

**Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
Region 5 (Eastern Oregon) Review Team
Evaluation for September 2000 Applications**

APPLICATION NO.: 200-188
PROJECT NAME: **WALLA WALLA RIVER IRRIGATION DISTRICT WATER CONSERVATION**
APPLICANT: Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council
LOCATION: Walla Walla Basin
OWEB FUNDS: \$290,482.00 TOTAL COST: \$719,452.00

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project seeks funding to convert flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation, cost-share water efficiencies, water-measuring devices and piping 3 miles of an irrigation ditch that serves over 40 users which loses 3.9 cfs through leakage and evaporation. All activities will require that the saved water goes back into the stream through the Oregon Conserved Water Program. A gain of 3-5 cfs is anticipated and will help to restore summer flows for 2.5 miles of habitat used by ESA-listed steelhead and bull trout. The headwaters of the Walla Walla are supporting one of the strongest populations of bull trout in the State. Redd counts have doubled over the last year. USFWS and NMFS are investigating the possibility of “take” occurring as bull trout and steelhead are impacted by irrigation withdrawals. The project follows the objectives of the Watershed Assessment and Action Plan, goals F-4, F-5 and F-9. The proposal seeks a 50% cost-share for funding the Walla Walla River Irrigation District and 4 landowners within the district. Plans are completed for converting the Eastside Ditch into a pipe delivery system with new fish screens at the diversion point. Project objectives include increased streamflows, improved water quality and improved fish habitat for ESA-listed species.

OWEB funds are requested to assist with the purchase of the pumps, control gates, sprinklers and measuring devices. Cost-share partners include CTUIR, Irrigation Districts, WRD, ODFW, WWWC, landowners, Oregon Water Trust and ODFW.

REGIONAL TEAM REVIEW: The review team recognizes significant watershed benefits would be gained from this project and favor this endeavor. The team notes that NRCS and BOR are not recognized as active partners in this proposal, and could provide valuable technical expertise in project inspection and evaluation. Some team members are concerned about the high cost per-acre associated with this work. The team also notes that no irrigation water management plan is provided in this proposal. The team recommends funding, with the condition that the applicant involves NRCS, BOR or another recognized technical expert in project inspection, evaluation and oversight. An important side conversation: NRCS has a Small Watersheds Program that funds these types of projects through a more formal, detailed process that requires congressional authorization to dedicate staff to manage projects. OWEB needs to consider that funding more complex projects, like this proposal, requires more detailed, comprehensive project review, monitoring, and evaluation of results and effectiveness. Prior to the grant award, the applicant needs to provide the name of the technical specialist who will provide

oversight with the design and project implementation. Also, a detailed list of anticipated project outcomes - length of pipe, # of pumps, control gates, etc. needs to be submitted to OWEB.

RECOMMENDATION: FUND. MEDIUM PRIORITY, contingent on the applicant meeting the conditions of the review team.