

Walla Walla Basin Place –Based Water Planning

Letter of Interest

Submitted by:

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council

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Location: Walla Walla Watershed (USGS HUC 17070102) northeast Umatilla County, Oregon

Key Project Partners: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Walla Walla River Irrigation District, Hudson Bay District Improvement Company, Gardena Farms Irrigation District, Fruitvale Water Users Association, Oregon Water Resources Department, Washington Department of Ecology Office of Columbia River, Walla Walla Water Management Partnership

- a. Place-Based Water Planning is urgently needed in the Walla Walla Basin to develop a Strategic Action Plan for improving stream flows and out of stream water availability. The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council (WWBWC) has been asked by two entities (Walla Walla River Irrigation District and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation) to lead this planning process and to secure the necessary OWRD planning funds. The WWBWC has been in existence since 1994 and has served as the convener for several Walla Walla Basin water and/or fish recovery assessment and planning efforts. For the last year and a half, the WWBWC has been the co-lead for a Bi-state Walla Walla Streamflow Improvement Study funded by the Washington State Office of Columbia River. Our Washington partner co-leading this effort is the Walla Walla Water Management Partnership. Office of Columbia River funds have covered the costs of developing an initial action plan, assessing the fisheries, developing an integrated surface water groundwater model for the valley, assessing the feasibility of a water exchange system, designing water delivery efficiencies, and analyzing instream flow protection options. (see attached “Walla Walla Bi-state Stream Flow Enhancement Study Interim Progress Report”) However, the OCR funds are limited, and Oregon Place-based planning funds and technical support will help us complete our needed Strategic Action Plan that will describe and prioritize the water management projects that will allow us to attain our in stream and out of stream water goals.

b. Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council as Convener

The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council is one of several watershed councils formed in Oregon in the 1990s under state statute. Watershed Councils are comprised of members of a community representing diverse interests who work together to identify locally acceptable solutions to natural resource issues affecting their local environment. In the Walla Walla valley, the priority issues have been related to water availability and fish passage for federally protected fish species. The Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council has brought in over 16 million dollars in state, federal, and private grant funds over the last 20 years for projects, including water efficiency and fish passage projects, to improve watershed conditions. These funds have also been used for projects to restore groundwater levels, improve mountain roads to reduce sedimentation of streams, install upland ponds, stream habitat projects, levee setbacks, science education support for local schools, and monitoring the improvements to groundwater levels and stream flows. Seven staff members work for the council. Board meetings are open to the public and occur the 3rd Monday of each month at 7PM at the Milton-Freewater Community Building. Many of the WWBWC board members operate local farms or businesses: John Zerba (Chair), Ray Williams, Ralph Perkins, Clark Lampson, Kathryn Brigham (CTUIR), Steve Irving (City of Milton-Freewater), Vern Rodighiero, Larry Widner, Ed Chesnut (City of Milton-Freewater), Malcolm Millar, Robert Waldher (Umatilla County). The Umatilla County Commissioners recognized/authorized the WWBWC and review and appoint WWBWC board members. The WWBWC operates by consensus on deciding which projects we work on. Information about our completed studies and projects is available to the public via newspaper articles and local newspapers. The WWBWC received the national Walter C. Loudermilk award in 2006 for our science based restoration projects and outreach program. Local offices of Federal and State agencies often use the WWBWC meetings as a venue for interaction with the local community concerning natural resource management. The WWBWC diverse interests and viewpoints in, maintains neutrality on contentious topics, and utilizes collaborative, widely-supported processes to develop solutions for natural resource issues. The WWBWC is committed to long-term water planning and management. Some of the WWBWC Board members have been involved in public water planning since the 1970s.

WWBWC water planning experience includes:

- the Walla Walla stream flow Habitat Conservation Planning co-convener
- the Upriver Comprehensive Irrigation Management Plan
- Temperature TMDL assessment and plan co-lead
- Co-lead on BPA Subbasin Plan
- Shallow Aquifer Recovery Plan
- co-lead with WWWMP on Streamflow Enhancement Study
- Local facilitation for Bull Trout Recovery Plan and Mid-Columbia Steelhead Recovery Plan
- Walla Walla Basin Assessment

The WWBWC is a primary collector of water data in the Walla Walla Basin (stream flow levels, gravel aquifer groundwater levels, and water quality). Data is accessible via our WWBWC website www.wwbwc.org

c. Partners

WWBWC partners on our Bi-state water planning include CTUIR, the three largest irrigation districts in the valley (Walla Walla River Irrigation District at 3200 acres, Hudson Bay District Improvement Company at 8000 acres, and Gardena Farms Irrigation District at 7000 acres), OWRD, ODFW, Washington Dept. of Ecology, Washington Office of Columbia River, WDFW, Walla Walla County Conservation District, and the Walla Walla Water Management Partnership.

