



Greater Harney Valley – Groundwater Study Advisory Committee Meeting Wednesday, October 12, 2022, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Harney County community Center – 484 N Broadway Ave, Burns
October 12, 2022 - Meeting Notes

Meeting Overview & Action Items

This meeting was largely dedicated to the Groundwater Study Team reviewing the key findings of the Harney Basin Groundwater Study with the Groundwater Study Advisory Committee and identifying if the Key Takeaways document that was produced by the Advisory Committee in 2019 needed to be updated now that the study is complete. This was also an opportunity to discuss areas that need clarification or of concern before the results are shared with the broader community on November 3rd, 2022. Water Resources Department staff provided updates on activities since the last Advisory Committee meeting in 2019 and briefed the Committee on upcoming activities. After viewing the presentations, Committee members were able to ask questions or pose topics of concern to discuss as a group. The Department also gave an update on the status of the Technical Assistance (TA) request from 2019 by the Advisory Committee. Members of the Advisory Committee were invited to attend the November 3rd Harney Groundwater Study Community Meeting to hear more about a dual approach (regulatory and voluntary) to stabilizing groundwater levels in the basin. This meeting marked the last meeting of the Groundwater Study Advisory Committee and the first invite for the Advisory Committee to be on the Rules Advisory Committee (RAC) for the evaluation and update of the Division 512 rules that will kick off in the spring of 2023.

Action Items

Who	What	When
Alexandra Scott	Update Key Takeaways document with updated study findings. Produce meeting notes. Send to Committee after and post to the GWSAC page https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/programs/GWWL/GW/HarneyBasinStudy/Pages/GWSAC.aspx .	By November 30 th
Advisory Committee Members	Talk to your neighbors about the November 3 rd meeting and consider attending to help answer questions about the study, process, key takeaways.	By November 3 rd

[U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\) Presentations and Feedback/Questions](#)

Amanda Garcia and Stephen Gingerich, members of the groundwater study team, presented the key findings from the published study. The Advisory Committee asked questions and gave feedback on the content.

To view the Summary of the Groundwater Budget presentation & Groundwater Resources of the Harney Basin presentation, [click here](#).

Questions/comments following USGS overview of study findings:

Ken Bierly (Question) - How does annual variability figure into the “average” values of the water balance?

- USGS: Annual variability was considered in the study.

Mark Owens (Question) - The three regions in the PowerPoint, do they all have a deficit?

- OWRD: Yes, deficits in all three areas, less in the southern region.

Barbara Cannady (Comment) - The means of irrigation may have an effect. Pivots seem to be the problem. When pivots were introduced, about 2010, there was a boom in groundwater development.

- USGS (Amanda) showed a slide where you can see the increase in development in the number of pivots and the drop in groundwater that could align with this observation.

John Short - Silver Creek modern water and Virginia Valley ancient? Is the situation the same or different?

- USGS: Silver Creek gets more recharge from surface water, but similar permeability. Recovery response would be different where there is more active recharge such as along Silver Creek.

Mark Owens asked Tony Hackett as a driller if he is seeing variability across wells in the basin?

- Tony finds different total dissolved solids, qualities of water, but the rock varies too, not consistent even in the same area.
 - USGS said yes, a lot of variability, conclusions are generalized across the big study area.

John Short – One the slide it shows two shallow wells in Silver Creek that have modern water, and two deeper wells that are also getting modern water?

- USGS: Yes, there is one well affected by the Chickahominy reservoir, so they are getting modern water there.

Barbara Cannady - Any correlation between recharge and Highway 20 being built and Highway 78?

- USGS: We did not have the data in the groundwater study to see that correlation.

Do Advisory Committee members generally agree with the USGS key findings?

All Advisory Committee members in attendance were in general agreement with the study findings as presented by USGS. The Advisory Committee gave consent to Alexandria Scott (OWRD) to update the Key Takeaways document from 2019 with updated numbers from the groundwater study if there were any estimates that were off. This is an important final deliverable from the Advisory Committee process and the most current science will be reflected in the updated draft. Brandon Haslick asked about where the USGS is with the hydrologic model development? The USGS stated that they are working on it; it is about 90% done but they are still calibrating it. This model will allow OWRD and other technical experts to test difference scenarios to inform future water management strategies to reach reasonably stable groundwater levels in the basin.

