

Methow Watershed Council
Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2007
Twisp Town Hall

Council Members present were: Chairman Katharine Bill, Greg Knott, Ray Campbell, Vicky Welch, Nate Wehmeyer, Okanogan County, Tim Johnson, MVID, and Tom Gehring, Council Member Town of Twisp.

Absent: Vice-Chairman Mike Fort, Marty Williams and Secretary Jackie Moriarty.

Guests present: Rusty Post, Department of Ecology (DOE), Lee Bernheisel, Mary McCrea, Vaughn Jolley, Isabelle Spohn, and Bob Barwin, DOE.

Chairman Bill called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 17, 2007 MEETING

MOTION:

Council Member Campbell moved to approve the minutes of October 17, 2007 as sent. The motion was seconded by Council Member Gehring and passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM #104 & 111 - DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY GRANTS

No report at this time.

AGENDA ITEM #119 - GUEST SPEAKER – BOB BARWIN, DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Chairman Bill introduced Bob Barwin, DOE, and welcomed him to the meeting. Mr. Barwin gave a brief overview of his experience with the DOE and a brief history that has ultimately brought the Watershed Council to where it is today. Barwin explained that the Council is now tasked to inventory how much water is left from the original 2 cfs. how it is currently being used and how the remaining 2 cfs. will be reallocated. Last inventory was done in 1990 by DOE and the assumptions were extremely conservative and there was no real data to support those assumptions. Barwin stated it's important to balance the human demands against the aquatic demands and come to a compromise.

Chairman Bill – Question #1 – Where is the metering data stored and would the Methow Watershed Council be able to access this data to refine our knowledge of existing and future water use in the basin?

Barwin stated that we could simply use the 5,000 gallons per day (gpd) as a measurement figure, but stated that there has to be a better currency/metric to accurately measure the water usage and be fair. Mr. Barwin referred to a metric, the choice of what currency/metric that would be used to get the actual water use and relate that to the 2 cfs. is up to the Council.

Chairman Bill discussed the 600 gpd figure that is in the Watershed Plan and has been apparently agreed upon as a valid figure to use by the DOE. Chairman Bill asked for Barwin's interpretation of how accurate that number was. Barwin stated that there are various elements that need to be factored into the 600 gpd figure, seasonal use, structures, etc. Campbell discussed the consumptive use of data that was collected questioning whether or not recharge factors were built into the previous study. Barwin stated that the study/model that had been done was only to calculate the draw down of instream flow not stream recharge.

Barwin discussed the success of the Wenatchee Watershed Council. Barwin explained that in Wenatchee they started by identifying the impact during the critical time of the year and ascertain if the flow needed to protect the aquatic life can be maintained during that period of time, if so it was determined to be safe. Wenatchee plan works towards the decrease of duplicate water rights or uses and encourages people to work with the local water entities to minimize this from happening.

Barwin stated that metering for all water services was inevitable. Greg asked about voluntary metering in Wenatchee and how it was received. Barwin stated at first it was not well received, but after it was explained the discussion agreement was reached with the mandatory metering. The City of Wenatchee has agreed to work with the Council in providing access to used metering equipment. Greg asked what number of meters would have to be put in before the DOE would consider it defensible in court. Barwin stated that in the Methow Valley, metering data from Twisp plus 5% of users outside of the towns would be enough to estimate average use. Metering outside of towns would be voluntary. This data would be considered representative for the area. Barwin warned the Council that it is a must to get buy in from water purveyors, water users, agencies and entities on the project.

Regarding the 2cfs reservation, and whether that is an accurate number, Mr. Barwin advised the Council to leave it as is in the plan. Write a document that tells why water planning is important in the Methow and point out the positives and the benefits. Make your case regarding public benefit when going to change the rule and prove that it is in the public's best interest.

Chairman Bill – Question #2 – Please outline the process that DOE would use to process a transfer of water rights from somewhere in the Basin to the Town of Twisp.

Barwin replied that the question to ask when transferring rights is will this transfer impair existing rights. His example was if water rights are being transferred from a source that is not constant to a place where water will constantly be pumped this would not be like uses. Barwin also stated that the further the distance from where water right originates to the transfer location, the more unfavorably DOE will look upon the transfer.

The process is to negotiate, file an application, public notice then goes to Conservancy Board and/or DOE, a decision is then published and there is an appeal period. Barwin stated that the Town of Twisp would have to submit a permit to receive water allocations from the Early Winters. Transferring from the domestic 2cfs reservation to a municipal use would require a rule change.

Chairman Bill – Question #3 – Please explain the jurisdiction and permitting procedure for new wells as coordinated between the State Department of Health (DOH), DOE and Okanogan County.

Barwin stated the bigger the water system the more stringent the rules and reporting requirements. A DOH water system plan identifies water rights and uses and whether they are in compliance, the water system plan is sent to DOE for review, DOH works with DOE. Smaller water systems are not so strictly monitored. Currently group wells are not defined in the reservation, unless the group well stays below 5,000 gpd which is defined in the reservation.

Chairman Bill – Question #4 – Please describe an example of successful watershed planning in other basins in the State, and explain the why and how this success occurred.

Barwin again discussed the Wenatchee Watershed Council. Barwin stated that the river is in good shape other than looking hard at the summer usage relating to the aquatic life. Wenatchee was able to engage many agencies and entities in the process. They took a look at the way life and recreation has changed and what they believe is in the future for the area and they gave opportunities to give consideration to options and to get the plan done.

Council Member Knott discussed consumptive use versus non-consumptive use and how or if we could account for recharge. Barwin explained that wastewater produced in a home that goes to either a septic system or treatment plant comes down to amounts and location. It must be determined between the point of withdraw and the point of recharge what affect it is having on that specific area. To determine the recharge impact data would need to be collected on mound system and more traditional system which would require the use of a soil specialist. This testing would be site specific and system design data representative of the area. Barwin suggested implementing a small septic recharge study with various systems in various substrates.

Council Member Campbell - How does the DOE establish that the water drawn from exempt wells completed in closed basins is not in continuity with basin water supply?

Permit process for property owner and well drilling contractor to assure that construction meets the requirements of the rule. Closed basins are not counted in the 2cfs rule, but are subject with respect to the senior water right holders in the particular area.

Mr. Barwin discussed Group A and B wells in regards to counties. DOE and Counties are working on a case by case basis on large developments.

Chairman Bill passed out a timeline that Rusty Post had developed taking from Chairman Bill's original timeline.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The Council suggested the next meeting date for November 26, 2007 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION:

A motion was made by Council Member Knott to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.