The CTUIR, ODFW, and WDFW provide the flow needs for maintaining and improving our fish populations. The Irrigation Districts and individual irrigators can inform the process regarding their out of stream water needs and what water management projects are feasible. The State water agencies can inform the planning process with what is possible within state water law and provide insight gained from experiences in other Basins.

A governance agreement will be developed to formalize this water planning process. Planning meetings will be openly advertised for the public to attend. The partner organizations will make decisions by consensus. Adequate information regarding projects prior to decision making. This Place Based Planning will build upon the initial work completed by our Bi-State Streamflow Improvement Study (see attached Interim Progress Report, July 20, 2015). We will use the Bi-state Water Study page on our WWBWC website to communicate agendas, minutes, study reports, project data to project partners and the public. We will also use local newspapers and email networks. Updates will be provided to the Board of County Commissioners.

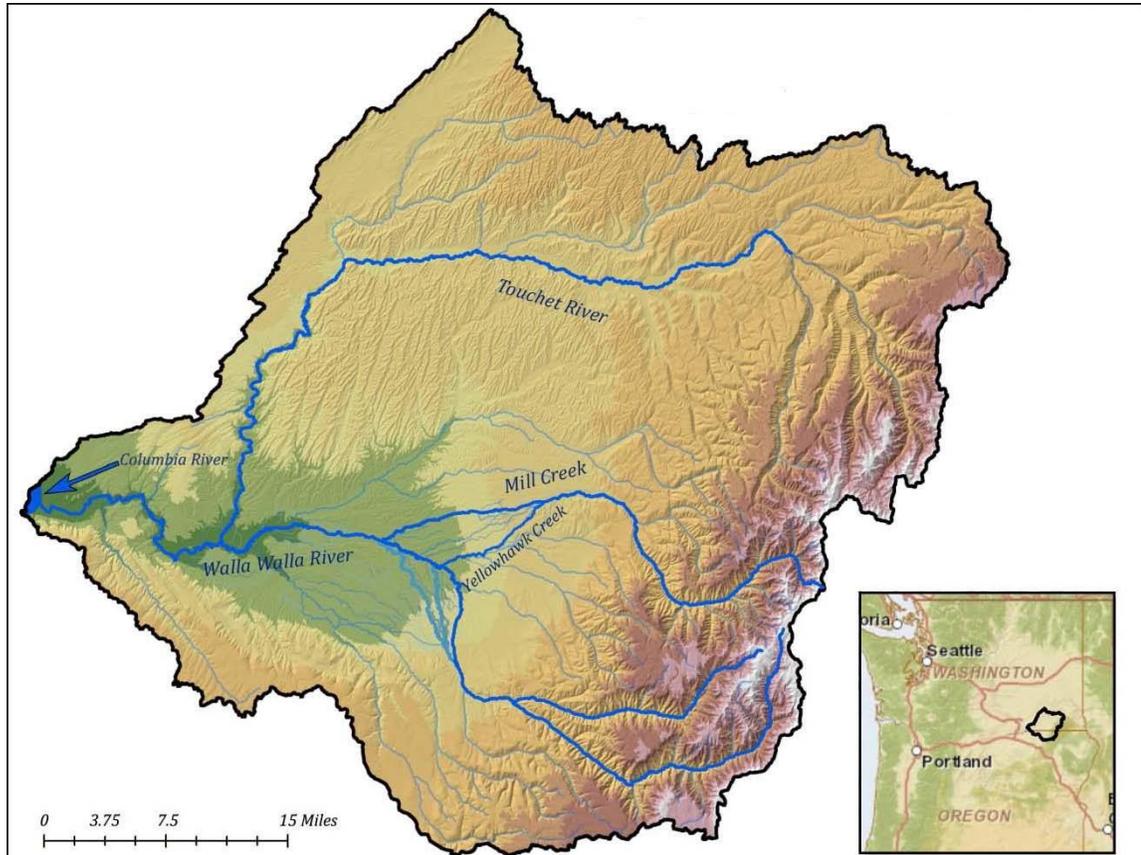
d. Statement of need

The Walla Walla Basin has already recognized the need for developing a locally based streamflow improvement Strategic Action Plan. There is not enough water to serve both in stream and out of stream needs. For fifteen years now, an out of court settlement agreement with USFWS has caused approximately one third to one quarter of many of the local farms water rights to be left instream to improve passage and habitat for ESA listed fish. Summer time river flows in the middle reach of the Walla Walla River went from zero to 25 cfs, adequate to sustain salmonids, but USFWS and NOAA Fisheries would like to see those summer instream flows doubled to at least 49 cfs. The CTUIR Fisheries program has reintroduced spring Chinook salmon and would like to see summer flows as high as 100 cfs in the summer. That level of flow improvement would only be possible with large scale water storage or an expensive pump and pipe bucket for bucket water exchange with the Columbia River. In the meantime the portion of local water rights that have been left instream for fish has created increased tensions among water users and has forced multiple changes in water management that have created impacts for a large number of water right holders. The WWBWC has brought in grant funds to pipe over fifteen miles of irrigation delivery canals, and convert 86 farms to more efficient sprinkler systems. Groundwater levels have been declining, but we have now constructed thirteen shallow aquifer recharge sites that are starting to reverse that trend at certain locations. In our

best winter water availability year, we put 7700 acre feet in the ground. By this fall we have doubled the amount of recharge sites and have the potential to recharge as much as 14,000 acre feet during our Winter and Spring recharge season.

Limited stream flows in the Walla Walla Basin are identified as a key limiting factor for fish recovery in the Bull Trout Recovery Plan, the Mid-Columbia Steelhead Recovery Plan, the Oregon Conservation Strategy, and the BPA Walla Walla Subbasin Plan.

Bi-state Walla Walla Watershed (1758 square miles, one-third of basin is in Oregon)