A Next Step: Rules Advisory Committee

Just Iverson (OWRD) reminded the Advisory Committee and any audience members about the Division 512 rules for the basin. According to the rules, a RAC will be formed within 1 year of the Harney Groundwater Study being published to evaluate whether the rules need to be updated. The Advisory Committee was invited to be on the RAC for the Division 512 rulemaking and other diverse stakeholders will be invited to be on the RAC in the coming months. The County Court expressed an interest in partnering with OWRD again to appoint members to the RAC like they did in 2015.

Update on the Technical Assistance Request from the Advisory Committee from 2019

At the last meeting of the Advisory Committee in December 2019, Committee members requested the following information:

- Delineation of groundwater decline areas
- Amount of groundwater level decline in those areas (rate of decline and magnitude of decline)
- Estimated groundwater evapotranspiration (ET) and pumpage for irrigation use in those areas

OWRD produced two products:

- A memo describing magnitude and rates of groundwater declines in various parts of the basin
- A memo describing irrigation water use across the basin

Both documents can be accessed on the Groundwater Study advisory committee meeting materials page https://apps.wrd.state.or.us/apps/misc/wrd_notice_view/Default.aspx?notice_id=58.

Justin Iverson (OWRD) updated the group and stated that the Department has satisfied 75% of this request. The model being produced by the USGS will help to satisfy the remainder of the technical assistance request. To get to the next step of establishing the criteria for boundaries the Department will want to work with the RAC. Currently, things are broken out into 3 regions: not on a finer scale. Mark Owens asked why is it important to have that information? Justin Iverson answered that it will help with management actions to have them broken down in finer detail.

Upcoming November 3rd Groundwater Study Community Meeting

Justin Iverson (OWRD) shared with the group that the Department has a vested interest in continuing to partner with the community to pursue reasonably stable groundwater levels through both regulatory

and voluntary approaches. This dual approach will be covered more in-depth at the upcoming November 3rd Harney Basin Groundwater Study Community Meeting.

Closing Remarks from Advisory Committee & Audience Members

Tony Hackett - In trying to balance the water budget, will there be more meters that work? He sees a lot of meter problems. Justin Iverson said the best approach for metering is something that can be discussed by the RAC.

Steve Rickman - Nothing to add.

Mark Owens - Thanked OWRD and USGS, it will be hard for community to come up to speed, there may community will push back on the study findings; it will be tough.

Karen Moon - Echoed Mark, she appreciates the USGS and OWRD for helping the Advisory Committee to understand. She feels like she has a grasp of it now.

Fred Skunkcap - Doesn't know that there will be snowpack this year and he wonders if his neighbor's well will drop any further.

Jo Skunkcap - Her concern is pivots and water being ran all over the place; concerned her well will go dry with the increase in population/use.

Graham Thomas - Appreciated the care put in by the group into the process.

Ivan Gall - Thanked everyone who showed up and cares about water. Recognized that it is valuable to have citizen input.

Dally Swindlehurst - Thankful for the effort.

Casey Shelman - Thanked the Groundwater Study Team and Committee.

Kristin Shelman - Thanked the Groundwater Study Team and Committee from county court.

Bill Hart - Playing catch-up but the Court will be engaged moving forward.

Nico Godinez - Hoping people can reach consensus on path forward.

Danielle Reynolds - Not much to add.

Tyler Goss - Appreciates the work, hard work ahead but encouraging to see everyone working together.

Jeff Mackay - Thanked everyone for the hard work, work is not over, surface water planning is going, and the place-based planning group needs help on that.

Barbara Cannady - Concerned for permit holders to know what is coming down the pike. Forest Service sent notices recently by mail and suggests every permit holder should be reached. Many people think law will protect them and so they are ignoring this process.

Brandon Haslick - Now is the time to be involved as decisions need to be made to help the people.

John Short - Thanked the USGS and OWRD. He is looking forward to the RAC.

Brenda Smith - Thanked those involved with the study and said a few steps to come to prepare for the RAC, May will come quick.

Lorissa Singhose - Agrees with Mark about helping to get the community up to speed about the groundwater situation in the basin.

Jerry Grondin - Appreciate the interest and time put in by the group.

Jason Spriet - Thankful for the participation and commitment.

Steve Gingerich - We are happy to help explain if you have questions on the study.

Ken Bierly - Acknowledged the uniqueness of this groundwater study in that it is not the way that the USGS and OWRD usually conduct them.

Darrick Boschmann - Thanked the USGS and OWRD for all the time committed. He did not appreciate the public outreach part of his job early in career but does now.

Tara (Last name unknown online participant) - Appreciated the presentations and focus on what and where and why.

Notes prepared by: Alexandria Scott (OWRD Engagement Coordinator) 11/17/2022