

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting
December 15, 2025
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Board Members: James Baker, Ed Chesnut, Caty Clifton, Joel Huesby, Ralph Perkins, Vern Rodighiero, Kevin Scribner, John Zerba, Jerimiah Bonifer

Staff: Michelle McClellan, Wendy Harris, Sara Harris, Luke Adams, Cat Garza

Guest(s): Jean Dolling

(7:00 PM) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair John Zerba.

(7:05) Business

- The November 17, meeting minutes were reviewed.
 - Motion: Ralph Perkins moved to approve the minutes.
 - Second: Ed Chesnut
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
- Board Nominations (wildlife seat)
 - The board considered the nomination of Mark Medina to fill the vacant Wildlife seat.
 - Motion: Kevin Scribner moved to approve Mark Medina's appointment to the board.
 - Second: Ralph Perkins
 - Discussion ensued regarding sector representation and whether board members must represent specific sectors. Staff will research this issue and report back.
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
- John Zerba suggested that a nominating committee be formed for the upcoming officer elections.
 - Ralph Perkins, Joel Huesby, and John Zerba volunteered to serve on the committee.

(7:15) Update: Bureau of Reclamation Walla Walla Basin Study

- Ralph Perkins provided an overview of the Bureau of Reclamation's Walla Walla Basin Study and recent BAC presentation highlights including:
 - Completion of hydrologic modeling and calibration work
 - Focus on future supply, demand, climate change, and population growth
 - Development of trade-off analysis to evaluate water management alternatives
- Anticipated Timeline:
 - Trade-off analysis: mid-2026
 - Final report: September 2026
- Discussion ensued with questions raised about diversion modeling, interaction with other studies, and opportunities for engagement during upcoming phases.

(7:25) Staff Updates

- New Hire – Clean Water Project Specialist

- Michelle McClellan announced the hiring of Ryan Pike, who will begin on January 5, 2026. Ryan will support the Salmon Safe program, agricultural outreach, and front office operations.

Valley Giving Guide Campaign

- Sara Harris provided an update on WWBWC's participation in the Valley Giving Guide (December 2-31, 2025):
 - \$1,025 raised to date from 8 donors
 - Average gift size of approximately \$120
 - Most donations historically occur in the final two weeks of December
 - All donations remain eligible for bonus pool funds
- Board members suggested including endowment balance information in future newsletters.

(7:35) Preview of 2026-2030 Strategic Action Plan – Michelle McClellan

- The previous plan was adopted in 2014; the new plan reflects significant changes in watershed conditions, partnerships, and organizational capacity
- Planning process included community surveys, key informant interviews, a full-day board and staff retreat, and partner review
- Five core priorities:
 1. Measurable improvements in watershed health
 2. Broad support for watershed stewardship
 3. Strong partnerships
 4. Thriving education programs
 5. A diverse and stable funding portfolio
- Michelle summarized partner feedback received to date and outlined proposed refinements, including clarification of monitoring approaches and role definition. The Board discussed timing, review process, and expectations for adoption at the annual meeting in January 2026.

(7:55 PM) Big Basin Issues Check-In – Staff & Board

- **Alluvial Aquifer Recharge:**
 - Limited License application under review by ODFW and OWRD
 - Monitoring plan revisions underway, including compliance monitoring and revised objectives
 - Requirement identified for a registered geologist stamp on the updated monitoring plan
- **Leasing of Water Rights:**
 - Walla Walla River Irrigation District leasing program approved with seasonal volumes identified
- **Levee System:**
 - Anticipated town hall meetings related to Corps and Tribal studies
- **Tiger Mill Project:**
 - BAC discussion requested to allow Forest Service staff to present details and address concerns

(8:05 PM) Flow & Water Temperature Report – Luke Adams

- Streamflow conditions across key gages following a significant high-flow event
- Snowpack currently well below median levels
- Water temperature data showing slightly cooler conditions in 2025 compared to 2024, but warmer than pre-2020 flood conditions
- Board discussion focused on flood recovery, spring influences, and implications for future watershed conditions.

(8:25 PM) Announcements & Closing

- **Next WWBWC Board Meeting**
 - January 26, 2026 (rescheduled due to holiday) 7:00-8:30 PM (Hybrid)
- **BAC Meeting**
 - January 28, 2026, 1:00-4:00 PM, Water & Environmental Center, WWCC (Hybrid)
- **Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Workshop**
 - January 29, 2026, 7:30 AM-1:00 PM, Milton Freewater Community Building
- **Chair Announcement**
 - John Zerba announced his intention to step down as Board Chair following his upcoming 80th birthday. He intends to continue serving on the board.

(8:43 PM) Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 PM.