

**Water Resources Commission
Meeting
Salem, Oregon
February 25, 2016**

WRC Present

John Roberts, Chair
Ray Williams, Vice-Chair
Bruce Corn
Carol Whipple
Bob Baumgartner
Dennis Doherty
Jeanne LeJeune

Staff Present

Tom Byler
Renee Moulun
Cindy Smith
Racquel Rancier
Kim Ogren
Jon Unger
Doug Woodcock
Rachel LovellFord
Dwight French
Alyssa Mucken
Machelle Bamberger
Tracy Louden
Ivan Gall
Harmony Burright
Becky Williams

Others

Wes Morgan
Amber McKinney
Bonnie Crawford
Wade Peerman
Kimberley Priestley
Lauren Smith
April Snell
Samantha Murray
Margaret Matter
Leslie Bach
Daniel Timmons
Mary Anne Nash
Karen Moon
Martha Pagel
Sandy McKay
Mark Davidson
Timothy Gross
Tia Cavender

Written material submitted at this meeting is part of the official record and on file at the Oregon Water Resources Department, 725 Summer St. NE, Salem, Oregon 97301-1271. Audiotapes of the meeting are on file at the same address. Staff reports and PowerPoint presentations are available on the Department's website.

Chair Roberts called the meeting to order, and asked the Commission and audience to introduce themselves.

A. Overview of Progress on 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy Update

Alyssa Mucken, IWRS Coordinator, briefed the Commission on plans for updating the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS), and presented a draft progress report. She shared a list of the members of the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) who will meet four times during 2016.

Commissioner Doherty asked about partner agency participation. Mucken assured the Commission that all four partnering agencies would be actively involved.

Commissioner Williams expressed concern about a lack of representation of irrigation districts, particularly from the eastern side.

Commissioner LeJeune expressed appreciation of the variety of PAG members, and that the diverse perspectives will be valuable.

Commissioner Doherty commented that the purpose of having a diversity of members was to bring different sectors' perspectives into the discussion.

The Department agreed to look into including an additional member.

Commissioner Doherty asked about feedback from interest groups and agencies in regards to progress made on the IWRS action items and how progress is communicated to legislators. Mucken outlined some of the comments. Director Byler referred to the Progress Report as a tool to assist in communicating with all parties.

Chair Roberts asked to have this agenda item at each Commission meeting.

Director Byler said he wanted to see the progress summary document in every binder as a reference for other agenda items. He also stated that some items in the report may never be completed because of the ongoing nature of those items.

Commissioner Baumgartner asked how priorities are determined. Mucken said that the PAG, state agencies, and the Commission will assist in prioritizing time and investments in the next five years.

April Snell, Oregon Water Resources Congress, expressed her organizations avid interest in the IWRS, and thinks that it can be used as a beneficial tool to not only help Oregon meet its diverse water supply needs, but also to better advocate for funding. She noted that process and communication is very important. She withheld concerns about process in hopes that they turn out to be unwarranted. One issue is that the update will be completed during irrigation season, and that representation from the east-side during irrigation season is an imposition and a burden. She thinks the timeframe for the update to be complete is ambitious and that adjustments may need to be made to the timing, process, or content.

Commissioner Doherty asked Snell about the expectations of the roll-out. Snell thought Alyssa Mucken has done a tremendous job managing the process and progress is good, but there are a lot of recommendations to be completed. She would like to see additional funding so the Department can better track and implement the priorities of the recommended actions. There is a lot of work still needing to be done to not only improve access to storage and water supply, but also data management.

Commissioner Williams asked Mucken to what extent is there consultation with partner agencies in the summary. Mucken said that state agency partners were consulted in March 2015 on the "road map" document that the progress report is based on. The document does not show progress made by local partners. Williams commented that he would like to see local partner input.

Director Byler hopes this document isn't over analyzed, as it is intended to be just a quick check of things.

Commissioner Doherty likes that the progress report shows very visibly the scope and scale of what is involved in updating the IWRS.

