

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting
January 27, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Board Members: Ed Chesnut, Ralph Perkins, John Zerba, Joel Huesby, James Baker, Steve Irving, Vern Rodighiero, Kevin Scribner, Jack Ferrise, Jeremiah Bonifer (Zoom)

Staff: Wendy Harris, Troy Baker, Cat Garza, Eric Hoverson, Tara Patten, Sara Harris, and Luke Adams

Guests: Umatilla County Commissioner Dan Doran (Zoom), Jeff Catlin, Sam Bango- Anabranh Solutions (Zoom), Jon Brough (Zoom), Eliza Keksi – Anabranh Solutions (Zoom)

(7:00 PM) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by John Zerba at 8:00 pm.

(7:03) Board Member Resignations and Potential Departures

- Nathan Viavant resigned due to a conflict of interest after taking a board position in Walla Walla.
- Malcolm Millar and Clark Lampson resigned due to time constraints.
- Ray Williams indicated to Wendy that he may resign due to a lack of availability.
- Discussion took place on providing recognition for outgoing board members, and members were encouraged to suggest ideas for appreciation gestures.

(7:04) Board Officer Nominations

- Given the ongoing Strategic Action Planning process, the 2024 officers were asked if they would continue in their officer roles in 2025.
- **Motion:** Kevin moved to retain current leadership until the strategic plan is adopted.
 - Current officers agreed to continue in their leadership roles
- **Vote:** Motion passed unanimously, pending bylaw confirmation.

(7:06) Committee Assignments & Meetings

- Committees reviewed; members encouraged to verify or adjust their participation.
- The Project Committee will meet in February to discuss upcoming proposals.

(7:08) Financial Update – 2025 Budget Overview

- **Secured Grant Funding:** \$2,191,192 (an increase of ~\$800,000 from last year).
- **Pending Grant Funding:** \$1,390,000 (various applications pending with OWEB, ODA, and others).
- **Multi-year Projects Carryover:** \$1,483,623 carried forward into the next fiscal year.
- **Private Donations:** Nearly \$12,000 was raised, with \$5,900 from the Valley Giving Guide.

(7:22) **Beaver Conflict Resolution Program Presentation (Anabran Solutions)**

- **Presenters:** Sam Bango (Restoration Planner) & Eliza Keksi (Fish Biologist).
- **Objective: Establish a Basin-Wide Beaver Coexistence Program.**
- **Key Program Elements:**
 - Coordinate with landowners and agencies to ground-truth the beaver suitability map for the Walla Walla Basin
 - Implementing coexistence strategies (e.g., pond levelers, exclusion fencing).
 - Potentially developing a beaver translocation program.
 - Educating and engaging landowners.
- **Discussion:**
 - Concerns raised about landowner opposition and PR risks.
 - Investigating landowner compensation and funding sources.
 - Ensuring regulatory coordination and tracking relocated beavers.

(8:04) **Hydrology and Current Snow Pack Update**

- **Flow Monitoring:**
 - **South Fork Walla Walla River:** 130 CFS
 - **North Fork Walla Walla River:** 15 CFS
 - **Mill Creek:** 112 CFS
- **Snowpack:** 100% of the median level.
- **Drought Conditions:** Improved due to above-average precipitation.

(8:13) **Water Recharge Limited License Update Discussions**

- The temporary water recharge permit is still pending.
- Staff are providing additional data to the OWRD to fulfill a recent data request
- Walla Walla Irrigation District declined to provide a letter of support, preventing water movement through their system, which required modifying the previously submitted application.
- Hudson Bay District Improvement Company continues to support the recharge efforts.
- Members discussed seeking grants to cover irrigation district maintenance costs to facilitate cooperation.

(8:22) **Outreach & Engagement Events**

- **February 28:** Open house event for Dry Creek landowners to discuss the upcoming sub-watershed assessment
- **Water & Wine Events:**
 - **January 8:** Featured Frank Nicholson (Walla Walla Public Works). Attendance increased by 20+ participants over the prior event.
 - **February 5:** Guest speaker: Rory Corrigan (Forest Service) at Roti Cellars.
- **Pub Trivia Nights:**
 - The January 21 event had 8 participating teams.
 - The February 11 event is scheduled at Big House Brewpub.

(8:27) **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27