

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting
May 18, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Board Members: James Baker, Ed Chesnut, Caty Clifton, Jack Ferrise, Joel Huesby, Mark Medina, Ralph Perkins, Kevin Scribner, John Zerba

Staff: Michelle McClellan, Sara Harris, Tara Patten, Luke Adams, Cat Garza

Guest(s): Darcy Dauble, Jean Dolling

(7:00 PM) Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Chair James Baker. A quorum was present.

(7:01) Business

- April 2026 meeting minutes
 - Motion: Joel Huesby moved to approve the minutes.
 - Second: Ralph Perkins
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

- Bylaws revisions
 - Board members discussed each proposed change to the bylaws.
 - Article 1 Section 4 – Registered Office and Registered Agent
 - Discussion: Registered agent change from John Zerba to James Baker confirmed; subsequent question about whether this information must be in the bylaws.
 - Decision: None

 - Article 4 Section 1 – Number and Qualifications
 - Discussion: About draft language pertaining to a new Board seat reserved for a student enrolled at Walla Walla University, Walla Walla Community College, or Whitman College, and whether the student will have voting privileges.
 - Discussion: Suggestion made to add Blue Mountain Community College to the list of eligible higher ed institutions.
 - Decision: Add Blue Mountain Community College; yes to extend voting privileges

 - Article 4 Section 3 – Notice of Meeting
 - Discussion: About adding that print meeting notices will be posted at the Milton-Freewater City Hall and Milton-Freewater Public Library.
 - Decision: Approved

- Article 4 Section 6 Item B – Special Meetings / Polling by Email/Phone
 - Discussion: Suggestion made to replace “Communications will be sent to all Board of Directors and a majority of the total Board of Directors voting in favor is necessary for approving any action” with “Communications will be sent to all members of the Board of Directors, and a majority of the members of the Board of Directors must vote in favor to approve an action.”
 - Decision: Approved

- Article 4 Section 7 – Quorum and Attendance
 - Discussion: About replacing “Failure to participate on a regular basis may be cause for removal by the Board of Directors” with “Three or more consecutive absences in one year may, but will not necessarily, be cause for removal by the Board of Directors. The Board will consider each member’s unique circumstances in determining if removal is warranted.”
 - Decision: Approved
 - Decision: Strike this language from Article 4 Section 7 and move it to Article 4 Section 9 (Director Removal)

- Article 6 (Duties of Officers)
 - Discussion: About adding new Section 4 describing Treasurer duties.
 - Decision: New section approved with this change: Replace “The Treasurer will be a member of the Fiscal Committee, oversee the corporation’s fiscal activities, and ensure that fiscal policies are adhered to” with “The Treasurer will Chair the Fiscal Committee, oversee the corporation’s fiscal activities, and ensure that fiscal policies are adhered to.”

- Article 7 Section 3 (Committees)
 - Discussion: About changing “Chairs of each standing committee are elected by the Board of Directors” to “Chairs of the Personnel and Project Review committees are elected by the Board of Directors.”
 - Decision: Approved
 - Discussion: About change specifying that the Personnel Committee will perform an annual performance appraisal of the Executive Director (not “paid council staff”).
 - Decision: Approved
 - About replacing “The Project Review Committee will be responsible for reviewing all projects brought to the Board of Directors for endorsement and/or approval and in passing on a recommendation to the Board of Directors in a timely fashion that allows for a complete review and analysis” with “The Project Review Committee will review potential projects, whether proposed by staff or a Board member and including K-12 and public education projects, and make recommendations to the Board of Directors in a timely fashion. Projects must receive a majority vote by the Board of Directors to proceed.”
 - Decision: Approved
 - Discussion: About adding “For small projects where the WWBWC portion of the total budget is \$20,000 or less, the Committee Chair may approve the project without committee review or a Board vote.”