Samantha Murray, Oregon Environmental Council, thanked staff for their work on the update of the IWRS. She also thinks the progress report is fantastic. She appreciates staff for creating a PAG (Policy Advisory Group) that is diverse, yet not too large, but said that Oregon Environmental Council had a seat on the original PAG, and would have liked to have been asked for recommendations for the new PAG. Murray encouraged the Department to offer travel reimbursement to the PAG members. She would have liked to see more balanced representation from the instream side on the PAG, but is grateful for the process.

Leslie Bach, The Nature Conservancy, spoke to the make-up of the PAG, and had hoped that members of the conservation community would have been participants, but thinks that the Department did a great job, and that all interests are well represented around the state.

Commissioner LeJeune thinks it is a testament to the process and the success of the PAG that there is so much interest in participation.

B. Reservations Rulemakings: Preview of Division 79 Draft Rules and Adoption of Division 509 Rules to Extend Burnt River Reservations

Racquel Rancier, Senior Policy Coordinator, provided an overview of the draft public hearing of the Division 79 Rules and recommended adoption of the OAR 690, proposed Division 509 rules.

Commissioner LeJeune asked for background and history of the Department of Agriculture being the applicant instead of potential future users. Rancier speculated it was because of existing statutes stipulating only state agencies could apply. Things have changed over the years, and now other government entities could apply for reservations.

Commissioner Baumgartner asked about the fate of the contested instream water rights based on the Commission's decision. Director Byler said that there is shared interest in finding resolutions to the protested water rights that are pending in the Powder Basin.

Commissioner Doherty asked for clarification of the role of state agencies. He thinks that the interests are colliding.

Commissioner Baumgartner asked for a general answer to what size would a water right be for these reservations. Rancier said she would get the numbers for him.

Chair Roberts asked that if Division 509 were adopted today, if there are modifications in permanent Division 79, could Division 509 be later adjusted to be consistent.

Commission Doherty asked if Division 509 Rules were adopted, would it be burdensome to the Department if Burnt River Basin operated under slightly different rules than the rest of the reservations.

Director Byler answered that there are options, and that the Department recommends passing them as they stand, and if the Division 79 permanent rules look different than the draft rules, then there could be discussions in the future to revisit the Burnt River Reservations.

Commissioner LeJeune was less concerned about the timeframe a reservation was renewed for, than that all parties are treated fairly and equally. Rancier answered that a short-time period of renewal would make it difficult from a staffing standpoint to start rulemaking immediately again to meet the new timeframe. She said that in a year or two if the Division 79 Rules are significantly different, a new rulemaking could be initiated to make modifications to Division 509.

Moulun answered that the Commission does have authority to adopt the Division 509 Rules for a shorter timeframe, but the Department has asked for policy and staffing considerations. If the Division 509 rules are made permanent as they stand, there is a legal issue to modify them to align with new Division 79 rules, unless the Department of Agriculture (ODA) made a new application for the Burnt River pursuant to the standards of the Division 79 Rules.

Chair Roberts said that he thinks the concern of the group is that there is a 20-year reservation with nothing to show, but likes the clause that requires a biennial report. He asked who has the final authority to release water under the reservation.

Rancier answered that a request to use reservations would include checking the ODA to ensure consistency, and a discussion about the prospects of the water use, but that not all reservations are held for one entity.

Director Byler said anyone applying to store water would have the normal permitting process that would include checks with ODFW, ODEQ, and ODA.

Commissioner LeJeune asked if Department of Agriculture was doing outreach for use of these reservations. Rancier didn't know if the outreach was specific to Burnt River, or reservations in general. LeJeune stated that it is irresponsible of Department of Agriculture to not do the required progress reports to keep everything legal.

Commissioner Doherty wanted to address the Burnt River noting that it must be done by March 8, with the stipulation of annual reports.

Chair Roberts thinks that a 20-year extension would give an entity plenty of opportunity to develop a work plan, and asked if it would be reasonable to expect sideboards. Rancier said that sideboards could be expected from the reservations that point to a specific entity, but it would be hard to define what a work plan would look like with reservations that don't point to a specific entity.

