

WRIA 54 Water Management Work Group Meeting

10/15/2007

Attendees: Sara Hunt, Rick Noll (alternate for Charlie Peterson), Lloyd Brewer, David Luders, Craig Volosing, Mike Hermanson, Brian Crossley, Cynthia Carlstad, Bryony Stasney.

Overview of Plan Development

- 5-6 work groups will meet 4-5 times and develop issue papers for the Planning Unit's consideration.
- Water management work group will meet 2nd Tuesday each month at 10 am.
- Meetings tentatively set on Nov 13, Dec 11, Jan 8, Feb 12 and Mar 11, 10 am, Spokane County Public Works Bldg, Conf Rm 4A or 4C.

Review of Plan Terminology

- Group reviewed terminology proposed for the issue papers - issues, goals, objectives, and solutions/toolbox.
- Developing and agreeing on goals can provide common ground for diverse groups and opinions

Work Group Scope

Overarching concern - lack of info about whether or not there are sufficient water resources to provide water for current and future instream and out of stream uses.

- Group discussed the overall scope of the water management issue paper:
 - Groundwater and surface water resources
 - Water allocation (water rights)
 - Water supply (e.g., water purveyors and infrastructure)
 - Water use
 - Regulation (i.e., legal framework and enforcement)

Groundwater and Surface Water Resources

- Need additional instream flow assessments for tribs to be able to determine available water resources.
- Lack of flow data for many of the tribs.
- Sara Hunt will research information on WRIA 54 Surface Water Source Limitations (SWSLs).
- Sara Hunt will research policy, if any, for administrative closures within WRIA 54.
- Groundwater and surface water are assumed in hydraulic continuity unless there is evidence to suggest otherwise.
- Actual and potential importation of water from WRIA 57 into WRIA 54 increases available water resources.

Water Allocation

- Uncertainties about how much water is allocated.
- Illegal use is unknown. May be an issue in Deep Creek.

- Potential solutions include WRATs database clean-up and adjudication.

Water Supply

- Includes actual and potential importation of water from WRIA 57 into WRIA 54.

Water Use

- Unknown impacts and lack of metering for permit exempt wells.
- Need for better connection between land use regulations and available water supplies.
- Includes conservation, reclamation and reuse.

Goals

Group agreed to revise the third bullet of the draft issue paper goals to “Coordinate areas of growth and development with water availability”.

Group agreed to add a new goal - “Ensure sustainable use of water resources”.

Issues

Water Rights

Group agreed to:

- Refine first bullet to say “Groundwater and surface water is over-allocated in localized areas”.
- Modify third bullet to say “Tribal and other federal reserved water rights are unquantified” (including the Spokane Indian Reservation and Fairchild Air Force Base).

Fourth bullet “Keep water rights with the landowner” was unclear to the working group as to the planning unit’s intent. Do we mean:

- make the water right transfer process more clear, or
- ensure that certain uses of water are preserved (e.g., is there concern about the change from agriculture to domestic use?)

Domestic Exempt Wells

- Evaluate the potential ways to control proliferation of permit exempt wells (so as to avoid over allocation of groundwater resources) – i.e., reservation as component of instream flow rule, land use regulations (e.g., require developers discuss water supply with purveyors), other management tools, such as creation of ground water sub basins or management areas, like Odessa and Quincy.
- Sara Hunt (Ecology) will provide information on the regulations and examples for the working group to discuss at the November work group meeting.
- Discussion that Group A water systems have restrictions on amount of domestic water use of about 350 gpd per home. Should some areas be encouraged/required to change from single family domestic exempt wells to Group A systems?
- 5,000 gpd for permit exempt wells is excessive. Consider DOH water supply for household (about 800 gpd) as a more reasonable limit.

Water Supply/Use

- Need to evaluate the cities' and county's process for evaluating water availability during planning and building permitting and other processes.
- There appears to be a reasonable process through city platting and review – through coordinated water system planning.
- There appears to be a poor connection between water availability and zoning changes – through Comprehensive Plan amendment.
- Areas of strained water resources could be defined through critical areas ordinance. Commissioners and other decision makers need technical information to help support land use decision making.
- Mike Hermanson said that he will do some research on water availability – land use planning and report back at the November work group meeting.

Technical Information

- Does Ecology have any additional flow information on Deep, Spring or Coulee Creeks? Sara Hunt will research and report back at the November work group meeting.

Next meeting

November 13, 10 am- noon, Spokane County Public Works Building, 4A or 4C.