

Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC) – Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
Meeting of September 6, 2007

Introductions

Attendance:

Members present:

Michael Echanove	Dan Boone
Fritz Fiedler	Bill French
Kirk O'Reilly	David Hall
Ree Brannon	Marilyn Beckett

Excused Absent:

Jerry Fairley
Mark Loaiza
George Grader (represented by Marilyn Beckett)
Joe Spoonemore

Guests:

Steve Robischon, PBAC
Mark Storey, PBAC

Approval of minutes:

The August 9, 2007 minutes were approved.

PBAC Report & Update (August 16 meeting): by Steve Robischon.

- PBAC voted to approve the administrative assessments.
- The PBAC members are currently leaning toward banking the research project money for this year (or maybe even for several years).
- The “Framework” project was not selected by Ecology for funding. Operational grants have not been decided yet. There is only one project with a chance for funding is the flow monitoring on the Palouse River. There may be some money left over at the middle of the biennium, and a project may yet get some funding. Keith Stoffel said that surface water projects seemed to get the highest funding priorities this funding cycle. Also, the planning units with an adopted WRIA plan got extra points during the ranking process at the regional level. The final ranking of projects was determined at the state level.
- The Whitman County Water Conservancy Board report – was forwarded to DOE, who has 30 days to respond (time is up on September 7). Keith Stoffel signed an extension to put it at October 8 for the decision by Ecology, because Ecologies person that reviews the packages is too busy right now. There is a comment period after the DOE decision (30 days). They have already received 3 comments, including one from Moscow and one from the Water Conservation Network.

Idaho DWR Report - Helen Harrington. (Not Present at Meeting)

Washington DOE Report– Keith Stoffel

- DOE is constantly in the media regarding the Golf course, the appeal process on the Municipal water law suit (known as the “Cornelious” Lawsuit). The press is constantly seeking info from the Department of Ecology.

Open Forum

- David Hall – Reported that U of I is questioning whether or not the aquifer levels would still drop if we stopped pumping. This seems to be a big topic (from Darren Saul) with respect to sustainability.
- Michael Echanove reports that Kirk O’Reilly is moving to Bellevue, and will no longer be able to serve on the committee. Suggesting his replacement Ree Brannon – studying sustainability at U of I. Ree has an extensive background with the forest service. Steve will forward the proposal to PBAC. The nomination was motioned by Kirk O’Reilly and seconded by Bill French, and approved to forward to PBAC.
- Bill French asked if we need to consider the organizational structure of CAG, and seek “approval or concurrence” of the PBAC committee. Steve suggested that it would be a good idea to clarify whether or not the original representation (per the IDWR mandate) is represented.

New Business:

- Echanove discussed the history of CAG, and that it has been around for almost 2 years. He suggested we craft a letter to PBAC, and move forward with a proposal for conservation, considering the history of discussions. It seems that conservation is the quickest and easiest way to have an impact on water resources in the basin. We need to let PBAC know that the citizens of the area want action, and a letter to PBAC (and also IDWR/WSDOE) is the best way to start.
- Stoffel suggested that the “reclaimed water” project ought to be one of the highest priorities, and that we need to start working on the legislature again. It goes hand-in-hand with the goals of CAG and PBAC.
- Regardless of strategy, PBAC’s long range plan does not appear to be working. Sustainability does not seem to be achievable with the current efforts and plan. PBAC does not ever meet its own target dates. The “big” picture is not being met (sustainability).
- Ree Brannon said that one of the big issues to the public is to answer the question of “why”. Such as “why” do we need to conserve. The public does not even know if conservation will do any good. This just reinforces the fact that we don’t know enough about the big picture. We need to listen to the citizens.