Chair Roberts stated that the credibility issue is very important, that folks don't assume the Commission is authorizing them without consequences. Commissioner Williams agreed with Roberts and asked that if a provision were required, could a consequence be imposed if the actual work did not move forward.

Commissioner LeJeune asked how the 20 years came about historically. Rancier didn't know other than 20 years had been a typical time period in other programs.

Commissioner Whipple asked who was responsible to provide the update. Rancier said that the new rules have a shared responsibility. It is the Department's responsibility to keep those reservations on the Commission's radar, but the Commission may require periodic reports from ODA.

Commissioner Whipple made a motion to adopt the proposed rules as presented in Attachment 6. Seconded by Commissioner Williams. Voting for the motion: Commissioners Whipple, Doherty, Williams, Baumgartner and Roberts. Commissioner Corn voted for the motion with the disclosure that he serves on the Owyhee Irrigation District Board, but has no financial or personal gain in the proposal. Voting against the motion, Commissioner LeJeune.

Wes Morgan, Burnt River Irrigation District, thanked the Commission for their support of the effort. From his perspective, the energy and work it takes to make progress on a project is very difficult. He commented how much less expensive a project would have been 10 or 20 years ago, but at that time there wasn't Place-Placed Planning or the IWRS, and no funds were available.

Chair Roberts asked if the irrigation district has opportunities that they think can be accomplished in the next 20 years.

Morgan indicated that in the previous 20 years, ground was purchased for the project, and there is a plan for a site, and potentially another, but there have been issues that limit them.

Commissioner Doherty pointed out that Morgan's letter really caught his attention because it asked for a requirement of investment in local resource management entities as a condition of any reservation. He appreciates the need for local investment in any successful project.

Commissioner LeJeune liked Morgan's point about his nervousness of coming to the Commission if he had no progress to report, and she wanted him to understand that her "no" vote was because of Department of Agriculture's lack of reporting, and not the individual entity.

Commissioner Whipple asked for a one-page report on how much water is currently held in Reservations in the State of Oregon.

C. Procedures to Extend Reservations of Water for Economic Development: OAR 690, Division 79, Rulemaking Hearing

Chair Roberts opened the public hearing on Procedures to Extend Reservations of Water for Economic Development, for OAR 690, Division 79 Rulemaking.

Comments were provided by April Snell, Oregon Water Resources Congress; Mary Anne Nash, Oregon Farm Bureau; Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon; Wes Morgan, Burnt River Irrigation District.

At 11:30 Chair Roberts adjourned the Public Hearing.

Note: A transcript of the public comments is included as part of the rulemaking record and staff report for the April 2016 Commission meeting.

D. Greater Harney Valley Groundwater and Malheur Lake Basin Program Rulemaking Update

Dwight French, Water Right Services Administrator, and Ivan Gall, Field Services Administrator, briefed the Commission on the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater and Malheur Lake Basin Program Rulemaking.

Chair Roberts asked about the deadline for the rulemaking and Director Byler explained that the Department committed to the local community to have rules in place prior to the next irrigation season.

Commissioner Corn asked how many permits are pending and how many acre feet are involved in the pending applications. French indicated that there are 39 pending applications, and the tools that are being developed in the rules are available for applications filed by April 15. Gall answered that they represent 13,700 acres, approximately 12,180 are primarily for irrigation. There are currently just under 100,000 irrigated acres; if these pending applications are approved, they represent about a 10 percent increase.

Commissioner Doherty asked if the goal was to prevent more declines, or if recovery was part of the objective. Gall said that the main goal is to start the groundwater study, but the ultimate goal is stabilization of groundwater levels.

Commissioner Doherty asked if the Burns Paiute Tribe had an interest in this issue. Gall answered that they have not participated in the Rules Advisory Committee to date. He does expect them to have an interest in participating. Commissioner Doherty thought it might be an opportunity to get ahead of a potential issue if the Department did some outreach to them.

