

Fifteenmile Watershed Council Meeting

St. Alphonsus Parish Hall, Dufur

January 30th, 2018

3:15-4:15 PM

MINUTES

In attendance:

Tatiana Taylor, *SWCD*

David Wagenblast,

Shilah Olson, *SWCD*

Bill Markman, *Member*

Scott Oviatt, *NRCS*

Charlie Remmington,

Jim Olson, *Member*

Mike Kelly, *Member*

Amy Kaser

Katie Pierson, *NRCS*

Karen Lamson, *SWCD*

Garrett Duyck, *NRCS*

Clinton Whitten, *NRCS*

Frank Cochran, *NRCS*

Martin Underhill, *Member*

Lavelle Underhill

Stan Ashbrook

Deanna Sudan

John Clausen

Nate Ulrich

Chris Rossel, *USFS*

Walt Burt, *GSI*

Jason Keller, *GeoSystems*

Analysis

Phil Kaser, *Co-Chair*

Robert Wallace

Introduction, Review/ Approval of Minutes

Phil called the meeting to order and led introductions.

The council took a moment to review the minutes. Tatiana proposed a word change to the minutes. On page 2 under the FAST and Instream Lease 2018 section, she proposed to change the sentence “To use supplemental water rights, groundwater must be exhausted and enrolling in FAST does not ‘exhaust’ water rights.” To be changed to: “To use supplemental water rights (typically groundwater), primary water rights (typically surface water) must be exhausted and enrolling in FAST does not ‘exhaust’ water rights.”. The council considered the change.

Mike Kelly moved to approve the minutes as corrected by Tatiana, Bill Markmen seconded, and the motion passed.

NRCS Basin Outlook Snow Pack Report- Scott Oviatt, NRCS

Scott stated that statewide, Oregon is at 51% of ‘normal’ SNOTEL levels. Scott noted that on this day last year the SNOTEL levels were at 123% of normal. By July, a lot of the snowpack had been lost due to an exceptionally warm summer. The majority of the benefits had been lost by September, when usually they would see a continuation of benefits into fall. The climate is getting more difficult to decipher and more variable. Scott noted that middle elevations are the best representation of Eastern Oregon, and that it will take a lot of snow to get us to normal snowpack. On January 1st, 2018 Mill Creek was at 28% of normal flows.

Scott displayed several basin graphs demonstrating daily minimum and daily maximum levels. Last year the melt out was a week earlier than normal. Scott expressed his concern about a potential drought year because of the low snowpack levels. He noted that December and January are typically the best winter months to achieve normal levels.

Scott discussed the rain reports, which were closer to normal. Rain reports for Washington and Idaho are above normal. Oregon is at 92% of normal precipitation, and the northwestern portion of the state has had the most precipitation. Nearly all the precipitation in Oregon this year has been rain.

Scott mentioned that a new forecast would be available February 1st, although he doesn't anticipate an increase in values. This year drought is going to be a common topic of conversation because 65% of the state is abnormally dry and 15% of the state is moderately dry.

The last thing discussed was future work being done regarding snow surveys. There are several sites in High Prairie and NRCS is working with OWRD to get stream flow data in real time.

Phase 2 Report 15Mile Managed Underground Storage Feasibility Study - Walt Burt, GSI and Jason Keller, GeoSystems Analysis

Walt explained that the first part of the study was a desktop study. The team is exploring ways to divert water from the creek and put it underground. The water would then be pulled back up to the surface during the summer, thus allowing water to remain in the creek.

Walt explained potential that may arise in the project. For the project to work they need water with enough clarity. There is potential for a well near the creek to pull water through the soil to ensure clarity.

The group has been working on test pits 18-20 feet deep. The pits are drilled until they hit bedrock. These pits are then examined for permeable layers. The team will also test infiltration in the test pits. Walt mentioned that it is relatively inexpensive to find if underground storage is feasible before more expensive testing is required.

Jason began by explaining that the test pits are being excavated to determine what depth they hit basalt and how deep the ground water is. They also perform hand tests for soil types while they are digging test pits. They had completed three test pits on January 10th and started moving farther up the valley.

Jason mentioned that they have found a layer of highly conductive soil that will readily transport water. This layer is approximately 5 feet thick. Jason explained that most of the calculations were based upon a 10-foot-deep conductive layer, but that they are currently in the process of seeing how a shallower layer will affect the calculations. The team found a cemented sand layer approximately 16 feet deep in several of the test pits. Although they expected basalt, this layer still acts like the bottom of the alluvial aquifer. Jason showed a picture of the cemented sand and the highly conductive layer made of sand and cobbles.

Walt explained that the information collected during the test pits will be used to refine estimates based off field conditions. They will be used for estimating capacity and costs, and then the team will come back to the watershed council and present results. Walt mentioned that the next meeting will be a check-in once they refine the data.

Phil inquired what guarantees that flow will continue through the layer. Walt explained that if a good connection is maintained with the creek, flow should continue. Walt discussed the need for natural scouring in the collector wells. Scouring occurs during high flows. The collector wells capture water from the river and filtered through the river. Given the morphology of Fifteenmile Creek, Walt believes the collector wells should stay clean.

Walt also expressed an interest in collecting turbidity data, to establish a baseline data set. He mentioned that higher permeability areas are less likely to plug up, although it depends on how well it is adhered to the bottom of the aquifer. Discussion ensued.

Updates & Announcements

Tatiana Taylor mentioned that the FAST deadline was March 2nd, and she encouraged any producers interested in signing up to contact her with any questions or concerns.

Nate Ulrich gave an update and introduced the Columbia Land Trust, based out of Hood River.

Shilah Olson mentioned that government furlough also closes the Wasco SWCD office due to housing with NRCS.

Next meeting is set for May 1st, 2018.

Phil adjourned the meeting.

Minutes Prepared by Tatiana Taylor