

# Walla Walla Pilot Local Water Management Program

## Interim Progress Report

Submitted to the  
Washington State Legislature by the  
Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership  
in collaboration with the  
Washington State Department of Ecology

Pursuant to  
Second Substitute House Bill 1580, Chapter 183, Laws of 2009  
(RCW 90.92)

December 2012



Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership

*For Fish. For Farms. For Everyone.*



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This report is available on the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership website at:  
<http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/downloads/2012report.pdf>

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Executive Summary .....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Pilot Local Water Management: Background and Formation .....	2
Establishing the Partnership as a Water Management Board .....	3
Composition of the Partnership Board and Committees.....	4
Partnership Authorities, Duties and Responsibilities.....	5
Funding .....	7
Actions and Accomplishments: Implementing Innovative Water Management .....	9
Water Banking .....	9
Local Water Plans .....	12
Innovative Transactions .....	14
Exempt Well Mitigation Exchange.....	16
Integration of Efforts.....	17
Recommendations for Improvement of the Local Water Plan Process .....	19
Appendices	
A: RCW 90.92 Pilot Local Water Management Program .....	21
B: Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board and Committee Members.....	29
C: Summary of Local Water Plans .....	31
D: Walla Walla Partner Activities – Leveraging Strengths and Enhancing Investments.....	34
E: Strategic Planning and Communications .....	41

## Acknowledgements

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Participating water right holders and stakeholders serving on the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board, Policy Advisory Group and Water Resource Panel. The complete list of Board and committee members is in Appendix B.

The Washington State Department of Ecology, in appreciation of agency efforts to support the work of the Partnership.

Contributors of the cover photographs: Sonja Gooding, Staci Huett and Mark Brotherton.

Partnership Executive Director Cathy Schaeffer and Program Director Chris Hyland, for their work to develop this report and administer local water management programs.

In memory of Greg P. Farrens, the Citizen at Large member of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board since it was formed in 2009 until his untimely passing in October 2012. Greg served as the Vice-Chair of the Partnership Board in 2012, and was widely respected for his deep community connections and agricultural irrigation expertise.

## Executive Summary

In 2009, the Washington State Legislature unanimously approved Second Substitute House Bill 1580 (Establishing a pilot local water management program in one qualified jurisdiction) as a ten-year pilot program. The act was signed by Gov. Christine Gregoire and codified in RCW 90.92. The Walla Walla Watershed is provided an unprecedented opportunity under RCW 90.92 to solve local water management challenges in a new way, piloting a cooperative approach that includes local shared-governance and innovative tools to address the complex and intertwined problems of low stream flows, endangered fish populations, and competing water demands. This document is an interim progress report, the first of three required reports in RCW 90.92.060, summarizing the previous three years' actions, funding, accomplishments, and recommendations of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership.

Implementation of the ten-year pilot program began in July 2009, with Ecology's recognition of the first and only local water management board, the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership (Partnership), to focus on managing water so that people, rivers, farms and fish can all continue to share this valuable resource long into the future. Consistent with RCW 90.92, the Partnership formed as a local public agency and advanced in developing its authorities, duties and responsibilities as a local water management board. The Partnership's water management authority is designed to significantly contribute to the enhancement and restoration of streamflow to support salmon recovery while maintaining the availability of water for out-of-stream uses including agriculture and municipal water. Premised on the concept of "Flow from Flexibility," the Partnership's local approach is intended to encourage water conservation by allowing flexibility in how water is withdrawn, conveyed and applied to help optimize out-of-stream uses. The innovative, voluntary nature of this program originates from the belief that the key to augmenting stream flows is for water users to be afforded greater flexibility beyond what conventional water management options can deliver.

The Partnership is applying the tools provided by RCW 90.92 to implement the voluntary development of site-specific Local Water Plans, where water users are allowed flexibility in how they use their water to enhance stream conditions for fish. With the unique authority to bank water rights, the Partnership is entering into non-use agreements with water right holders for environmental benefit, effectively stopping the relinquishment clock during the agreement period and returning banked water rights back to users at the end of the agreement. Partnership programs have enjoyed eager adoption by water right holders during the initial three years of the pilot, with a total of 92 water banking non-use agreements and three Local Water Plans executed to-date, depositing 8,870 acre-feet annually of surface water and groundwater rights into the Partnership's one-of-a-kind water bank for environmental enhancement.