LETTER TO PBAC – *brainstorming session- don’t mind the lack of format.*

General Content of Letter (multi-meeting agenda item)

Dear PBAC,

Since formation of the CAG 2 years ago, it has studied many areas of PBAC's performance, and the CAG would like to review areas of concern:

1. Start with a "Thank you", and we want to Encourage PBAC to continue working forward to solve water resource issues.
2. Then launch into a request for a "State of the Palouse" report on water use and conservation. This would need to include details of each entity. PBAC would need to meet with each city, etc. This would be a good starting point for PBAC to report back to CAG.
3. CAG stresses that PBAC must continue to provide support for Pullman's Wastewater Reuse project.
4. PBAC and CAG must seek consensus (from the community) on future actions or activities.
5. The PBAC 1992 Ground Water Management agreement has been amended, and there is a revised PBAC plan. We should focus on the current plan, not the 1992 document.
6. Steve Robischon said "Action plans ceased around 2000, PBAC then focused on pumping goals. The goals have now changed (2006), they now seek to balance supply and use, by 2020, with a specific action plan in place by 2010." So, we need to better understand sustainability issues. Pullman is looking at ASR. Moscow is looking at surface storage. It seems that PBAC entities are taking some small steps in the direction of solving the sustainability issue.
7. Sustainability also has a lot to do with long term demand (tied with growth). PBAC must tie growth and demand into the plan.
8. Bill French said that all activities in the region seem to be tied to new water use. We need the entities to start consider solution involving reduced water demand.
9. Keith Stoffel – We don't have a lot of older "water rights" to move around in the Palouse because of the long history of dry land farming. This has resulted in fewer water rights available to transfer. It is hampering the growth potential of the region. This needs to be factored into the long term growth or development plan.
10. Bill French - Need to outline the issues affecting our big picture, such as supply, demand, cost, reclaimed water project, legal issues, etc.
11. PBAC should coordinate a discussion about the cumulative effect of conservation by all of the entities. The committee wants to highlight the tiered water rate system and its effectiveness. Echanove says it is almost impossible to implement a tiered water rate system due to political pressures. The entities should look at other ways to do a water plan that encourages "no lawns", limit the size of lawns, and changing mowing habits.
12. The Palouse Basin needs a regional approach to conservation. This should take the form of a regional conservation plan. French- need to limit lawn areas at new subdivisions. Maybe PBAC and CAG could promote conservation by working with the development community through incentives. This should focus on the relative values of water, such as drinking/cooking is high, and lawn irrigation is low. To summarize, what are the most valuable uses of water, then factor this into the conservation plan. This is implemented through a tiered rate structure.

Also, you can reduce infrastructure costs by reducing peak demand (this makes \$ sense). Also, total water storage, such as in reservoir cost, can be reduced.

13. It was suggested that the letter could probably end with "PBAC, the problem is not being solved". PBAC needs to look at the "big" picture. It may be that WOW or another research group would be willing to look at the "big" picture and examine cumulative effects analysis of demand and conservation/use. This must also include an examination of rural vs. urban vs. university demand, etc.

Keith Stoffel - Walla Walla just did an instream rule limiting the use on exempt wells. Whitman County is discussing it now. He suggested that it is a good idea to consider it even though it is not a huge amount of water. It will systematically limit long term demand from development in rural areas.

WATER SUMMIT – October 2

CAG will have the opportunity to present to the Summit on the progress made by CAG (Michael will have about 15 minutes)

Brainstorming Session for Michaels water summit presentation:

- Discuss the Charter of the CAG from IDWR – discuss citizen input.
- Recommendations that have been forwarded to PBAC.
- Perhaps we want to share some of the results of Chuck Harris's study of public perception.
- Solicit input from summit attendees, as long as we make sure that we are clear on how the input will be used.
- Let the people know this is a complex issue, and that the answers currently elude us.
- We need to let people know that we need an adaptive management plan for the future, as there is no single solution to the water resource problems. The problem is more complex because of the many entities involved, and the questions regarding the extent of the existing water resources in the area.
- Consider discussing the cost savings for conservation measures.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2007, at **6pm**, Jacks Creek Room, U of I Facilities.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.