

Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC) – Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
Meeting of October 11, 2007

Introductions

Attendance:

Name	Representing	Present	Excused	Absent
Michael Echanove, Chair	Municipal Provider - WA	X		
vacant	Municipal Provider – ID			
Dr. George Grader	Petitioning Group	X		
Dr. Jerry Fairley	Petitioning Group	X		
Jim Mital	Petitioning Group	X		
Joe Spoonemore	Rural Interests – WA	X		
vacant	Rural Interests – ID			
Dan Boone	Developer/Business – WA		X	
Mark Loaiza	Developer/Business - ID	X		
Dr. Fritz Fiedler	Technical	X		
Ree Brannon	Other	X		
Dr. Bill French	Other		X	
Keith Stoffel	WSDOE, ex-officio	X		
Helen Harrington	IDWR, ex-officio	Phone		

Guests:

Steve Robischon, PBAC
 Mark Storey, PBAC
 Mimi Wainwright, WSDOE
 David Hall

Approval of minutes:

The August 9, 2007 minutes were approved with revisions

PBAC Report & Update (Sept 20): by Steve Robischon.

- All PBAC entities agreed to pay the new administrative fees, \$5k each for Whitman County, Latah County, and Colfax, and \$20k each for the four primary pumpers, Pullman, Moscow, U.of I., and WSU.
- Moscow has now signed the research funding agreement, so all four primary pumpers have approved the research funding agreement, supplying \$20k each per year to fund ongoing research (at this meeting Moscow had not yet signed the agreement, but now have).
- Ree Brannon’s appointment to the CAG was approved and welcomed by PBAC.
- Pullman well #8 bottomed out in early September at a little over 800 feet, and bottomed in alluvial basalt cobbles. The well is located on Pioneer Hill (between

Bishop Blvd and City Hall) in the southeast quadrant of Pullman, near the City water tank. This well does not represent an increase in Pullmans Water Rights.

- PBAC meets next week, and will hear Chad Opatz's thesis summary, regarding cleaning out U of I well (2) near the Wallace Complex. The project was studied as a way to recharge the lower aquifer from the upper aquifer (studied as a possible ASR-like project). When the well was cleaned out and "fixed" it resulted in some water level increases in nearby shallow wells. (FYI – Chad's conclusions include that the water level increases were due to a precipitation event and not the well cleaning, which implies Wanapum recharge is occurring in the vicinity Paradise Creek on the west end of town)
- PBAC has a good financial outlook for the next year now that the new dues schedule has been approved.

Idaho DWR Report - Helen Harrington. (by phone)

- Helen has taken on a new position, in the planning bureau at IDWR. They are going to develop basin plans, driven at the state level through the water resource board. The work will be performed by the state people instead of a local planning unit. Their first task will be to develop a framework for long range basin planning. The group will start with specific basins and look at a 10-year planning horizon to start. Palouse basin is currently ranked fourth out of ten to start looking at basin planning. It will depend on the legislative goals set next year. It will forward about \$1million per basin. So, there may be money for the Palouse basin in two or three years. Helen plans on retaining her position with the CAG.
- North Idaho adjudication meetings are starting. There is a lot of interest, concern, and opposition. Much of the opposition is by local officials at the county level. This is something tat IDWR will have to deal with over the next few years.
- Helen praised the Water Summit, and thanked Steve Robischon for a great PBAC year-end report.

Washington DOE Report– Keith Stoffel

- The Cornelius legal case is scheduled for hearing right after Thanksgiving. The basis of Scott's case was multi-faceted and covered quite a few criteria (issues). Part of it has to do with consolidation of WSU water rights and points of withdrawal. The University wanted all of their existing water rights to be applicable to all of their points of withdrawal. This type of consolidation of water rights is fairly common across the state.
- This week the Water Conservancy Board decisions were completed, and one of the decisions was overturned, one had minor changes, but approved. Two were approved as is. The one overturned was the one changing from a surface withdrawal along the South Fork Palouse to the Hawkins development near stateline. The decision to deny the transfer was based on the mitigation plan provided for flow in Paradise Creek, and that DOE disagreed with the mitigation conclusions. Now starts a 30 day appeal period. If no appeal is filed the DOE decisions will be final. An appeal could cause the decision to go to hearing.

