



OCTOBER 2002

NEWSLETTER NO. 1

This newsletter series is meant to provide information on the status of the Walla Walla River Basin Feasibility Study (WWRBFS). The purpose of the study is to investigate the feasibility of conducting aquatic ecosystem restoration within the Walla Walla River Basin in Oregon and Washington.

BACKGROUND

This study follows the Corps of Engineer's (Corps) completion of the Walla Walla River Watershed Reconnaissance Report (report), October 1997. The report identified water resource problems in the basin and potential opportunities to resolve those issues. The report concluded that habitat for salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act, as well as nonlisted species/stocks, could benefit from ecosystem restoration. Increasing instream flows was identified by the report as a primary opportunity to address ecosystem restoration, pending identification of a local sponsor to share in the cost of conducting a study.

On May 10, 2002, the Corps and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) signed a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement providing for the Corps and CTUIR to share equally in the cost of conducting the study.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study will concentrate on restoration of fish habitat quality as its main objective, with emphasis placed upon options for increasing instream flows.

A Feasibility Report/Environmental Impact Statement (FR/EIS) will document the results of the study and evaluate the environmental effects of

the various alternatives considered to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

OTHER BASIN ACTIVITY

The Corps and CTUIR are aware of various habitat improvement efforts underway in the basin and will not seek to evaluate those efforts in the study. However, in addition to studying ways to increase instream flows, the study will concurrently seek to identify other habitat improvement measures suitable for the basin. The Corps and CTUIR will consider measures not currently undertaken in the basin for possible expansion of the scope of the current study or for development of future cost-share projects with CTUIR or others.

EARLY PUBLIC INPUT

In order to involve the public and resource agencies early in the study process, the Corps and CTUIR conducted public scoping meetings on September 11, 12, 16, and 18, in Dayton and Walla Walla, Washington, and in Milton-Freewater and Mission, Oregon, respectively. The purpose of the meetings was to learn what problems/issues and solutions the public considered most important to the study. The scoping meetings were conducted midway through the scoping period of August 28 through September 27, 2002.

The format for the meetings included afternoon open houses followed by a formal program in the evening. During the open houses, visitors reviewed

displays and spoke individually with study team members from the Corps and CTUIR. In the evenings, study team members presented an overview of the study and conducted an issue identification session.

During issue identification sessions, attendees were asked to respond to two scoping questions designed to facilitate their identification of problems that should be addressed in the study and ideas for increasing flows in the basin. Those questions were:

- 1. What do you think are the most important problems that should be addressed to restore the aquatic ecosystem in the Walla Walla River Basin?*
- 2. What actions do you think would increase flows in the Walla Walla River Basin?*

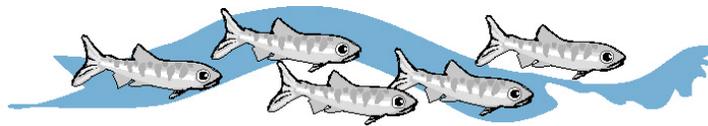
The problems and actions identified by those in attendance were listed on large paper flip charts. Participants were then asked to prioritize the items by identifying the one issue they felt was most important under each of the questions. This was accomplished by providing each attendee a single colored dot and asking them to place it beside the problem and action they felt was most important. At the end of each session, some listed items had multiple dots, while other items had one or none. This prioritizing process helped identify the problems and actions considered most significant by those in attendance.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Location	Date	Total Registered Attendees
Dayton, WA	September 11, 2002	13
Walla Walla, WA	September 12, 2002	21
Milton-Freewater, OR	September 16, 2002	45
Mission, OR	September 18, 2002	7

SCOPING MEETING RESULTS

Following is a listing, organized according to meeting location, of problems and actions identified. Numerals positioned beside some of the items represent the number of individuals who identified the problem or action as most significant to them. Attendees at Milton-Freewater were divided into four groups; therefore, items from that meeting are also presented according to group number. 🍃



WHAT WE LEARNED

SEPTEMBER 11, 2002, DAYTON, WA

QUESTION 1 - What do you think are the most important problems that should be addressed to restore the aquatic ecosystem in the Walla Walla River Basin?	QUESTION 2 - What actions do you think would increase flows in the Walla Walla River Basin?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 - Plan must not conflict with 2514 local basin plan. 3 - Improve coordination between all basin activities. 2 - Inherent distrust of government agencies. 1 - Restoration of salmon could cause restrictive water/land use. 1 - County does not want imminent domain used for water right acquisition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tribal participation 2514. - Domestic water use conflicts. - Storage and sources of water. - Need basin baseline (production) by reach-capability in basin. - Habitat is not a problem (Touchet). - Potential Forest Service/Public Lands involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 - Seasonal flow - needs will change with introduction of salmon and detriment of landowner. 2 - Look at how much water is in a particular reach and what time of year. 2 - Look at creating water market. 1 - Store it when you have it - release it when needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water Right Acquisition - Ability to buy beyond reasonable economic return. - More off-stream storage. - Use beavers and soft wood to create more pools of water. - U.S. Forest Service hydrologic data - when flows are coming off. - Washington law requires basin hydrology be considered. - Look at evaporation/transpiration (50%).

