news media and posted on PBAC web site. The meeting [minutes are available](#) on the PBAC site.

Old business

Julie recommends tabling the draft bylaws until a determination is made on whether CAG is covered by the Idaho and Washington open meetings laws. At Susan's request, the Latah County prosecutor looked at the organization and said the Idaho law may not apply.

Action: Members present vote unanimously to postpone a vote on the bylaws. Steve will raise the open meeting question with PBAC.

New business

Members share their ideas about the future direction of CAG. Generally, they express frustration about the group's effectiveness and a desire to be more active. Comments include:

- The group should evolve. I can see that it would be frustrating if your bent is toward conservation and social science. Our goal not to have a reason to exist, to get to a point where the water level isn't dropping. In the meanwhile, what are we doing here?
- Can you think of anything we've done as CAG that's made a difference? (Replies: The Framework project funding is due in large part by pushing from CAG. Also, letters to policy makers in support of WSU/Pullman water re-use project sent at urging of CAG.)
- I'm frustrated and discouraged. I've seen people of quality and people who care in the group, but PBAC doesn't seem to seek input or take advice from us.

- We seem divorced from the community.
- It's CAG's job to both provide input and try to get it from the public.
- We really don't have a seat at the PBAC table, direction on how to serve them.
- CAG seems too passive. I want a more active role, to be a translator between scientists and citizens. Who do I represent?
- Don't shortchange value of what CAG members bring to the discussion. We are watching. Pullman has changed its water rates to encourage conservation. The WSU water re-use facility did get \$1 million for related work last year. Things take time.
- Conservation is still the fastest, cheapest means to sustain the water supply.
- We need to put our communities' water situation in the context of what is happening with water around the world
- There's reason to be encouraged, such as the Waters of the West basin modeling project.
- The group I represent, Protect Our Water, was created by the Naylor Farms controversy. It no longer exists. But our water level is still dropping by a foot and a half a year. Maybe we can get some other input – we could reach out more.
- The business community thinks if we don't grow and continue to thrive, we're going to die. Water is one reason Moscow is considered anti-growth.
- Prosperity goes hand-in-hand with effectively using our water. It doesn't mean we can't use our water, it means we can't squander it. (Conservation) is not going to decrease the quality of life at all. We are flushing gold down the toilet. We need to go out into the community, go to meetings. We can't always expect people to come here.

Conclusions: CAG needs to get a better sense of what PBAC members want from it. And CAG be more active. Members need talking points so they can start going into the community to reach people with the conservation message.

Action: Julie will draft talking points for future discussion.

Discussion of meetings

Julie surveys members about possible change in meeting time; the consensus is to stay with 6:15 p.m. on second Thursday of month. Discussion about possibly alternating locations of meetings is deferred until a decision is made about the open meetings law question.

In keeping with members' previously stated preference not to meet in the summer, September 9 is set as the next CAG meeting date. Julie and Mark both express willingness to host summer social gathering of CAG.

Meeting adjourns.