

WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

WORK SESSION

March 7, 1991

Salem

MINUTES

Commission members present:

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

Water Resources staff:

Becky Kreag
Steve Sanders
Jan Shaw
Sam Allison
Amin Wahab
Steve Brutscher
Fred Lissner
Pam Homer
Jake Szramek
Tom Kline
Robertta Jortner
Greg Nelson

Others:

Larry Sprecher
Marjo Nelson
Dennis Goecks
Karen Russell
Bruce Niss
Gene Clemens
Jerry Schmidt

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.

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DRAFT WILLAMETTE BASIN PLAN AND PROGRAM, OAR CHAPTER 690, DIVISION 502.

The current Willamette Basin Program was initially adopted in four parts in the mid-1960's. Over the years, the Commission made minor amendments to address specific local problems. Now, after 25 years of growth and development in the basin, the existing program is no longer responsive to the demands being

(MORE)

placed on the basin's water resources. In the Commission's 1989-1991 Biennial Program, published in August 1988, the Commission committed to revising the Willamette and Sandy Basins between 1988 and 1990.

The process to update the Willamette Basin program began in August 1988. Based on a public interest survey and citizen input at a series of town hall meetings in January 1989, the Department staff selected five main issues for study in the Willamette Basin. The issues included surface water allocation, groundwater management, reservoir coordination, water conservation, and municipal-domestic water systems.

With help from citizen work groups, the Department prepared a discussion paper for each issue containing background information and management alternatives. The staff conducted a series of workshops in June 1990 to get public reaction to the background papers and management alternatives.

Based on input from the workshops, the staff revised the discussion papers to recommend policy positions and preferred management options.

Before revising the surface water allocation paper, Department staff will recompute water availability, by month, for 300-plus streams in the Willamette Basin. These streams either have existing instream water rights or minimum streamflows or were identified by the Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Environmental Quality and Parks as having important instream resources. Based on the new water availability figures, the staff will complete the draft surface water allocation plan element and the draft Willamette Basin program (rules).

Director's Recommendation

The staff recommended that:

- . The Commission review the draft plan and program and authorize the Department to make the additions proposed by the staff and changes as directed by the Commission, in order to complete the draft plan and program;
- . The Commission authorize the Department to hold public hearings on the draft Willamette Basin plan and rules;
- . The Commission authorize the Department to schedule four public hearings to be held during the last two weeks of May in Portland, Salem, Corvallis and Eugene;
- . The Commission select one or more Commissioners to attend at least one of the hearings.

(MORE)

Commission and staff discussion at the work session concentrated on two issues: surface water allocation and groundwater management. Each issue included several topics. For surface water allocation, those topics were:

- Water availability
- Irrigation seasons
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers storage releases
- Pending water use applications
- Conversion of minimum streamflows to instream water rights
- Reservation of water for future economic development

Staff stated it will continue to review water availability based on an 80% exceedence probability (natural streamflows that are predicted to be present in four out of five years). The information will be used to develop water use classifications.

The Commission supported establishing an irrigation season of March 1 to October 31 throughout the basin where water use classifications would allow it and water was available for appropriation. The Commission concurred with staff's recommendation that uncommitted, stored water should not be treated as natural flow.

The Commission directed the Department to work with the Corps of Engineers to establish permits or agreements to protect this water from diversion. The Commission agreed that where the new rules change existing water use classifications, a permit could still be issued for those applications that were deemed complete prior to the adoption of new rules. Each application would still be subject to a water availability review.

The Commission suggested that staff recommend a course of action for converting basin minimum streamflows at the next meeting. Finally, the Commission approved the general reservation provisions of OAR 690-502-030(4) and the subbasin specific irrigation recommendations.

For groundwater, the topics were:

- Use restrictions
- Pending applications
- Illegal users
- Time-dated permits

The Commission concurred with the proposed general water use classification throughout the basin. It also agreed with the proposal to restrictively classify ten localized areas to stabilize the groundwater situation. It generally concurred with the proposed approaches to managing groundwater.

The Commission expressed an intent to process pending applications according to the rules and classifications it adopts. This may result in the rejection of permits to use groundwater in proposed

(MORE)

special management areas. The Commission, while expressing concern about "shutting people off from water," agreed that illegal water users should not receive preferential treatment. Lastly, the Commission felt that allowing for time-specific use of groundwater to establish a crop was a useful management tool.

The other planning issues, reservoir coordination, municipal and domestic water systems, and conservation, were held over for a work session in conjunction with the April meeting.

The Commission asked for another day-long work session on this issue, which meant that the proposed hearing schedule would have to be delayed. Other suggestions were to take a Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday around the next Commission meeting for further discussion. The final decision was to spend another day and an evening around the Commission's April 18-19 meeting to further address these issues.

The Commission took no formal action in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,



Jan Shaw
Commission Assistant