Conservancy Board Report (Joe Spoonemore)

- The South Fork water transfer was intended to cycle pumping through the year to avoid taking from the Paradise Creek and the Wanapum aquifer in the summer when water levels are low. Joe thinks that the transfer mitigation issue could be modified and then deemed approvable by DOE. He also predicts that Hawkins will provide a modified mitigation plan to help seek approval of the transfer.
- Joe will want to follow the process to determine what the water rights are worth in Whitman County. This will likely impact the “market value” of a well in our area.
- Joe found out the WSU golf course is using more water than they said they would during their public meetings. Also, Joe has heard that diverting water to the golf course is preventing water from getting to the WSU orchard.
- Keith Stoffel said Hawkins could let the DOE transfer decisions stand and reapply after the one transfer is denied, or they could file an appeal of the one decision and then “negotiate” with DOE for a revised mitigation plan.

WRIA 34 (Mimi Wainwright, WSDOE)

- The Phase III plan was approved by the planning unit yesterday. Now the plan goes to the County Commissioners for adoption. Once this is complete, the planning unit officially enters Phase IV, where a detailed implementation plan will be developed. This will let the Planning Unit get 5 years of continued funding by the legislature, initially 3 years at \$100k each, then 2 more years at \$50k each.
- On October 29 at 10:30, in the County Commissioners chambers in Colfax, there will be a public hearing for Whitman County to get comments on adoption of the watershed plan. On November 28 (time currently unknown) there will be a joint commissioner meeting with all counties involved (including Spokane, Whitman, and Adams) to consider (or discuss) the plan and vote on adoption.

Forest Service (Jim Mital)

- The director of the Forest Service recently indicated that water resources will be a serious concern (priority) to the Federal government in the near future. The other 2 priorities will be global warming and education. It is interesting how the Forest Service is recognizing that it essentially manages the source for most public water, especially here in the west.

Open Forum Discussion

- Jerry Fairley asked about the possibility of PBAC funding a multi-year “Framework” project. Robischon said it has been discussed. Also, Stoffel said the state may still be able to fund the “Framework” project later in the funding cycle.
- Round robin discussion about the water summit. Michael indicated that the summit was a great forum for public awareness. Ree felt that the group attending the seemed to feel like one community discussing the issues rather than two (Washington and Idaho). It appeared to Jim Mital that WSU is struggling at supporting basin research compared to the efforts of U of I. Fairley said that the WSU geology program and other related programs have recently been

