

WRIA 54 Water Management Work Group Meeting

11/13/2007

Attendees: Sara Hunt, Charlie Peterson, Lloyd Brewer, David Luders, Craig Volosing, Mike Hermanson, Sarah Orrange, Bryony Stasney.

Water Management Work Group Scope

Group discussed the overall scope of the water management issue paper and confirmed:

- Issues / potential actions related understanding groundwater and surface water resources will be passed on to the Technical Information Work group.
- Issues / potential actions related to coordination of growth areas with water availability will be passed on to the Land Use Work Group.

The group confirmed the scope of work for the Water Management Work Group as:

- Water allocation (i.e., water rights);
- Water supply and Water use (e.g., including water transmission and how water is used, including water conservation, reclamation and reuse); and
- Regulation (i.e., the legal framework for water management).

Overarching Concern

The group noted that the overarching concern identified in the draft 110907 issue paper (i.e., that there is not currently a good system to effectively manage the water resources of WRIA 54) does not capture the fact that there are systems for water management and components of these systems do function well. The group identified the following systems that have components that could be modified, added to and/or fixed:

- Population projections (i.e., where are current and future growth and water demands anticipated to occur and what will be the nature of these water demands);
- Land use planning (i.e., there appears to be a poor connection between water availability and land use planning);
- Resource understanding (i.e., there is a lack of detailed understanding on groundwater and surface water resources);
- Water allocation (i.e., water rights processing is inefficient and there are uncertainties associated with how much water is allocated);
- Water availability (e.g., our methods to judge water availability and consider actual water use and conservation are limited).

After discussion, the group modified the overarching water management concern in WRIA 54 as:

There are systems in place to manage water resources in WRIA 54, such as water rights processing, land use planning and water system planning. However, not all components of these systems function to support efficient and effective management of water resources of WRIA 54.

Summary of Water Supply in WRIA 54

The group reviewed page 2 of the draft issue paper (110907). Discussion included:

Importation of Water into WRIA 54

The group discussed importation of water from WRIA 57 into WRIA 54 and requested that the following be included in the upfront summary of the issue paper:

- Infrastructure exists to convey City of Spokane water, drawn from the SVRP, to Fairchild AFB and the City of Airway Heights. Use of this intertie varies from year-to-year. Over the last year (Oct 2006 to Oct 2007) water use via the intertie has increased, primarily to offset withdrawals from the West Plains aquifers and to accommodate maintenance activities at Fairchild AFB. The intertie therefore provides redundancy and mitigation benefits for the users. However, the cost incentive for the users encourages both entities to rely on their own water sources as much as possible. ***Review this language with FAB, Airway Heights and City of Spokane.***

Water Allocation

The group discussed the following under **water rights**:

- The City of Spokane put in an application to Ecology to consolidate its water rights. The City subsequently withdrew its application because the application opened the City's water rights to review by Ecology (and the review may result in a decrease in the City's water rights). ***Review with City of Spokane. Any recommendation from this?***
- Fairchild Airforce Base has an application pending with Ecology to change its 1.5 billion gallon per year water right claim to a water right certificate. Fairchild Airforce Base is anticipating that a private entity will take over supply of water to residences on the Base. Fairchild Airforce Base currently uses about 0.7 billion gallons per year (35% of which is used to supply housing and 65% for other water uses on the Base). ***The group recommends that Ecology process this water right change application to reduce uncertainty about how much water is allocated. Sara Hunt will find out if the Planning Unit can make a recommendation to Ecology to process this application as a priority.***
- Ecology to clean up the WRATs database to give more realistic idea of how much water is allocated. ***Is this being done through the pre-adjudication work (that includes WRIsAs 54, 55, 56, 57 and 59)? Can this be conducted by a third party through targeted studies? Sara will research the options with Ecology and confirm if and how this can be done.***
- The group discussed the recommendation that Ecology process water rights changes and transfers more efficiently.
 - ***Planning Unit to clarify if efficiently means faster or with less cost (or both).***
 - ***Sara will research:***
 - ***How many pending water rights changes and transfers are there in WRIA 54?***
 - ***What are the current Ecology impediments to processing efficiently?***