- Discussion: Suggestion to incorporate notion of complexity (e.g., no. of miles of stream restored) into consideration; counter argument offered that it would be challenging to define “complexity” in this context.
 - Decision: Approved with this change: “For small projects where the WWBWC portion of the total budget is \$20,000 or less, the Committee may approve the project without a Board vote.”
 - Discussion: About whether to vote to approve the revised bylaws at this meeting or by email, when Michelle emails a clean copy to all Board members.
 - Motion: Ed Chesnut moved to approve the new bylaws with the corrections made this evening during the meeting.
 - Second: John Zerba
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
 - Action item: Michelle will email the revised bylaws to all Board members.
- Conflict of Interest policy
 - Board members discussed the proposed standalone Conflict of Interest policy.
 - Discussion: Pertaining to Article 8 (Procedures for Determining Compensation), Number 2b, Michelle reported on Jerimiah’s suggestion to change the wording of the last sentence to indicate that compensation surveys may be used but are not required.
 - Discussion: About a potential gap in the policy related to accepting personal gifts and the need to specify a dollar amount above which such gifts would constitute a conflict; suggestion to quantify the fourth bullet under Article 2 Number 1 (What is a Conflict of Interest?) by modifying the language to specify that a situation in which a director, officer or key person or that person’s relative or business “receives or may receive personal gifts or loans of *more than \$25.00* from third parties dealing with WWBWC” is a potential conflict of interest. Counter argument offered.
 - Discussion: About situations in which a Board member could potentially benefit from having insider information about contracting opportunities. Further review of the policy led to agreement that the recusal requirement in the policy is adequate and that such “insider information” situations can be anticipated and dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
 - Discussion: James pointed out that Article 4 (Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists) Number 3 pertaining to “related party transactions” addresses the issue of personal gifts or loans, with specified dollar amounts.
 - Motion: Ed Chesnut moved to approve the conflict of interest policy as written with the change Jerimiah recommended to Article 8 Number 2b.
 - Second: Caty Clifton
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
 - Action item: Michelle will email the policy to all Board members and follow up about signing the Disclosure Statement.
 - New business checking account
 - Board members discussed the Executive Director’s recommendation that WWBWC open a new checking account for unrestricted gifts and donations, annual endowment payouts, and unrestricted Umatilla County grants. Rationale includes the need to avoid commingling restricted and unrestricted revenue and to facilitate 24/7 transparency about available operating funds and day-to-day management decisions.
 - Motion: Joel Huesby moved to approve opening the new checking account.

- Second: Ed Chesnut
- Decision: Motion passed unanimously.

- Staff departure
 - Chair Baker announced that Ryan Pike was let go.

(7:45) Mill Creek Springs Inventory – Tara Patten, WWBWC Deputy Director

- Tara presented findings of the completed Mill Creek Springs Inventory and Baseflow Assessment.
 - Kevin suggested collaborating with the City of Walla Walla to publicize these findings with partners and the media, via a press release and/or a public presentation.
 - Tara mentioned that people are interested in more isotope analysis, so we will wait for the USGS study results and evaluate the need for next steps from there.

(8:04) Flow Report – Luke Adams, WWBWC Project Manager – Monitoring

- **Streamflow Conditions**
 - Luke provided streamflow updates for the period April 15 through May 15.

- **Snowpack & Drought Conditions**
 - Basin snowpack is approximately 4% of median.

Current drought conditions:

- Southern WW / Northern Umatilla Moderate Drought (D1).
- Northern WW Abnormally Dry (D0).
- Some improvements in Umatilla and parts of Walla Walla County (from D2 to D1).
- Much of Walla Walla County remains in Moderate Drought (D1).

Precipitation:

- Near above-normal in eastern Oregon.
- Highest precipitation in Blue and Wallowa Mountains.

Temperature:

- 6 to 12 degrees above normal for last 7 days.
- 1 to 5 degrees above normal for last 30 days.

Wildland fire potential for June and July:

- Fire potential grows in July due to warmer temperatures.

Monthly outlook:

- 50-70% chance for above-normal temperatures.
- 33-40% chance for below-normal precipitation.
- 3-month drought outlook: persistent or worsening drought conditions.

(8:14) Big Basin Issues

- Discussion of the impact of the recent high flow event on restoration treatments and steelhead redds on the North Fork and Couse Creek.
- Kevin suggested that we request an update from the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board on what we're learning from pit tags about Chinook salmon coming up the mainstem.

(8:20 PM) Announcements & Closing

- **New Location and time for June Council meeting**
 - On Jerimiah's behalf, Michelle asked if Board members are available on Tuesday, June 16 as an alternate to the regular Monday date. No objections raised.
 - Action item: Michelle will confirm the date and time (Tuesday, June 16, 1-2:30 PM, optional hatchery tour; 2:30-4 PM, meeting) with Jerimiah and notify all Board members by email.
- **WWBWC Open House**
 - Staff reminded Board members about the WWBWC Open House on May 20 from 4:00-7:00 PM.
- **Other events discussed:** Friday Nights on Main on May 22, BAC meeting and field trip on May 27, BAC Implementation Workgroup on May 21

(8:29 PM) Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM by Chair James Baker.