Martha Pagel of Schwabe, Williams and Wyatt, representing the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, has been a part of the Rules Advisory Committee and voiced her appreciation of the way the Department approached this issue. She commented on the give and take of the local community, and appreciated how the Department was willing to extend the process when there were unresolved issues. Pagel appreciates that the comment period is still open and the Commission has the opportunity to provide feedback and be a part of the process.

Commissioner Williams asked if keeping water availability for recharge is part of the plan. Ivan Gall answered that each approved applicant will have to drill an observation well for on-site data, allowing the Department to monitor if there are groundwater declines and implement curtailment.

Commissioner Corn commented with the percentage of unutilized permits, and the 39 applications pending, the groundwater could be vastly over-allocated already. Gall said that with his understanding of the basin, many un-utilized permits were highly unlikely to be developed. French said that this situation is unique because a comprehensive study has not yet been completed, but has been identified as an area of concern.

Commissioner Doherty asked if the Harney County governance has been a willing and constructive participant in the process. French replied, absolutely, they have been very engaged.

Commissioner Baumgartner asked about the un-utilized permits, and the extension and cancellation process. French said that the right that is being traded for offset water needs to be a right that is subject to a permit amendment or a transfer, so it has to be on the books and currently valid for development. There is also a safeguard in that it has to be pending by April 15.

Commissioners asked many questions about conditions of transfers and selling of permits and certificates under these scenarios.

Director Byler stated his appreciation for the Rules Advisory Committee for their work on this difficult issue and their flexibility. This is just the beginning of a longer relationship with the community.

E. Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning Pilot Funding Recommendations

Kim Ogren, Senior Water Resources Development Advisor, Harmony Burright and Steve Parrett, Planning Coordinators, presented the Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning Pilot funding recommendations.

Commissioner LeJeune asked if the Mid-Coast and Malheur Lake projects could continue moving forward with their projects if the only funding was the partial funding provided by these grants. Commissioner Corn asked if the Department could obtain for more funding, since there are several agencies with a stake in the program's success.

Director Byler commented that the review team had a successful comprehensive and sound process, there was a high level of interest from the applicants, and he has a lot of hope for the continuation of the program.

LeJeune encouraged applicants who may get partial funding to pursue other funding sources for optimum success.

April Snell, Oregon Water Resources Congress, gave general support for the Place-Based Planning Pilot funding recommendations, and that they will make progress and potentially apply for SB 1069 funding

opportunities. She expressed concern over the Spotted Frog issue in the Deschutes Basin and the potential to affect that areas ability to plan and pursue projects. She also spoke in support of SB 266, and that planning efforts should not derail existing projects or efforts underway.

Mary Anne Nash, Oregon Farm Bureau, stated that while statewide stakeholders have input, control needs to stay local. She asked for sideboards to make sure that the issues stay focused on long-term water supply planning, and not on statewide policy issues. She also talked about Harney Basin area needs and that they need to be in position to do planning as soon as data from the study comes in. She encouraged the Department to continue having discussions with communities that might not be ready to start planning, so they have the right tools when they are ready.

Commissioner Doherty was concerned about putting pilot projects on hold to discuss sideboards, and suggested that sideboards be developed from things learned during pilot projects. Mary Anne Nash responded that she didn't want to see water supply development funding dollars go to projects that are housed by other agency programs, such as DEQ. She thinks the sideboards should include making sure a plan complies with the intent of the program.

Commissioner LeJeune said that early discussions centered on the IWRS not being a regulatory tool, and that the approach is a bottom up, and an integrated approach.

Director Byler responded that he is not going to let the Department's planning dollars go to programs that are other agencies responsibilities.

Karen Moon, Harney County Watershed Council, said that they are extremely excited to be considered for funding, and that it is very timely for her area. She said that the Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative is the collaborative group that has been awarded funds through OWEB, which will help move that Initiative and projects forward. Her group will be working diligently on water planning even with reduced funding, and will pursue other funding opportunities.