Bi-state Water Planning

During the Spring of 2014, the Walla Walla Basin started to assess conditions, to develop instream flow targets, to investigate water management changes including above ground and below ground storage coupled with irrigation efficiency. The Washington Office of Columbia River has been funding this planning process so far. However, the Washington funding is already stretched and will not get us to the ultimate outcome of a long-term flow restoration plan. With the OCR funding and the OWRD funding, the Walla Walla Basin will be in a better position to explore and determine how all the various projects fit together in our efforts to restore flows while maintaining out-of-stream uses.

Water issues

- Improve instream flows for ESA listed fish, CTUIR treaty water rights, and water quality (Temperature)*
- Out of stream water needs for irrigated farms, many of whom have already sacrificed a portion of water rights as part of an out of court settlement agreement with USFWS for ESA listed bull trout*
- Declining shallow (gravel) aquifer*
- Declining deep (basalt) aquifer
- Water quality issues with shallow aquifer (e. coli, nitrates)
- In past years we have convened our Walla Walla Basin Plan Rules Advisory Committee to discuss the following potential rule changes: adding groundwater recharge as a beneficial use, OWRD recognition of fish bypass water, allowing storage of water diverted at or downstream of the Little Walla Walla River Point of Diversion. Further analysis and discussion could bring consensus on proposing Basin Rule changes.
- There is a need to better understand deep basalt aquifer trends and management (this may also lead to a change in the Basin Rules)

*the current Bi-State Streamflow Improvement Study is already working on these topics

e. Proposed approach:

It is recognized need by our WWBWC board and our Basin partners that we need to expand upon our initial bi-state Walla Walla stream improvement study and develop a comprehensive strategic plan for improving stream flows and overall water availability to meet in-stream and out of stream needs. The approach we will take is to further investigate the feasibility of water development project options utilizing the secured funding from the Washington Office of Columbia River and any additional funding we secure from the OWRD Feasibility Grant Study Program. OCR and OWRD Feasibility study funds have provided cost and feasibility information for the Columbia River Pump Exchange, expanding our water model, and assessing a site for Aquifer Storage and Recovery. One of next studies will assess sites for off channel surface water storage. We plan to increase our water planning group to expand the group to include the Fruitvale Water Users Association (a smaller irrigation district), invite spring branch water users represented by the Little Walla Walla River working group, upriver irrigators, cities of Milton-Freewater, Walla Walla (in Washington, but has a municipal water right in Oregon), Weston, and invite regional environmental and industry organizations.

Before developing a Walla Walla Water Strategic Action Plan, we will need a detailed analysis and assessment of water conditions and trends. The WWBWC has been collecting data for fifteen years. This data, coupled with OWRD and DEQ data, can help provide the information we need.