- *Are any improvements needed to the county water conservancy boards?*
 - *What does Ecology need to process water rights changes and transfers more efficiently (e.g., more staff / funding, higher fees).*
- Is there a water conservancy board in Lincoln County? *Yes, confirmed by Jim DeGraffenreid 112007.*
- The group questioned whether or not the Planning Unit could recommend priority of use for future water allocation and if this priority could be made consistent with comprehensive planning. The group questioned if there is sufficient information on water quantity in localized areas in WRIA 54 to make this type of decision. *Bryony will communicate with the WRIA 56 WIT to understand how this might work in practice.*
- The group agreed to explore water rights trusts and banking as a potential solution to limited new water rights. *There is a conference planned in Spring 2008. Review Ecology publication.*
- In relation to the potential action to: *Consider joint mitigation planning for WRIA 54 cities for water right applications. Is transfer of water from the SVRP aquifer considered mitigation? WMWG recommends that this action be developed to recommend that the WRIA 54 cities form a West Plains Aquifer Joint Board and that this Board would work on joint mitigation planning for water right applications as well as on other topics such as wellhead protection planning. OK this with the Planning Unit at the Nov 2007 meeting.*
- In relation to the potential action to: *Maintain and expand water rights, especially for agriculture and exempt water use due to growth. This is unclear to the WMWG. Instream flows have not been set so do not know if water is available. Clarify this with the Planning Unit at the Nov 2007 meeting.*
 - *Clarify if this is an action to protect agricultural / residential land use. If yes, this could be considered by the Land Use Work Group.*
 - *Could this be connected to use of reclaimed water for agriculture?*
- In relation to the potential action to: *Develop and maintain a public database of willing water rights buyers and sellers throughout Stevens County (currently being implemented by the Stevens County Water Conservancy Board) ... Spokane County and Lincoln County also ?? Clarify the purpose of this database at the Nov 2007 Planning Unit meeting.*

The group discussed the following under **permit-exempt wells**:

- In relation to the issue of: *Without accurate information about number of permit-exempt wells, location and magnitude of water use, it is impossible to evaluate the impact of permit-exempt wells on the water resources of WRIA 54.*
 - *Did Stevens County PUD expand their service area in the Suncrest area to incorporate the UGA? Bryony to check with Dick Price. If, not the group would like to consider a recommendation that Stevens County PUD do this.*
- In relation to the issue of: *Clarify rights of permit exempt well owners to be assured of continued water quality and quantity. This is unclear to the WMWG. Present to the Planning Unit for clarification at the Nov 28 Planning Unit*

- meeting. Note that Ecology does not typically manage permit-exempt wells. Rewrite with the Planning Unit as an issue / concern or delete if this is not supported by the Planning Unit. Do we mean:*
- *Clarify whether exempt well use can be curtailed if there is an instream flow set?*
 - *Clarify if permit exempt wells are allowed to use 5,000 gpd?*
 - *Is this related to what to do in the event that groundwater quality is compromised?*
- *In relation to the issue of: Address illegal uses of permit-exempt wells. The group confirmed that enforcement against illegal use of permit exempt wells should be taken on by Ecology. Sara to research what Ecology might need to address illegal uses of permit-exempt wells in WRIA 54. Confirm with the Planning Unit that this is a concern in WRIA 54 – and if yes, are there specific areas.*
 - *In relation to the issue of: Address permit- exempt wells that impact senior water rights. The group discussed that there is a process in place whereby the senior water right holder files a complaint with Ecology. Ecology will work with the senior water right holder to address the concern in a step by step process that may involve well deepening etc. Sara to research what Ecology might need to address permit-exempt wells in WRIA 54 that impact senior water rights. Confirm with the Planning Unit that this is an issue and where this is an issue.*
 - *In relation to the issue of: Increase permit-exempt well use for small to medium developments. This is unclear to the WMWG. Present to the Planning Unit for clarification at the Nov 28 Planning Unit. Is the intent to manage land use practices?*
 - *Sara Hunt plans to meet with the Ecology permit writers next week to discuss regulatory options to address permit-exempt wells, such as establishment of a groundwater management area. Sara requested that the group work on permit exempt wells at the December 2007 work group meeting.*
 - *The group would like to consider the following at the December 2007 meeting:*
 - *Daily withdrawal limits*
 - *Options to manage permit-exempt wells:*
 - *Instream flow rule*
 - *Groundwater management*
 - *County / City ordinances (i.e., land use planning, irrigation restrictions)*
 - *What are other watershed plans recommending? Bryony to do some research on this.*

Next meeting

December 11, 9 – 11 am, Spokane County Public Works Building, Conf. Rm 4A.