Timothy Gross, City of Newport, thanked the Commission for its consideration to fund their project. He said most of the water providers are fairly small, and do not communicate with each other. He has found that there is a need for those providers to communicate and collaborate to share information and resources. The City of Newport is the largest entity with the most informational resources, and wants to share opportunities with those smaller providers. The Place-Based funding opportunity came after City of Newport had already initiated some planning activities. This planning activity can proceed more quickly and with more expertise through this funding opportunity.

Commissioner Doherty asked how communication was going with the Tribes. Gross thinks it is going well, and hopes that these funds will only increase their collaboration and communication.

Commissioner LeJeune is interested in watching how redundancy is addressed as these small water providers collaborate and communicate better.

Samantha Murray, Oregon Environmental Council, commented on OEC's request to consider more than just supply needs, when funding a project to achieve the optimum benefit for any water project as outlined in the IWRS.

Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon, commented on the sideboard questions, noting that guidelines exist in SB 266 and in the IWRS and they are not asking for additional sideboards. She also wanted to correct an error by a previous commenter. WaterWatch worked closely with the Department on SB 266.

Commissioner Williams moved to adopt the funding recommendations as presented by the Department, Table 2 of Section 6. Seconded by Commissioner Corn. Voting for the motion: Commissioners Whipple, Doherty, Williams, Baumgartner, Roberts, Corn and LeJeune. Voting against the motion: none.

Commissioner Doherty asked that the letter from Representative Gilliam be followed up upon.

Director Byler said that as a pilot program, he welcomes a lot of dialogue and comments from all interested parties, and that the communication is going to be invaluable for the long-term tenure of the program.

F. Water Resources Development Program Funding Opportunities Update

Tracy Loudon, Administrative Services Division Administrator; Kim Ogren, Water Resources Development Advisor; and Jon Unger, Grant Program Coordinator, briefed the Commission on the applications received for water project loans and grants, and feasibility studies. They also provided an overview of the Water Project Grants and Loans evaluation process.

Commissioner Whipple asked for a description of oversight of large grants. Tracy Loudon explained how the Department will conduct oversight with the input of local participants.

Commissioners wanted to know more about the oversight of the Mosier well drilling funds. Brenda Bateman, Technical Services Division Administrator explained how oversight would occur, and that the local watershed council is very engaged and prepared to provide staff and cost share to the project. Protocols have been set to ensure dollars are distributed appropriately.

Chair Roberts asked if any loans had been applied for. Loudon explained that there had been inquiries but no actual applications.

Commissioner LeJeune asked questions about need and public benefits, which staff addressed.

G. Water Development Loan Fund – Process Overview

Tracy Loudon, Administrative Services Division Administrator provided the Commission with a history of the Water Development Loan Fund, briefed them on the role of the Commission, and responded to Commissioner questions and comments.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully,

Lorri Cooper
Executive Administrative Support to the Director's Office

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Chair Roberts called the meeting to order and asked the Commission members and audience to introduce themselves.

H. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 19 and 20, 2015 meeting were offered to the Commission for consideration.

Commissioner Williams made a correction to the attendees on the February 19, 2015 minutes.

Commissioner Corn moved to approve the November 19, 2015 minutes as amended, and the November 20, 2015 minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Doherty. Voting for the motion: Commissioners Roberts, Williams, LeJeune, Whipple, Corn, Doherty, and Baumgartner. Voting against the motion, none.

I. Commission Comments

Commissioner Whipple has been watching Agriculture's SB 1010 biennial local update, and may have more next meeting on that subject.

Commissioner Doherty discussed the Baker County area grant application that was conditionally approved at the last meeting, that they could match the dollars, and that Wes Morgan reported that they

will be able to complete the project. He complimented Wes Morgan for his efforts. He discussed the potential of funding of a second Assistant Watermaster position in the North Central Region.

Commissioner Williams has been involved in a Steering Committee regarding water in the Walla Walla basin. The intent is by the end of 2016 to have specific directives to meet the needs of all the stakeholders in the basin.