The Partnership is also facilitating paid transactions for instream trust water, through voluntary agreements to lease or purchase water rights for instream habitat improvement. The Partnership is taking a lead role in working locally to balance the growing water needs of rural development with existing instream and out-of-stream water rights, by administering a fee-based mitigation

exchange for new domestic wells on the Washington side of the Walla Walla Basin. Additional activities include strategic planning and integration to address critical low flows, establishing a mechanism to employ Agreements Not to Divert to protect water instream, and forward-looking programs for creative problem-solving among competing water demands.

Under RCW 90.92, the innovative approach to managing water in the Walla Walla Basin explores uncharted territory in how local shared governance and new resource management tools can succeed in a collaborative environment where community members join with water users, Tribes and stakeholders in developing water management solutions. Recommendations for improvement of the Local Water Plan process, funding and program implementation are provided in this report, including:

- Maintain funding for implementation of RCW 90.92 throughout the remainder of the ten-year pilot period, with targeted investment through legislative budget proviso or dedicated grant funds through the Washington State Department of Ecology to support program operations of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership.
- Support the Washington State Department of Ecology in their effort to appoint a local Watermaster in the Walla Walla Basin.
- Support enhancement and coordination of the Walla Walla Basin monitoring network to enable more robust tracking and reporting of flow restoration achievements of the Partnership and other partners.
- No changes to RCW 90.92 are recommended at this time, but early success suggests the Partnership's flexible water use approach will provide valuable insight when looking at ways to improve Washington water management.

Learning from the past and building on this innovative local approach, the Partnership is positioned to successfully implement RCW 90.92 with a future vision for the Walla Walla Watershed to achieve and sustain a healthy river system where human and natural communities can thrive and flourish.

## Introduction

The Walla Walla Watershed is provided an unprecedented opportunity under RCW 90.92 to solve local water management challenges in a new way, piloting a cooperative approach with local shared-governance and innovative tools to address the complex and intertwined problems of low stream flows, endangered fish populations, and competing water demands. Implementation of RCW 90.92 as a ten-year pilot program began in July 2009, with Ecology’s recognition of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership (Partnership) as a local water management board in Water Resource Inventory Area 32. Consistent with RCW 90.92 (Appendix A), the Partnership is established and implementing its authorities, duties and responsibilities to locally manage water for people, farms and fish in the Walla Walla valley.

The Partnership’s water management authority is designed to significantly contribute to the enhancement and restoration of streamflow to support salmon recovery, while maintaining the availability of water for out-of-stream uses including agriculture and municipal water. Premised on the concept of “Flow from Flexibility,” the Partnership’s local approach is intended to encourage water conservation by allowing flexibility in how water is withdrawn, conveyed and applied to optimize out-of-stream uses. The innovative, voluntary nature of this program originates from the belief that the key to augmenting stream flows is for water users to be afforded greater flexibility beyond what conventional water management options can deliver.

**“Flexible measures, such as local water plans, are beginning steps to develop innovative approaches toward flow restoration without adversely impacting agriculture and other business interests. Working together to create solutions has been CTUIR's approach, and it has proven to be both successful and enjoyable, addressing these natural resource challenges through collaborative means.”** *Representing the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) as a Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board member from 2009 to 2011, John Barkley is the Chairman of the CTUIR Tribal Water Commission, and sees the Partnership as another venue vital to CTUIR and basin stakeholders in restoring flows and for the protection and exercise of CTUIR Treaty rights.*

This report was prepared in compliance with RCW 90.92 by the Partnership in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). Accordingly, “The board, in collaboration with the department, must provide a written report to the legislature by December 1, 2012, December 1, 2015, and December 1, 2018. The report must summarize the actions, funding, and accomplishments of the board in the previous three years, and submit recommendations for improvement of the Local Water Plan process. The 2018 report must also contain recommendations on the future of the board.” (RCW 90.92.060)

This document is an interim progress report submitted by the Partnership in December 2012, summarizing Partnership activities and accomplishments from the pilot program’s origination in July 2009 through November 30, 2012. In the following pages, the Partnership discusses its organizational formation, authorities, collaborative accomplishments, and recommendations.