- restructured and put under the direction of staff at the Vancouver campus. It also seemed that there was more summit participation by the business community. Ree indicated that Michaels discussion about the CAG was very good and helped shed light on the importance of the CAG. Michael thinks that the community appears more informed and concerned about water issues over the last year or so. Moscow and Pullman gave good presentations on ASR and surface reservoirs.
- Jerry Fairley felt that the presentation by Kevin Gardes was not really accurate. He felt that it misrepresented the fact that when you use ASR, there is a certain amount of water “loss”. One gallon in does not mean one gallon out, or one gallon saved. Jerry felt the consultant did not answer his questions well, and actually misled the audience. He felt that ASR might be a good solution, but not the way that Phil Brown represented to the public. Jerry feels that Pullman has been sold a bill of goods by the consultant. However, with this said, Jerry still feels that ASR could be a viable option for our basin. There are several current concepts for ASR: Kamiak, Pullman using South Fork Palouse River water, and Pullman wastewater reuse used to infiltrate ASR.
 - One of the common concerns is whether or not excess surface water would be available for multiple potential future users (ie-Pullman and Moscow). Who will get the water that is considered to be available from our surface water sources. Mimi talked about the WRIA 34 Instream Flow committee and how it is currently looking at this issue for the North Fork Palouse. This is an issue that needs a great deal of future work.
 - Mark Loaiza asked if there is any value to recharge from a reservoir, such as one the size of Dworshack. If we build a reservoir in our area, what would be the impact to our aquifer. Jerry indicated that it would certainly help, but cannot be quantified with our current level of knowledge about the aquifer. He also talked about the lack of information that would help us answer these types of questions. So far we can only guess about discharge and recharge areas and characteristics, etc.
 - Keith Stoffel indicated that from his perspective, the most important thing that the basin should be seeking is a comprehensive synoptic measurement of ground water levels, so that we can start to get a sense of gradient.
 - Jerry Fairley said the challenge is that throughout most of the basin, we have a significant vertical gradient, wells are screened over multiple intervals, we have pumping wells only (with drawdown effects), and there is a lot of data noise. Therefore, we have a difficult time separating the good data from the rest of the data. Jerry suggests we take out the pumps from individual wells and do pucker tests to get a sense of true head in each interval of each well. Keith was not convinced that this would yield the results that we are seeking.
 - Robischon suggested that the real focus of PBAC is to balance pumping with supply or recharge (or ASR etc). This started a great deal of discussion about what could be done considering that recharge is essentially zero in the Grande Ronde. So, for operations, we should be able to take out what we are putting in.
 - Fritz Fiedler talked about the uncertainties of the fractured basalt aquifer system, and that we will need to make decisions on imperfect data, especially about the Grande Ronde. We need to find the bounds or ranges of data in order to start

making our decisions. One of the big questions is how much storage is available within the practical “reach” of existing wells?

- When looking at the boundaries of the Grande Ronde, age dating shows that younger water is overlying older water at some locations. This suggests that at least some recharge is occurring. Other than that, we really don’t know much about the recharge.

The Following bullets have to do with a discussion about future study needs:

- Jerry Fairley summed it all up by saying the most important thing to do is the “Framework” project. The project would collect existing knowledge and focus attention of the “important” things that we still need to know. This would help us determine what things that we really need to spend effort and resources on in the future in order to focus our effort, and avoid wasting our time studying everything. From a project perspective, this should be our highest priority. We also need to acknowledge that there are other priorities (such as conservation) that are also important for other reasons.
- Keith Stoffel suggests that we get all the researchers together in a room to hash out what our basin questions are. Jerry Fairley said we need to get a “peer review” process going where we pull together the researchers and experts in the basin to generate the “needs” of the basin. Then we could gather several experts from outside the basin to review all the ideas and rank them by merit. This way we get an unbiased prioritization of our needs. We could then develop a plan for future studies or actions. One of the problems is that we only have less than half a dozen ground water researchers in the basin. There aren’t enough to really develop a consensus of actions needed.
- Fritz Fiedler indicated that he is uncomfortable making decisions or recommendations to PBAC regarding research needs in the basin, as he is on of the regions primary researchers, and in a position to conduct the research that is recommended. He feels this may put him in a position of “conflict of interest”. This is likely true of the other researchers in the basin.
- Robischon said one of the big limitations is the amount of money (maybe millions) it would take to study the basin and know the answers. Stoffel disagreed and said that we really need to do the first study to find out what we really need.
- Ultimately we are going to have to decide what is important, and how quickly we need to act. (do we have 6 years or 600 years of supply left?). This will help dictate which actions we will pursue. This will include which model we will need to use in the basin (ie - simple or complex, etc.).

Other open Discussion

- Michael wants to get back to conservation.
- Bill French – convinced Moscow to consider adopting new conservation verbage saying it needs to be against city goals of Moscow to water an impervious surface.

New Business:

Water summit committee will meet next week. They will try to characterize the 2007 summit, and start to discuss the 2008 summit. It was suggested that it may be a good idea for CAG to take the lead on the 2008 summit . One idea is to wrap it into U. of I. sustainability work next year.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2007, at **6pm**, Jacks Creek Room, U of I Facilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.