Commissioner Baumgartner reported a wet December with lots of water to deal with. He commented on the statement from the City of Newport Manager the day before and is very pleased with the projects that came out of the Place-Based Planning program. Baumgartner has been involved in a National Legislative Committee on water re-use, and is glad to see a lot of the projects presented for funding did involve some reuse. He heard a story on OPB on Tree For All, a program he has been involved with in Tualatin as a part of restoration efforts.

Commissioner Corn reported it has been a significantly better water year. He is seeing a lot of infrastructure issues, and projects to repair that infrastructure at an expense to the local water users. He is concerned about some statewide issues that he sees affecting folks at a local level, such as the PERS program. Corn is seeing a lot of conservation efforts in his area, making them more efficient and resilient, as a result of the collaborative efforts.

Commissioner LeJeune reported that the EQC has met twice since the last meeting, and has approved new rules for the water quality trading program. In their February meeting they brought the Commission in to participate in a staff satisfaction exercise. They also did a day-long employee evaluation on the Director. Based on comments Commissioner Doherty made, she believes the Commission should consider the issue of water right permit fees. She would also like to see a meeting in a place where Place Based Planning efforts are happening, such as the City of Newport.

Chair Roberts updated the Commission on the last meeting of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and new processes for grants. OWEB summarizes projects in pamphlets and suggested that the Department consider doing the same to improve communication. Roberts reported on the WISE project, which is moving slowly. He is now sitting on the Governance Committee of the WISE project.

J. Director's Report

Director Byler briefed the Commission on Department business, including the Willamette Basin Reservoir Study, the Umatilla Basin work with NOWA, and the Klamath Basin agreements.

Byler reported that a Performance Audit by the Secretary of State's office is underway.

He also reported on the Spotted Frog litigation in the Deschutes Basin, and the ramifications of the outcomes of that litigation.

Byler thanked the Commission for their comments and encouragement to develop better communication to tell the message and story of WRD. He described the History Project to the Commissioners.

K. Legislative and Budget Update

Racquel Rancier, Senior Policy Coordinator, and Tracy Loudon, Administrative Services Division Administrator, briefed the Commission on the 2016 Legislative Session and development of proposals for the 2017 Session.

Commissioner LeJeune asked for clarification on who approves fees, since some fees are approved by Commissions, and some by the Legislature. Rancier answered that some fees are written in rule, and some in statute. Most of the Department's fees are in statute.

Commissioner Williams commented that the Legislative Concept on Water Right Transactions Fee Schedule Sunset is important.

Commissioner Corn asked if the rise in minimum wage would have an effect on state employee salaries. Louden answered that Department staff are not directly affected, but he does see an impact on goods and services.

Commissioner Baumgartner asked if the bond increase in the Legislative Concept on Protection of Groundwater covers the cost if someone improperly puts in a well. Brenda Bateman answered that it would not completely cover the cost, but that it would be double the current bond.

Commissioner Corn asked if it might be valuable to take a look at what a bond that would cover costs would be. Bateman answered that all of the increases in this concept area were developed with the Oregon Groundwater Association.

Commissioner Whipple asked that in light of recent litigation, is there anything that can be done in the legislative arena to strengthen the Department's position as groundwater regulators. Bateman responded that this legislative concept is an attempt to get everyone to play their part, and to create more clarity for well drillers and consumers. Rancier commented that communication will be a key piece on matters related to groundwater.

Commissioner LeJeune commented when she came on the Commission eight years ago, the focus was inward. With the development of the IWRS, the focus has shifted outward, which makes communication and education so important. She encouraged the Department to take information to the Legislature as to the success of the grant application programs.

Commissioner Williams asked about the Dam Safety adequacy of the proposed fee for engineering review. Chair Roberts thought there should not be a cap on that fee. Bateman said there will be many more discussions on this before anything is solidified.