## Pilot Local Water Management: Background and Formation

The Walla Walla Watershed's innovative water management concept developed over years of planning and coordination, beginning with a collectively supported concept which began to take hold in 2005, identified as the Walla Walla Water Management Initiative. The Initiative sought to collaboratively address the Walla Walla Basin's water management challenges, bringing together water users, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, state agencies led by the Washington State Department of Ecology, environmental interests and local leadership to achieve goals for establishing flexible local water management while supporting improved flow conditions for fish recovery. The concept of local water management gained momentum with support of a proposal to the Washington State Governor and Legislature in 2008<sup>1</sup> to pilot local water management as the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership. The proposal focused on solving the significant water challenges in the Walla Walla Basin, including the need to coordinate efforts, increase stream flows in an over-appropriated basin with limited water resources, identify pathways to resolve interstate water issues with Oregon, and enact new legislation to authorize this work within a ten-year pilot program.

The proposal for local water management was drafted into legislation and introduced to the 2009 legislature as House Bill 1580. There was strong in-basin and statewide support for the pilot local water management program, leading to unanimous legislative approval and the Governor's signature in the spring of 2009. The final legislation (2SHB1580) was codified in Chapter 90.92 RCW, including recognition of the contributions, cooperation and commitment of Walla Walla Basin partners:

*The legislature finds that the Walla Walla Watershed community faces substantial challenges in planning for future water use and meeting the needs of fish, farms, and people. The legislature further finds that the participants in the Walla Walla Watershed planning group have demonstrated exceptional cooperation in developing an innovative water management concept that enhances flexibility in water use while protecting ecological functions. The legislature also recognizes the significant contribution of Representative William Grant's leadership in the creation of a Walla Walla pilot design to authorize local water management activity. (RCW 90.92.010)*

This Walla Walla Basin pilot effort is modeling a new way of managing water, elevating watershed management to a local-leadership level and building on the foundations laid over years of cooperation. The Partnership is an example of unprecedented collaboration, with local stakeholders working together to pilot water management at the watershed scale and address the basin's water management challenges in a way that benefits fish, farms and people.

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<sup>1</sup> This 2008 report (Publication no. 08-11-061) entitled "Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership: A Proposal for a Pilot Local Water Management Program in the Walla Walla Basin" is available on the Department of Ecology's website at [www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0811061.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0811061.html).



## ***Establishing the Partnership as a Water Management Board***

The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership was formed in August 2009, with Ecology’s support and approval of the local initiating entities’ petition<sup>2</sup> to establish a local water management board in the portion of the Walla Walla Basin that drains to the Walla Walla River<sup>3</sup> as depicted in Figure 1. In reviewing the local petition for a water management board, Ecology, in consultation with the initiating entities, considered how the Walla Walla Basin met the criteria of community support, local watershed management plan, commitment to enhance stream flows for fish, and existence of an adequate monitoring network. Through this evaluation, Ecology recognized the WRIA 32 Instream Flow Rule (WAC 173-532) adopted in 2007, the status of the Walla Walla Basin planning area as a fish-critical basin with a history of severely impaired flows, and adopted watershed planning implementation plan with salmon recovery plan. In addition, Ecology gave strong consideration to the Walla Walla Basin for having completed a judicial proceeding to adjudicate water rights.

**“Where this innovative local water planning approach is successful in providing fish flows and common-sense water use flexibilities, there is great potential for local irrigators to lead the way in resolving competing demands for water while preserving water rights for use by our farms, industries and people.”**

*Pepper Bridge Local Water Plan 11-01 irrigator, **Bob Rugar**, values the local water management approach.*

