Medford Open House
Medford Public library
June 22, 2016
Meeting Notes

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

- The 2015 drought had a positive impact in our community. It brought our community together and led to greater community involvement. It resulted in the drought summit in the Rogue Basin, which lead to the development of a feasibility study. Due to the increased rainfall this year, people will naturally become complacent. Last year's drought was good in that community leaders came together. Request that the IWRS continue to fund studies and monitoring on a long-term basis.
- Community involvement was incredible at the City of Ashland. The community came together and rose to the occasion by voluntarily reducing water consumption by 30 percent. It was made possible by being transparent with the community. A consistent message was shared through the media, social websites, presentations, newsletters, etc. The community feels a sense of accomplishment by coming together to reach a community goal (an online gauge was used as a visual). The water shortage started in 2014 and the city started outreach at that time and by 2015, the Use Water Wisely campaign was widely accepted.

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

- Our area has a success story, from a 3-year period of drought that culminated with absolutely no snow in 2015. Medford Water Commission has worked with the Eagle Point Irrigation District to manage water and the district was able to deliver water without a shortage. Medford Water Commission was able to take less water upstream, treated more downstream. By working collaboratively, both organizations were able to meet their needs.
- In the Rogue Basin, stored water is available that is not allocated. We need to plan ahead of time, looking how to best use and share the water.
- The 2015 drought provided the community with an opportunity to plan by crisis and to bring water managers together.

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

- State should address data quality management and equipment problems. Monitoring equipment is not effective if the selected meters are not appropriate for the use. Water users have good intentions, invest money, but if it is not installed right or read correctly, they are of no use. In my experience, monitoring wells are not constructed per rules and there are errors in water resources database.
- Need to implement laws on the book (example: DEQ's Outstanding Resource Waters).
- Would like the state to validate groundwater data through the well permitting process by gathering water quality and quantity information.
- Funding for community forums & training. It costs money to host community events and it would be nice if the state could provide grants to host community meetings. Would like to see more community related events.
- More urban types of funding for community outreach and education. Community wide projects for storm water management, low impact development, etc.

- Funding for outreach and education.
- Future – changes in water law. Water banking and sharing. Example – apply a portion of irrigation water to instream.
- Flexibility of regulation, allow flexibility to use the water wisely and judiciously.
- Stored water is available but Lost Creek Reservoir was too low for recreation, even though there is unallocated water. If stored water is used for irrigation, new infrastructure will be needed to pump uphill. Example: Tried to obtain stored water for use in a rural area but was not feasible due to the cost of delivery infrastructure. Need funding for infrastructure.
- Address temperature issues. Important to look at ecological requirement of water. Water temperature the most important value for fish. Water affects every aspect of life. Need to maintain adequate flows to protect temperature. Water quality data should be made accessible online. The Watermaster maintains real-time flow and temperature sensors and the data is available online to the public.
- Need studies for gaining and losing reaches. Cannot find the information for the Rogue Basin.
- Regarding conservation, the cities are in a catch-22. We want conservation, but lose money.
- Has a study been done to show instream benefits of conservation? Is there a way to incentivize flood to sprinkler irrigation? Example: Sell back the water right that a farmer is no longer using. Can the state provide a benefit for unused water, example: conservation easement.
- Relationship between demand and shortage – conservation actions will help with shortages.
- Statewide water bank – trying to keep permeant crops alive by fallowing fields. California example: state would audit reservoir and pay based on consumptive savings.
- All of the right topics and dialogue but need a state plan that identifies the barriers. A lot of low hanging fruit projects have already been addressed. Need a statewide plan for addressing place based planning and really address the beneficial use issue. Don't see place-based planning alone as a way to meet the state's goals. We need a more comprehensive look at water law, with strategic investments that are used in a targeted way.
- WRD needs state goals (planning goals), so smaller jurisdictions can use the information.
- Water conservation should be an underlying theme when engaging the public. Graywater use is now legal; however the permitting process may be overly burdensome. Retrofitting is very difficult and complicated. Streamline the graywater process.
- Put pressure/incentives on builders (schools, commercial, etc.) to install graywater systems during construction.
- Happy to see the Department is trying to maintain water in headwaters. Climate change may be an issue. Pumped storage does not make sense. Capture and store water at the headwaters.
- How would a municipality quantify water savings? Where is the low hanging fruit to start directing the funds? The state needs to provide the big picture perspective for actions.
- The Jackson SWCD has worked hard to move folks from flood to pressure systems. However, there are benefits to flood irrigation, such as subsurface flows that occur with flood irrigation that provide cool subsurface flows to streams. Money should be spent to improve flood irrigation and to improve operation, may not require pressurized systems.
- Irrigation efficiency depends on the right system on the right crop. Surface irrigation (flood irrigation) is not necessarily inefficient, but must be used properly. Sprinklers use energy.
- We need some type of a tax rebate for water, just like we have for energy industry.

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

- Water rights are too rigid to effectively manage water resources.
- Have the feeling OWRD is not reservoir friendly. Reservoirs should be encouraged if they are safe (downstream communities). Expand storage to try and keep water in the headwaters as long as possible.

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

- Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District would like to coordinate with the installation of any new monitoring wells.
- Interstate coordination is important for managing water resources. Interested to learn more about how Oregon is coordinating with other states.
- Addressing water challenges – barriers in processing timelines. Appreciate the efforts of OWRD to improve the timeline to process permits.