L. Monitoring Strategy Update

Brenda Bateman, Technical Services Division Administrator; Ken Stahr, Hydrographics Manager; and Mellony Hoskinson, Water Availability Technician, briefed the Commission on the monitoring Strategy that the Department will use to identify and establish monitoring sites around the state. They responded to Commissioners' questions.

M. Routing Water Right Data on Stream Networks – A Sneak Peek at new GIS Services

Brenda Bateman, Technical Services Administrator and Ken Smith, Information Services Manager briefed the Commission on new technology that will provide the ability for staff and the public to search for water rights based on stream location.

Commissioner Williams would like the Legislature to be made aware of the efficiencies and creativity resulting in this project.

Commissioner LeJeune thinks a short presentation of this to the Legislature included in a budget request would demonstrate the incredible need the Department has for this kind of technology, and the staff time it saves.

Commissioner Corn asked if irrigation ditches or manmade waters that have water rights are included. Smith replied that there are a few ditches and canals included, but for the most part the data is streams.

Commissioner Whipple noted that some may be concerned about having this information public.

Commissioner Williams asked about information purposes and regulation. Smith answered that this does not replace a Watermaster's best judgement and review process. This is a research tool to help try to locate information that may be considered in a regulation situation. There is also a disclaimer on the website as to the use of the data.

Commissioner Williams asked how to address the assumption that less staff is required with improved technology. Bateman responded that with technology comes a different need for staff resources, and that those accessing the data then require more customer service.

Commissioner LeJeune asked Ken Smith to be sure to tell his staff they did a fabulous job, and the Commission is impressed.

Commissioner Williams asked what was next. Smith said the next project is making groundwater data more accessible.

N. Public Comment

April Snell, Oregon Water Resources Congress, thanked the Commission members for their service, and wishes issues were less complicated and that there would be fewer challenges. She appreciates the balanced water policy decisions for all interests in the state. She is heartened by the work of the staff, and will be giving feedback to the budget and legislative concepts, and her organization has committed to advocate for the continuance of the transaction fee mentioned earlier. She will be advocating for additional funding for data.

In future meetings, the Commission will be hearing more about SB 839, and Snell looks forward to seeing the funding recommendations. She is encouraged by the first round and looks forward to people being inspired and willing to collaborate on these projects. Implementing the program will be important. Without advocating for specific projects, Snell understands that storage is controversial, complex and challenging, but feels passionate that in order to meet the water supply needs for the state, instream and out-of-stream, there needs to be a concerted statewide effort to develop and improve our storage options. She encouraged the Commission to push that issue to the extent it can, and have the discussion on how new storage is built to ensure irrigated agriculture, communities, and the environment are improved as a whole.

Commissioner Doherty asked, given the expense of storage, how does Snell see funding happening? Snell believes there will be a combination here in Oregon, leveraging funds with existing federal programs and matching the funding programs so they are efficient. In addition, she thinks it is important to develop the partnerships and the trust to make those projects happen. The third part would be to have a look at how water is managed and make sure it can meet current needs, so the Department has the flexibility to make real time decisions based on the needs.

Commissioner Williams asked about partnering with neighboring states to pool funds. Snell thinks there is a lot of promise there, but sometimes it's harder to become engaged in larger projects.

Chair Roberts likes the idea of sharing the knowledge base.

Commissioner LeJeune says the case must be made and the local capacity built, so that funding will come easier in 5-10 years.

O. Other Business

Commissioner Doherty announced and explained his resignation from the Commission. Commissioner Williams thanked him for his years of service to the Commission and Umatilla County, and that he will be sorely missed. Chair Roberts expressed the Commission's appreciation for his insight, comments, and wisdom.

Director Byler spoke of Doherty's insights and high-level thinking that has been inspiring at the staff level, and productive and helpful at the Commission level. He noted that Doherty has done much to advance water resource issues in the state, and the Department is grateful.

Commissioner Corn thinks it is a sad commentary that good people like Doherty feel pushed in a corner because of actions of unethical people.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorri Cooper
Executive Administrative Support to the Director's Office