

Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC) – Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
Meeting of March 1, 2007

Attendance:

Members present:

Michael Echanove	Dan Boone
Jerry Fairley	Jim Mital
Mark Loaiza	Kirk O'Reilly

Helen Harrington, IDWR, ex-officio (via telephone)
Keith Stoffel, WSDOE, ex-officio

Members Absent:

Bill Elliot	
Ben McLuen	Joe Spoonemore (came but couldn't stay)

Guests:

Steve Robischon, PBAC	Mark Storey, PBAC
David Hall, PWCN	Bill French, PWCN
Diane French, PWCN	

Approval of minutes:

The February 8, 2007 minutes were approved as corrected.

PBAC Report & Update (February 15 meeting): by Steve Robischon.

- Discussion regarding the \$250k placeholder in the WSDOE budget to perform a local groundwater study and summary report. There was no real update available for the meeting.
- PBAC approved the sending of letters of support for the wastewater re-use project proposed at WSU. The letters were sent to several local legislators and the Office of the Governor. Latah County and Moscow also agreed to send letters of support.
- There was a discussion about typical water use on the Palouse and how that relates to several of the upcoming development projects. Steve Robischon presented some data via a Powerpoint presentation. The water use data was compared to the Hawkins proposal, the Moscow Cemetery, and the WSU Golf Course expansion. There is a link to the presentation on the PBAC website.
- PBAC data release policies were discussed. Many of the entities had differences of opinion about how PBAC should respond to requests for information. A consensus was not reached on this issue, and will be discussed again at a future meeting.
- There was some discussion regarding whether the State of Idaho will be approving the Moscow Cemetery request for a water right, so they can drill their own well.
- Steve talked about the shallow and deep aquifer monitoring projects. The issue is whether or not PBAC should use the university students to continue "staffing" the

monitoring projects. If this is the desire of the committee, then Jim Osiensky will need to start recruiting new graduate students for next year.

- Steve presented the letter from the CAG to PBAC requesting information about ongoing or proposed conservation efforts or programs. After much discussion, it was decided that PBAC should encourage its host members to respond individually to the request. Some of the agencies are in the process of updating their water use and conservation plans and will be unable to respond for another 6 months or year.

IDWR - Helen Harrington (via phone)

- Moscow Chamber made a tour of Boise agencies, and stopped at IDWR. They covered a lot of topics and issues.
- Public meeting in May regarding the Spokane Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer project. It will be two days, first a summary of data, the second a management day. They will discuss state and cross state issues, and we may want to send someone from the CAG. The info is on the WSDOE web site. Steve will be sent a link, that can be disseminated.

WDOE - Keith Stoffel

- Keith handed out a flier regarding a “Reclaimed Water Workshop” to be held in Seattle on June 12. He urged anyone interested to consider attending.
- The head of WSDOE, Jay Manning, received a letter of support from the City of Moscow, pertaining to the proposed water reclamation project in Pullman.

Open Forum:

Joe Spoonemore came briefly to the meeting, and left before being called to order. He reported to those present, that the Whitman County Water Conservancy Board just received the water right transfer package from the Hawkins Companies consultants. They will be working on the transfer package starting next week. The Board will be meeting March 7 at 2-6 pm at the Public Services Building in Colfax. Keith Stoffel described the water right transfer process in general terms.

Business:

Two main topics were brought up for discussion by Michael Echanove:

First is a discussion regarding the PBAC effort to get funding from WSDOE to collect all the existing data and summarize it in a comprehensive summary report.

Second is a continued discussion on regional water conservation.

Bill French: Bill wants the CAG to start a comprehensive evaluation of different ways to conserve water on the Palouse. It appears to him that nobody wants to take the first step. Bill would like a more regional approach to conservation that PBAC and CAG could support. It would be far better for the region than everyone selecting their own method or means. The first step would be to get Moscow and Pullman together on a comprehensive approach.

There was a great deal of concurrence by the CAG members that Bill has a great idea. The border seems to be one of the bigger issues. Another issue may be the difference in cost to produce a “unit” of water between entities. It may be logical to encourage similar rate structures across the state line. Michael said, based on the operations in Palouse, it would not be very feasible. The water fund is an “enterprise” fund and is based on the cost of infrastructure and cost of delivery. Bill French suggested that a more realistic approach would be for both communities to adopt “conservation” rate structures. Simply stated, adopt a rate structure that encourages conservation.

Mark Loaiza brought up the issue of economic impacts of our water supply reliability on our region as a whole. Michael suggested that CAG consider a media campaign to educate the public regarding the water supply issues. However, Bill brought up the fact that the public will only respond to personal economic impacts. The rate structure approach accomplishes this. Jerry thought maybe each entity should consider a “surcharge” on the water bills to create a slush fund to award the entity that establishes the better conservation practices. This would create a more regional approach to conservation through a little “healthy” competition.

Dan Boone brought up the concept of “Valley Vision” in Clarkston-Lewiston area to bring together the communities for the greater good of the region. Each entity alone does not have the “clout” to achieve the water conservation goals. There needs to be a sense of regional responsibility. But, does the CAG have enough clout to get the right people together to adopt regional conservation policies. It was felt that the CAG needs to exercise some influence over the policies of each of the two cities. We should try to convince PBAC to exert pressure on the City Councils.

Bill’s big question is “what should our water consumption be to have a sustainable supply”. Mark still thinks the biggest issue is education of the overall population. Only when the people are convinced, will true conservation occur. The “cost” of water will need to increase dramatically before the community will pay attention.

It is critical that the focus of our conservation efforts be on property owners rather than on the overall population. An example by Mark Loaiza is that the rental property owners are few, and can be more easily targeted. Maybe CAG should target groups like the GMA (Greater Moscow Alliance) with a small presentation on the cost of water, and the overall benefits of conservation. David Hall brought up the spreadsheet put together by Larry Kirkland about the cost of water, and that conservation is the cheapest method of water supply, by far.

Diane French discussed the shortcomings of presenting a targeted education of different groups, and how elected officials may not be interested in condoning a “targeted” program. She said it would be great if CAG had the political clout to convince the City Councils that a targeted education program could be effective.

There was a little discussion about the fact that the larger houses on large acreage will have the largest water usage. The people that have the larger homes can generally afford the high rates and will use more water. There was also a discussion that we should encourage businesses to implement water conserving measures.

Back to “regional”. Benefits of conservation must be presented to the City Councils. Dan Boone said it needs to include the County Commissioners. The conservation groups are typically not heard by the elected officials. Jerry suggested we also need to invite PBAC to its meetings to start developing a higher level of common understanding of the issues facing the CAG.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding whether or not CAG should approach PBAC or the policy makers. Michael: CAG should tell PBAC of its intent to make conservation a high priority with the elected officials. The change toward conservation needs to be a real change in perspective and policy. Kirk brought up the idea that the new construction could require water conservation. So, CAG/PBAC needs to encourage a change in local ordinance for water conservation. This may include water saving devices, gray water systems, rain-barrel storage systems, etc. Maybe the local agencies should look at a requiring development to create a water savings somewhere in the community equal to the amount that a proposed development would use (this would be a requirement of a permit).

Next meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2007, at 7pm, Jacks Creek Room, U of I Facilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.