

Oregon Water Resources Commission Work Session
September 10, 1998
Baker City

Members

Mike Jewett
Dan Thorndike
John Frewing
Tyler Hansell
Jim Nakano

Others

Kurt Sala
Cal Foster
Kimberley Priestley
Jerry Franke
Mayor Steve Bogart
John Wilson
Bill Lovelace
Lyle Umpleby
Byron Brinton
Jim Colton
Roger Bachman
Kent Searles

Staff

Martha Pagel
Weston Becker
Diane Addicott
Tom Byler
Tom Paul
Bob Main
Lara Burgel
Vern Church
Jerry Rodgers
Adam Sussman
Barry Norris
Pat Lee
Mike Ladd
Rick Lusk
Larry Powers
Tom Rudolph
Brad Thomasen
Colt Nudd
Robin Moen

Written material submitted at this work session is part of the official record and on file at the Oregon Water Resources Department, 158 12th Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97310. Audiotapes of the work session are on file at the same address.

Martha Pagel explained the agenda changes for the day. Instead of a briefing on permit extension rulemaking there would be an update on proposed legislation. A discussion on the permit extension rules will be held on Friday; no action will be requested.

Jerry Rodgers, newly-appointed Manager of the Department's Eastern Region, welcomed the Commission to Baker County and introduced his staff to them.

1. Legislative Concepts Briefing

Tom Byler led this discussion with the Commission, distributing a listing of proposed 1999 legislative concepts. At recent Commission meetings, staff and Commissioners discussed a

limited number of proposed legislative concepts. At this work session the following concepts were discussed: 690-02/LC-911 which would authorize the WRC to allow new water rights for uses not specifically authorized under basin programs; 690-03/LC-912 which comes from the Hydroelectric Task Force and relates to decommissioning and annual fees; 690-04/LC-913 which relates to changes made to unadjudicated claims; 690-06/LC-915 which would create a task force to examine community water supply issues; and 690-01/LC-910 which relates to Water Development Loan Fund program changes.

Byler said that at the November Commission meeting staff will request Commission approval of the final recommended concepts. December 1st is the deadline for submitting drafts and updated fiscal impact statements to the Department of Administrative Services and the Governor's office for final approval. Legislative concepts must then be filed by December 15th with the Legislature.

2. Informational Overview: Powder River Basin

Vern Church, Watermaster in Baker County, distributed information outlining his presentation and showed a variety of slides and maps as he led a discussion on the basin geography and water resources.

Baker County Commissioner Steve Bogart spoke on economic and regional dynamics. As a lifelong resident of the area, he also shared many interesting facts and colorful stories about the history of Baker County.

Lara Burgel, Field Liaison for the Eastern Region, said that current regional issues include instream water right protests, the listing of Bull Trout, hydroelectric project relicensing, a few remaining 3111 petitions, defining waste and efficiency, and reservation of water. Using maps and slides she spoke in detail on water availability and requests for reservation of water.

John Wilson, Wilson Cattle Company, spoke on his experiences with riparian restoration projects. He said it was challenging to maintain highly motivated people on a particular project since students would move on, agency people would be reassigned, etc. He suggested that another issue to consider is the need to ensure continuation and maintenance of a project once funding has been disbursed. Incentives, such as a tax credit, for ranchers and farmers to work on riparian projects would be helpful — many landowners cannot afford the cost of a project and the time for completing all the paper work. Wilson said that since completion of a riparian restoration project on the North Powder River in 1989, others have seen what can be done and have worked on their own restoration projects on other stretches of the river.

Rick Lusk, Watermaster in La Grande, spoke on gaging stations in his area. Lusk said he has been the Watermaster in the Grande Ronde River Basin since 1993. In that period of time, three

species of fish were listed as either threatened or endangered which created many challenging water issues. Lusk discussed regulation in Wallowa County and explained the Lostine River and Bear Creek diversion monitoring program which is a voluntary and cooperative effort to quantify irrigation withdrawals and stream flows. This monitoring program has worked well and has provided valuable data thanks to the efforts and cooperation of many individuals and organizations.

Jerry Franke, Manager of the Burnt River Irrigation District, presented a brief overview of the block measuring method of water use reporting used on the Burnt River. WRD authorized the trial period for this measuring method which the District is still in, and issued them a water measurement improvement matching funds grant. The District has a total of 147 diversion points and nine measuring devices.

The Commission adjourned for lunch followed by an area tour of local projects.

Respectfully submitted,



Diane K. Addicott
Commission Assistant