

Bend Open House

Riverbend Community Room, Bend Parks and Recreation District

June 23, 2016

Meeting Notes

Q1 & Q2: How has the recent drought affected you? In what ways did the drought affect your community?

- Concerned about drought's impact on Oregon's saline system, in particular, Lake Abert. Drought in a saline environment will create diseases you haven't even heard of. The question is, will we have a Mono Lake situation here in Oregon? When you have salt and wind you get dust in the air that's harmful to humans. How do you take care of humans that are sick, due to salt dust particles because you haven't created enough water?
- State should assume that drought is a feature of our state, not a rare occurrence. It's a given, not a perhaps. Conditions will be very volatile. Catching rain instead of snow is very difficult.
- I'll stick my hand up for wildlife out here. We need to make sure there is enough water for habitat. Not just think about human uses.
- Wickiup Reservoir does not authorize water releases for fish, but Prineville recently authorized. More water was flowing down the Crooked River. Last year it was 240 cfs or above. The reservoir was really drawn down, lowest since it was built. Because of mismanagement of releases since that legislation. They quickly stepped it down to 35 cfs after the irrigation season. It left a great number of macro-invertebrates high and dry. You lost 50 percent of the food base. The winter winds churned up the silt at the bottom of reservoir, it covered up all of rocks, creating a sterile situation for fish. Every year, ODFW does a survey to estimate fish and last year, found 88 percent mortality of redband trout. Its poor decisions on how the water is released. It had a disastrous effect on the trout.

Q3: How did you respond to drought? Please share any successes or strategies.

- I want to speak on behalf of agriculture. We hear that agriculture is bad, that we are the largest user of the Deschutes, but we are doing our best to conserve that water. I served on LCDC for eight years, and we set aside high value agricultural land. Through conservation projects, we are doing all sorts of things to conserve water. With 40 recommended actions in the strategy, I want to stress that rules need to be flexible. Why do we lock up all of the water, making it so we can't be innovative to move water around? If I do a project, do I always have to give water back? I don't want to see all of the water go to the Pacific Ocean go unused. Jefferson County is producing so much food. We raise a lot of carrot seed.
- There has to be more collaboration between the state and federal Bureau of Reclamation on river management. ODFW doesn't have any voice in this process. They were never consulted in the legislation, and they are cut out now. ODFW should have more voice in the water coming out of Bowman Dam. There has to be better conservation. The state should be more involved in the Crooked River legislation. The intent was to better help with fish, but maybe that didn't happen. There is no autonomous decision making when it comes to flows.
- Recreation in our economy (paddle sports, and fishing) is a huge economic driver here. It probably outstrips everything else we do here. Protecting instream flows are really important.
- We all have to live with the water situation. If it weren't for farmers, we wouldn't even have a town here. Need better solutions for all uses.

Q4: What actions should be pursued to better prepare for future droughts?

- Fish have been an indicator of whether the river is still alive or not. If you look at the Upper Deschutes, where I live, I have watched that river die. I've talked to bird people, they don't see half of the bird life they used to see. The river dropped 22 inches in 17 hours, which froze the macroinvertebrates. I pulled bucket loads. There hasn't been any in the reeds. The macroinvertebrates have to be stepped up. It's not just the river and the fish, it's the whole ecosystem. It's been treated as a drainage ditch, an irrigation ditch. Like to see some macro-invertebrate studies.
- I'd like to see more metering. The public shouldn't pay for it, especially since they see it as their water. They need to pay for it.
- If everyone manages their water like North Unit, it would be a different situation.
- Most of the scenic waterways were passed by voters, so I would support more initiative actions that would change water law.
- In basins with over-appropriated water, there needs to be some feedback mechanism for the water rights holders to pay a cost when they use water inefficiently. The system rewards use. If I don't use the water, I lose it. If you used it, and it cost something, you would conserve it. Build economic incentives into the system.
- Need to consider carrying capacity.
- Research the use of graywater. I tend to favor the carrot over the stick. What are the barriers to graywater, for example, is it economically feasible?
- We need a systemic change. Since the Oregon legislature won't support that, then let's use the existing knowledge on minimum flows, then give them the most senior water rights. This could help.

Q5: What most concerns you about the future with regard to water?

- I'm not so confident we can get it done. I've been doing this my entire life. Been looking at population growth. A lot of the issues you are talking about were outlined in the 1970's. I know that the land use and water nexus is stacked against you. 20 year land supply forces communities to expand more land. The legislature prohibited the cities to vote on annexation. Real estate mafia. Housing subsidies going directly to developers. The cost of growth, the land supply law. We should allow a periodic vote at the city level, do you want to control population growth?
- People are moving here to live near the waterways. It's a concern to see how our recreational values are not being taken into consideration. Recreation is a huge economic driver for central Oregon. Make sure recreation is included in these future projections. It's both a lifestyle and economic driver.
- Local population growth, what does it mean in ten or fifteen years? I think the water resources strategy needs to look at what the population growth really means.
- The definition of beneficial use is a core problem and it needs to be examined.
- Segmented land planning is a problem. We need to look at water as sustaining life. We need to look at the basic use of water. It's Ag, and it's the least productive crop area in the state. Concerned about wildfire, and we not going to have the water. We need to look at the whole community, the whole watershed. How are we going to sustain the resource here?

Q6: Any other thoughts or comments you would like to share with the IWRS Project Team?

- Instream rights and unmet demand is not reflected anywhere. You do a disservice to yourselves when you leave out the unmet instream demand. When it's not even included, you lose credibility. We need to believe we are being heard.
- Want to echo the instream comment. We don't see it in your presentation, you don't measure it, and you don't track it. The strategy should focus more on system inefficiencies for water rights, on a basin by basin basis. Institute some efficiency rules that would drive water for some other uses.
- This is not my first meeting. What is lacking in the IWRS: any kind of look at the allocation system. Instead we get caught up in the minutia of how to make the resource better. The low hanging fruit has been picked. The stakeholders have met and agreed on as much as they can. We have to treat water as a resource, and not a commodity. We need a system that focuses on restoration, not mitigation. We are just keeping these species on life support. The Deschutes River Conservancy and others have done great work, but we have to move beyond that. The water rights appropriation system is broken. The Deschutes was over appropriated in 1913. Most of our efforts go to conserve water that then gets shifted to junior water rights. Systemic change is needed.