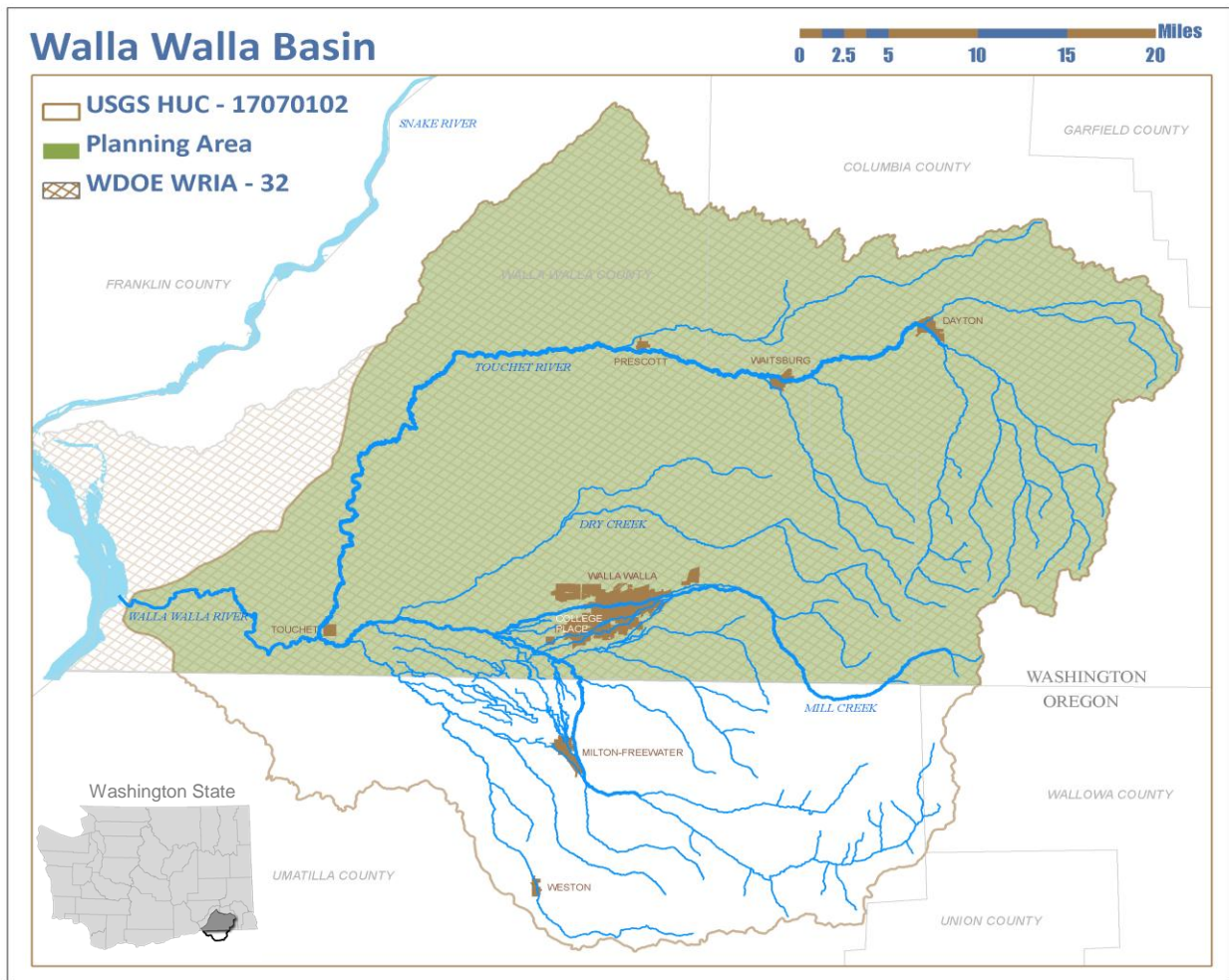
The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership was established on August 11, 2009 as the WRIA 32 water management board, a local public agency (municipality) directed by a Board of nine members as required in 90.92 RCW. With the Board populated and the planning area designated, organizational documents were adopted by the Partnership including bylaws and operating principles and procedures. With receipt of initial funding and grants, the Partnership employed staff and began working to establish the programs and framework for implementing the legislation.

A standard for involvement and transparency was set, with monthly Partnership Board and committee meetings advertised as public meetings, convening regularly at the Walla Walla Community College Water & Environmental Center, with meeting information posted and archived online at [www.wallawallawatershed.org](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org).

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<sup>2</sup> The initiating entities in the Walla Walla basin collectively submitted a petition to Ecology on July 24, 2009 requesting establishment of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership as a local water management board under Ch. 183, 2009 Session Laws created under Second Substitute House Bill 1580. The Ecology response on August 10, 2009 included findings that all requirements were satisfied and approved establishment of the WRIA 32 water management board. See [www.wallawallawatershed.org/partnership/about/partnership-primer](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/partnership/about/partnership-primer) for petition details.

