

Oregon Water Resources Department  
**Water Conservation, Reuse and Storage Grant Program**  
Evaluation for September 2, 2008 Applications

**APPLICANT:** Baker County: Powder Basin Water and Stream Health Committee  
**STUDY TYPE:** Above Ground Storage  
**APPLICATION NO.:** GA0014 09  
**STUDY NAME:** Water and Stream Health Feasibility Study – Tasks 1, 2, 3  
**BASIN:** Powder **WRD DISTRICT:** 8  
**WRD FUNDS REQUESTED:** \$500,000 **TOTAL COST:** \$1,000,000

**APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:**

The Powder Basin Water and Stream Health Committee (WASH) goal is to “enhance water quantity and quality in the Powder Basin.” The Powder Basin has 10-14 inches of annual precipitation and high elevation topography with deep snowpack. Water storage is expected to be an effective solution to a chronic water supply problem. WASH, in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation, is scheduled to complete a Hydrologic Analysis of the entire basin by May 2009.

WASH, in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation, is proposing a feasibility study of a yet-to-be determined storage site. The feasibility study will refine the identified alternatives, collect missing data, and develop engineering solutions. Studies will be needed to support the development of alternatives including: hydrology, water rights, hydraulics, geotechnical investigations, engineering, and design analysis. The alternatives once refined will go through an evaluation and assessment process. The evaluation will include technical development and cost estimate, environmental impact and economic viability evaluation, and identification of political, legal and administrative issues.

**APPLICATION REVIEW TEAM EVALUATION:**

The Application Review Team found this application to be in the early stages of a feasibility study. The team recognized that there was very broad support for WASH and the application. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Agriculture has water right reservations with a 1996 priority date that could be utilized with the associated project.

The team was supportive of the study’s goal, but felt that the application would have been strengthened by narrowing the study’s scope. For instance, 74 potential storage sites are under consideration; however, a much smaller number of sites seem to be the primary candidates for storage. A stronger discussion of the instream needs would have been useful. Additionally, the team felt that many of the line items had high budget requirements, such as the 4,000 hours associated with hydrology and economics.

The study is a priority for funding under SB 1069 since it includes provisions for using stored water to augment instream flows to conserve, maintain and enhance aquatic life, fish life or other ecological values. The study could begin on or before June 1, 2009 and be completed by July 1, 2012.

Application Review Team Funding Recommendation: Do Not Fund.

**COMMENTS:**

Letters of support for this application were received from U.S. Senator Gordon H. Smith; Representative Cliff Bentz; a joint letter from Fred Warner, Jr., Chairman, Baker County Commissioners and Tom Mac Kerns, Chair, WASH Committee; a joint letter from Mayor Bob Strom, City of Halfway, Kerry Gulick, Vice President, Pine Valley Community Watershed Project, and Rick Bryan, owner Old Pine Market (in Halfway); Peggy S. Browne, Coordinator, Water & Stream Health Committee; Jerry Franke, Manager Burnt River Irrigation District; Aaron Umpleby, Manager, Powder Valley Water Control District; and Cal Foster, Baker Valley Rancher.

These letters indicate that by June 2009 the Powder Basin Water & Stream Health (WASH) Committee will have narrowed down the 74 potential water storage sites to one preferred site. The WASH Committee has broad support, including funding from at least 16 entities, and has federal authorization for optimization and feasibility studies to be conducted in the Powder and Burnt River Basins. The project would address WRD's water supply goal and Economic and Community Development Department's economic goal through the creation of a multi-purpose water storage facility.

Ms. Browne indicated that funding from the Water Resources Department would help maintain the project's momentum, and recommended funding at least a portion of the study, such as "Task 1:" Data Collection: Water Quality, Hydrology, Economic Analysis, Cultural Resources, Real Estate/Land Ownership, Fish and Wildlife, Recreation, Geology/Geotechnical.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Do Fund at \$20,000;** contingent on contract negotiations to ensure that all provisions of the statute are met. Limit funding to Task 1: Data Collection.

**Commission Action:**

**On December 5, 2008, the Water Resources Commission took action to:**

*“Release funding to all feasibility study applicants the Commission authorized at its’ November 20 meeting, at a level representing 95% of staff recommendations, and move forward with grant agreement negotiations and signatures.”*

**This feasibility study received an award amount of \$19,000.**