Technical Assistance Needs:

- OWRD on deep and shallow aquifer trends
 - OWRD peer review of integrated surface water groundwater model
 - OWRD/ODFW peer review of winter water availability for out of stream storage (above ground or below ground) that still meets ecological needs
 - ODFW evaluation of Pine Creek drainage as a potential water storage site to boost stream flows for fish in lower Pine Creek and the Walla Walla River
 - OWRD policy/legal assistance with recognition/protection of new instream flows in-state and bi-state
 - Attorney General office assist with flow protection in-state and bi-state
 - OWRD completion of reviews of existing conserved water applications)
 - ODEQ assist with any additional shallow Aquifer water quality issues.
- Develop water projects (feasibility assessments, some of which we have begun assessing/designing with Washington OCR \$, and BPA \$)

The Walla Walla water planning group will need to complete the feasibility analysis of various water storage and water exchange options, coupled with irrigation efficiency and aquifer recharge. The group will need to debate, then agree upon a suite of approved actions to increase water availability and water quality. That suite of water management actions will be developed into a scientific assessment based strategic plan of actions ready for local approval and authorization by County Commissioners, Tribes, irrigation districts, cities. State agencies (OWRD, DEQ, and ODFW) will have opportunities to provide feedback on iterations of the plan. The next step will be OWRD Water Resource Commission review and adoption of the Walla Walla Place-Based Plan. The Plan can then be used to inform the local community and State and Federal funders how and why we will improve water availability for instream and out of stream needs in the Walla Walla Basin.

The Walla Walla Water Strategic Action Plan will include the following key steps:

1. Develop flow goals and potential water project list
2. Determine flow outputs (how much, where, when) of potential projects
3. Develop and apply project packages to meet flow goals
4. Analyze potential project packages to meet flow goals
5. Develop flow project package recommendations
6. Seek implementation funding to design and implement

f. Anticipated results

The completion of a Place-based Walla Walla Streamflow Improvement and Water Availability Strategic Action Plan will, in the near term, produce a better understanding of current water conditions and what projects can resolve existing water issues. Those issues being inadequate stream flows for fish passage and fish habitat, decreasing levels of surface

water and groundwater for agriculture. By including a diverse partnership of participants and seeking input from the local and regional public, we will gain an understanding of what projects are supported locally and regionally (including state industry groups and conservation groups). The Walla Walla Place-Based Streamflow Improvement and Water Availability Strategic Action Plan will serve as a strategic plan that can assist with securing state and federal support for water projects. In the longer term, the Plan will lead to the implementation of water management projects that can improve stream flows for fish and provide dependable water for the valley's agricultural and municipal out of stream uses.

g. Budget (see attached Budget table)

Draft budget for Year One Tasks and Year Two Tasks:

\$40,000	Project management
\$15,000	Outreach to potential participants/agencies
\$60,000	Assessment of conditions/data collection/trends analysis/projects
\$40,000	Facilitation of plan development (set guidelines/flow goals/project evaluations)
\$10,000	Progress reporting to community and state agencies
\$60,000	Strategic Action Plan write up
\$10,000	Outreach regarding completed Plan to county and city boards, state agencies
\$20,000	Administration (fiscal management, reporting)

OWRD Place Based Planning funds matched with:

Washington State OCR (\$80,000 pending for project management, facilitation, and plan writing)

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Council Capacity funding (\$20,000 secured for outreach, contractor oversight and project management)

BPA (\$20,000 secured for Surface Water and groundwater level data collection and reporting)

Total matching funds: \$120,000

Total OWRD Plan funds requested: \$135,000

Total project cost: \$255,000

An RFP will seek competitive bids for consultants to provide facilitation and write-up of the Strategic Action Plan. In house staff will be used for project management, partner coordination, outreach, and data collection and analysis. In-kind technical assistance will be requested from state agencies for analysis review.

Past funding sources we have used for assessing, planning, designing, and/or constructing water management and water monitoring projects: BPA, OWEB, DEQ, NRCS, USFWS, WDOE, OCR, and OWRD.

Current funding secured for water projects: BPA \$900, 000, OCR \$ \$300,000, OWEB \$98,000

Future funding anticipated for water projects: OCR \$300,000, BPA \$900,000, OWEB \$300,000

Walla Walla Placed-Based Water Plan Draft Budget

TASKS	OWRD	BPA	Office of Columbia River - WA	OWEB	Totals
Project Management	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 40,000
Outreach to potential participants/agencies	\$ 10,000			\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000
Assessment of conditions/data collection/trends analysis/potential projects	\$ 20,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000		\$ 60,000
Facilitation of plan development, guidelines/flow goals/project evaluations	\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 40,000
Progress reporting to community and state agencies	\$ 5,000			\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000
Plan write up	\$ 40,000		\$ 15,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 60,000
Outreach regarding completed Plan to county and city boards, state agencies	\$ 10,000				\$ 10,000
Administration (fiscal management, reporting)	\$ 15,000		\$ 5,000		\$ 20,000
Total Expenses	\$ 135,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 255,000.00