<sup>3</sup> The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership’s planning area comprises the Washington portion of the Walla Walla basin, including the mainstem Walla Walla River, Touchet River and their tributaries in Walla Walla and Columbia Counties. This area involves most of Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 32, exclusive of the Burbank area in the western portion of WRIA 32, which drains to the Snake and Columbia Rivers.



**Figure 1: Map of the Walla Walla Watershed Basin.** The green shaded area is the Partnership’s planning area in the Washington part of the basin.

***Composition of the Partnership Board and Committees***

The Partnership’s legislatively identified stakeholder-Board structure and advisory committees provide a unique local governance structure, with current members identified in Appendix B. The nine-member Partnership Board includes entity-appointed representatives of Walla Walla County, Columbia County, the City of Walla Walla, Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and a representative jointly appointed by the Walla Walla County and Columbia Conservation Districts. The six entity-appointed representatives conducted an open selection process to appoint three at large Partnership Board members to include a water rights holder, a citizen and an environmental interests representative. Partnership Board members serve two-year renewable terms, and select a Chair and Vice-Chair at the February Annual meeting to lead meetings and represent the Partnership.

The Water Resource Panel includes Board appointed members with expertise and understanding regarding surface water and groundwater monitoring and hydrological analysis, irrigation management and engineering, water rights, and fisheries habitat and economic development. The

Board invited participation from the Department of Ecology and the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Water Resource Panel provides technical assistance for the development of the Local Water Plans and provides advice to the Partnership on the criteria for establishment of Local Water Plans and the approval, denial, or modification of the plans. Water Resource Panel members serve two-year renewable terms.

The Partnership is advised by two committees created by the Board: the Policy Advisory Group and the Water Resource Panel, with current members identified in Appendix B. For the Policy Advisory Group, the Board invited participation from water users, community members, businesses and landowners. In addition, invitations were issued to the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other affected state agencies. The Board also appointed Policy Advisory Group members from local government, academia, watershed and salmon recovery entities, businesses, and agricultural and environmental organizations. The Policy Advisory Group assists and advises the Board in coordinating and developing water resource-related programs, planning, and activities, including the coordination of efforts with all jurisdictions of the planning area and development of the Partnership's strategic actions. Policy Advisory Group members serve two-year renewable terms.

### ***Partnership Authorities, Duties and Responsibilities***

The Partnership has worked in all areas of legislatively recognized authorities, duties, and responsibilities as identified in RCW 90.92.050 and described below:

*Assume the duties, responsibilities, and all current activities of the watershed planning unit and the initiating governments authorized in RCW 90.82.040.* The Partnership has assumed the work of the planning unit, and invited planning unit participants to engage in the Partnership's committees. In situations where the planning unit has been asked to review documents, respond to Ecology solicitations for comments, or prioritize projects, the Partnership has committed public meeting time and resources to respond on behalf of WRIA 32.

*Develop strategic actions for the planning area by building on the watershed plan.* The Partnership developed the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan and Strategic Plan Update 2012-2015 to include actions built on the 2005 Walla Walla Watershed Plan<sup>4</sup>; strategic planning documents are on the Partnership's website at [www.wallawallawatershed.org/partnership/strategic-plan](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/partnership/strategic-plan).

*Adopt and revise criteria, guidance, and processes to effectuate the purpose of this chapter.* The Partnership's Guidelines and Criteria for implementing RCW 90.92 is a document that includes comprehensive chapters to address each water management program area including water banking, Local Water Plans, the exempt well mitigation exchange, water right transactions, and Agreements Not to Divert. The Guidelines and Criteria document is on the Partnership's website at [www.wallawallawatershed.org/downloads/guidance.pdf](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/downloads/guidance.pdf).

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<sup>4</sup> The 2005 WRIA 32 Walla Walla Watershed Plan and 2006 Detailed Implementation Plan were completed by the Walla Walla Watershed Planning Unit. Both the Watershed Plan and Detailed Implementation Plan are available online at: [www.wallawallawatershed.org/files/wplan](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/files/wplan).

*Administer the Local Water Plan process.* Development of the program guidance and associated framework to administer the Local Water Plan process provides a roadmap for proposal development, review and public comments, State Environmental Policy Act review, and dispute resolution. Communications through the Partnership's website, Facebook page, and group/individual contacts and presentations serve to inform water users and the public.