SEPTEMBER 12, 2002, WALLA WALLA, WA

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 - Even out flow of river. 2 - Plan by city(s)/counties for water conservation. 2 - Reservoirs. 1 - More water. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recharge of groundwater. - Water temperature in lower river (cooler). - Lack of/need for flood control. - Fish - lack of water for passage. - Focus on Tribes, also. - Water quality. - Lack of natural riparian in downtown Walla Walla. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 - Build reservoirs. 2 - Recycle water, using Columbia. 1 - Wells (more). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pump back project. - Evaluate/establish baseline data on flows. - Irrigation efficiency. - Leasing water rights. - Urban conservation. - Opposed to long-term buying of water rights. - Xeriscaping. - Storage on Touchet (dam). - Storage on Mill Creek. - Irrigated farmland in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) (market driven). - Balance ongoing efforts throughout basin.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2002, MILTON-FREEWATER, OR (GROUP 1)

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 - No storage/plenty of water. 2 - Tunnel to divert water from Wenaha into South Fork. 2 - Irrigation water rights (value). 2 - Consider riparian enhancement and other components of fish restoration (change geometry, woody debris). 1 - Reforestation of Blalock Mountain and rest of watershed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study what is happening to flows from Nursery Bridge to mouth of Walla Walla River. - Study groundwater effects - top 700 feet. - Passage at flood control-grade control structures at Nursery and Bennington. - Consider planning for water for fish enhancing irrigation for agriculture. - No new water rights to dryland farms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 - Build several small scale reservoirs (upper Touchet, South Fork and North Fork, and Mill Creek). 2 - Shallow aquifer recharge/discharge as a reservoir using winter flows. 1 - Dam on Couse Creek. 1 - Storage site on Dry Creek, Oregon. 1 - Reforestation in upper portion of watershed. 1 - Piping water from Snake or Columbia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deep basalt wells to increase flow. - Investigate ways to promote channel stabilization (to reduce loss of water through substrate). - Levee setback.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2002, MILTON-FREEWATER, OR (GROUP 2)

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 - Water efficiency in basin, especially irrigation inefficiency. 3 - Decentralized storage sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dam integrity. - Security/terrorist activity. 1 - Study ways that water is currently used in Basin (economics of it - wineries/farmers). 1 - Groundwater recharge. 1 - Squeezing water from farmers to put it back into the river. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What group will benefit the most from this restoration project? - Original braided stream configuration. - Cost to use current water rights. - Storage and other utilization of surplus seasonal waters. - Fiscal feasibility for centralized site vs. less expensive multiple sites. - Protection of water and water rights. - Consider shallow sediment aquifer as a storage site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 - Conservation efforts besides irrigation efficiency. 2 - Irrigation efficiency. 2 - Buy water. 1 - Develop market for water exchange. 1 - Buy land to acquire water rights. 1 - Storage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More rain. - Less irrigation. - Look at crops that require less irrigation especially consider with climate projections. - Consider economic impacts of changing crops. - Create/develop market for efficient crops. - Crop exchange for water. - Storage lower in basin (Pine Creek, Dry Creek, Birch Creek, Cottonwood, or Couse Creeks). - Schedule use patterns.

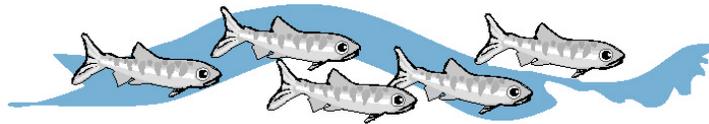
SEPTEMBER 16, 2002, MILTON-FREEWATER, OR (GROUP 3)

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 - Are restoration goals realistic/feasible? 2 - Surface ground water interaction. 1 - Gravel mining impacts - strike balance between agriculture and mining - the agencies that signed off on mining need to pick up tab - not agriculture. 1 - Maintain control of water now and in future (the water that is left in river). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dike areas - the straight areas. - If water is given up - want to see it go all the way down the Basin. - Can the current channel take increased flows? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is minimum flow? b. What is needed for restoration? c. Channel morphology. - Shallow wells have gone dry due to conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 - Off-river storage (reservoir). 2 - Channel modifications to approach historic conditions that may not require as much flow. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study shallow aquifers for recharge. - Water spreading (spring runoff). - Dry Creek, Couse Creek, North Fork (upper). - Water exchange with Columbia River (cost may make this not feasible). - Conservation, compensation. - Address impacts of other water users. - Need to make sure the upper reach of Walla Walla is maintained (manage logging, etc.). - Make sure all studies/agencies interact - make sure what each other is doing. Is National Marine Fisheries Service going to come up with numbers? - Use rainwater. - Establish weather stations. - Establish baseline conditions. - Deep wells (deep well levels are dropping...). - Recharge in spring (on deep wells).

