

WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

WORK SESSION/MEETING

DALLAS

OCTOBER 25, 1990

MINUTES

Commission members present:

Lorna Stickel, Chair
Cliff Bentz
Jim Howland
Hadley Akins
Mike Jewett
Roger Bachman

Water Resources Staff

Bill Young
Jan Shaw
Bev Hayes
Steve Sanders
Becky Kreag
John Borden
Mike Mattick
Tom Kline
Tom Paul
Marc Norton
Mike Zwart
Roberta Jortner
Donn Miller

Others

Audrey Simmons
Roy C. Webster
Rep. C.R. "Chuck" Norris

The staff reports presented at this meeting, which contain the Director's recommendations mentioned in these minutes, are on file in the Office of the Director of the Water Resources Department, 3850 Portland Road, NE, Salem, Oregon. Written information submitted at this meeting is hereby made a part of this record and is on file at the above address. Audiocassette recording tapes of the meeting are also on file in the Water Resources Department office.

1. **REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED DETERMINATION OF A CRITICAL GROUNDWATER AREA IN THE STAGE GULCH AREA, UMATILLA COUNTY**

The Stage Gulch area includes about 252 square miles in western Umatilla County. Investigation of groundwater conditions in the larger Umatilla Structural Basin began in 1983. This investigation continues earlier Department studies in the Umatilla Basin which date back to the early 1970's. These investigations show that the basalt groundwater reservoir underlying the Stage Gulch area responds unfavorably to the stress of pumping. Important conclusions, earlier investigations, and previous critical-area proceedings in the basin include:

- 1) Water levels are declining and have declined excessively in several areas.
- 2) The available groundwater supply is being overdrawn in the basin.
- 3) Substantial well interference occurs in some areas.

The Director signed a Proclamation on January 31, 1985 which initiated proceedings for a critical groundwater area determination in the Stage Gulch area. This action was taken in recognition of water level declines, overdrafting of the basalt groundwater reservoir, and interference between wells. The Proclamation prohibits the issuance of new permits to appropriate groundwater from that reservoir until final resolution of the question of a critical groundwater area.

The Department has documented water level declines totaling over 300 feet in some wells in the area. Many other wells have displayed declines of 50 to 100 feet since initial construction. Well interference during the irrigation season can exceed 100 feet in some parts of the area.

The western boundary of the Stage Gulch area coincides with a portion of the eastern boundary of the Butter Creek Critical Groundwater Area. This is the only external boundary that coincides with a mapped or inferred geologic structure. The other boundaries initially included an area of documented water level declines of 50 feet or more during the period 1965 to 1980. The area was expanded to include additional wells in which water level declines of five feet per year or more were occurring and to form a buffer zone one to two miles wide around these wells. Its width reflects the distance that substantial well interference has been noted in the basalt groundwater reservoir. The buffer zone is intended to protect the appropriators within the area from potential impacts of future development of the resource immediately outside.

Director's Recommendation

The staff recommended that the Commission authorize the Department to conduct a contested case hearing on the question of whether the basalt groundwater reservoir in the Stage Gulch area of Umatilla County should be a critical groundwater area. Staff also recommends that the Commission authorize publication of rulemaking hearing notice in the Secretary of State's bulletin at the earliest appropriate time. Those draft rules for the water distribution scheme would come before the Commission for hearing authorization at a later time.

It was MOVED by Jim Howland and seconded by Didi Malarkey to approve the Director's recommendation.

Before a vote was taken, Mike Jewett MOVED to amend the previous motion to omit the "buffer zone." The motion failed for lack of a second.

In the vote on the prior motion, Mike Jewett voted no. The motion passed.

2. REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF THE 1991-1993 BIENNIAL WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AND DOCUMENTS

The 1991-93 Biennial Water Management Program is the second effort to show proposed water management legislation and state agency programs in one report. The purpose is not only to improve coordination among state agencies but to present a complete overview of water management issues to the Legislature and interested citizens in 1991.

This Biennial Water Management Program has been developed over the last year. The Department began in October 1989 with a survey of city and county governments, followed by five workshops with city and county officials, special district staff, and state and federal natural-resource and land-management agencies. The Department then convened a committee comprised of representatives of the 12 state agencies in the Strategic Water Management Group (SWMG) draft the program using the public input. The committee work was presented to the public during a workshop held at the Capitol on April 24, 1990.

The biennial program committee used this review to refine the draft biennial program before taking it to SWMG for conceptual approval in May 1990. This May 22 draft was then used by the SWMG agencies in developing their proposed budgets and legislative proposals.


Director's Recommendation

The staff recommended that the Commission approve the 1991-93 biennial program subject to the final agency-specific editing and approval by SWMG.

It was MOVED by Roger Bachman and seconded by Didi Malarkey to approve the Director's recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



JAN SHAW
Commission Assistant

JS:dkh

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