SEPTEMBER 16, 2002, MILTON-FREEWATER, OR (GROUP 4)

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 - Maintain vibrant/vigorous agriculture community. 2 - What is going to be the impact on tributaries? 1 - Nursery-Tumalum identify black hole - how wide should channel be? (morphology). 1 - Restore flows to natural levels - water is needed for all uses (especially wetlands and Little Walla Walla). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operations and maintenance (ongoing) of Army, Corps of Engineers structures. - Impacts to irrigation diversion structures of increased flows. - Potential increased/full use of municipal water right (Milton-Freewater/Walla Walla). - Unexercised or junior water rights. - Oregon/Washington state water laws. - Would like to see how Umatilla Basin Project work informs this project. - Select streams/channels to address (alluvial fan). - Flood control impacts when channel is modified. - Be careful not to deplete shallow aquifer with irrigation efficiency measures (understand connections within system). - Soil erosion/sediment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 - Storage sites within Districts (eastside gravel pits). 1 - More efficient irrigations systems. 1 - Habitat restoration to restore flows. 1 - Flow augmentation from deep wells (feasibility). 1 - Bring in water from outside sources. 1 - Find mechanism to include upstream water users in Endangered Species Act targets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze effects on local economy (cumulative) of reducing acres under irrigation (especially acquisitions). - Deal with black hole. - Exchange pipeline to Nine mile. - Switch to supplemental sources earlier in season. - Recharge shallow aquifers. - Winter soil storage (in-ground). - Storage on Pine Creek, Dry Creek. - More efficient crops. - Cut trees greater than 6 inches wide in floodplain inside levee. - Municipal conservation. - Improve canopy cover on forest lands to retain snow pack longer.

QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2
<p>1 - Farm Bill - Requirements - Impacts on irrigation.</p> <p>1 - Educate non-tribal about tribal fishing and gathering rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Snail - New Zealand Mud Snail. - Change irrigation practices - to more natural system and to improve instream flows. - Access for harvest for tribal people. - Access potential increased usage for gathering (root digging). - Improper application of pesticides/herbicides. 	<p>3 - Storage off channel - Pine Creek.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not issue any further irrigation permits for at least 2 years. - Water exchange from Columbia River to minimize impacts on activities in the basin. - Better water conservation practices - agricultural. - 25-foot buffers (mandatory).



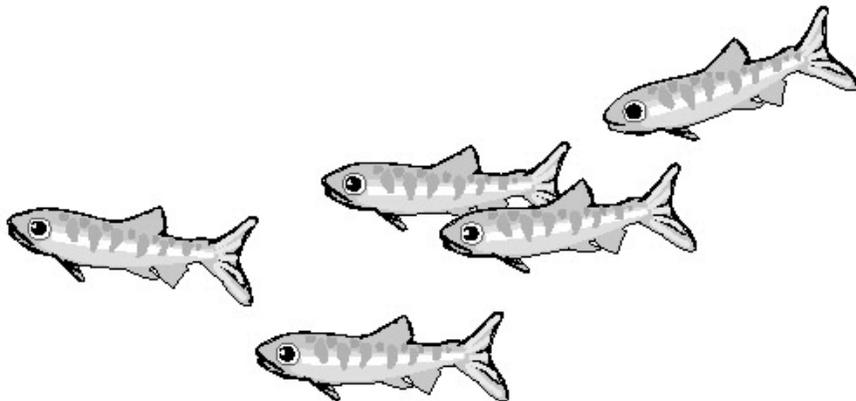
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our web site at www.nww.usace.army.mil. Under Current Topics and Issues, Hot Topics, click on Walla Walla River Basin Feasibility Study. Links to other information include CTUIR and others. Check back regularly for study updates, upcoming meetings, and new material.

To communicate with CTUIR’s environmental planner for the study, contact Mrs. Terry Shepherd; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Department of Natural Resources; Environmental Planning and Rights Protection; P.O. Box 638; Pendleton, OR 97801; telephone (541) 966-2360. ☞

STUDY COMMENTS

Comments on the study may be submitted through the web site or by mail. On the web site, click on Comment on the Study, fill out the comment form, and then click Submit. Mail written comments to Walla Walla District Corps of Engineers; Environmental Compliance Section; Attn: WWRBFS; 201 North Third Avenue; Walla Walla, WA 99362. If you wish to be added to the mailing list, contact the study’s environmental compliance coordinator, Mr. James “Red” Smith, telephone (509) 527-7244. ☞



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
WALLA WALLA DISTRICT
201 NORTH THIRD AVENUE
WALLA WALLA WA 99362-1876



STUDY MILESTONES

- Scoping Period Fall 2002
- Completed Draft FR/EIS Spring 2004
- Public Review of Draft FR/EIS Summer 2004
- Completed Preliminary Final FR/EIS Fall 2004
- Public Review of Preliminary Final FR/EIS Winter 2004
- Record of Decision Spring 2005

= Task completed