*Oversee Local Water Plan implementation.* With approval and implementation of Local Water Plans, the Partnership oversees the activities with annual compliance reporting. In situations where water rights are impaired, the Partnership is positioned to initiate a dispute resolution process; there were no impairments requiring dispute resolution during 2009-2012.

*Manage banked water as authorized under this chapter.* The Partnership reaches out to water right holders to solicit participation in the water bank; and banked water rights are documented with Ecology and tracked within the Partnership's water banking database. Agreement compliance is managed through an annual reporting framework.

*Acquire water rights by donation, purchase, or lease.* The Partnership, as a Qualified Local Entity within the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program, is working to implement lease and purchase transactions for the Washington State Trust Water Rights Program, and has established program guidelines for evaluating transaction tools. The Partnership is positioned to develop acquisition programs whereby the Partnership could hold water rights for reallocation to other uses or instream habitat.

*Participate in local, state, tribal, federal, and multistate basin water planning initiatives and programs.* Through strategic program integration and maintaining a responsive posture when challenges emerge, the Partnership is engaging in basinwide efforts including comprehensive flow enhancement planning, monitoring network coordination, Columbia River water management planning and state/federal flow management activities for salmon recovery.

*Enter into agreements with water rights holders to not divert water that becomes available as a result of Local Water Plans, water bank activities, or other programs and projects endorsed by the Partnership and Department of Ecology.* The Partnership has adopted program guidance and a structure for developing and implementing Agreements Not to Divert. Outreach to water right holders is focused in critical reaches, where use of this unique flow protection tool enables coordinated water conservation to maximize the effectiveness of instream contributions.

In addition, the Partnership may acquire, purchase, hold, lease, manage, occupy, and sell real and personal property, including water rights, or any interest in water rights, enter into and perform all necessary contracts, appoint and employ necessary agents and employees, including an executive director and fix their compensation, employ contractors including contracts for professional services, and do all lawful acts required and expedient to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The Partnership office is co-located at the William A. Grant Water & Environmental Center on the campus of Walla Walla Community College, where the Partnership's two full-time staff members administer and manage the pilot program organization including maintenance of project records and fiscal forms; conducting, coordinating, and scheduling of all meetings and activities; complying

with legislative requirements; and maintaining effective communication with Ecology, the Washington State legislature, initiating entities, and all affected local, state or federal jurisdictions. In addition to employed staff, the Partnership engages three professional service contractors providing accounting, legal, and water resources expertise.

The legislation identifies that the Partnership constitutes an independently funded entity, and may provide for its own funding as determined by the Partnership. The Partnership is allowed to solicit and accept grants, loans, and donations and may adopt fees for services it provides; however, the Partnership may not impose taxes or acquire property, including water rights, by the exercise of eminent domain. The Partnership may distribute available funds as grants or loans to Local Water Plans or other water initiatives and projects that further the Partnership's goals. Operation of the Partnership during the 2009-2012 period is consistent with this funding authority.

The ability of the Partnership to fully meet its duties under this chapter is dependent on the level of funding available. If sufficient funding is not available to the Partnership to carry out its duties, the Partnership may, in consultation with Ecology, establish a plan that determines and sets priorities for implementation of the Partnership's duties. To-date, funding priorities have been included in the strategic planning process and addressed in development of the annual work plan and budget.

The Partnership, and its members and staff, acting in their official capacities, are immune from liability and are not subject to any cause of action or claim for damages arising from acts or omissions engaged in under this chapter. Outside of the legislative immunity, the Partnership Board carries general liability insurance coverage.

Upon the creation of the Partnership as a water management board, and for the duration of the Partnership, the existing planning unit for the planning area, established under RCW 90.82.040, is dissolved and all assets, funds, files, planning documents, pending plans and grant applications, and other current activities of the planning unit are transferred to the Partnership. In 2009, the Partnership and Walla Walla County entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to address the transfer of the planning unit documents, funds and activities to the Partnership. This Memorandum remains in effect during the ten-year pilot program, with actions including transfer of remaining watershed planning funds to the Partnership in 2011 and file maintenance continuing.

## **Funding**

The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership is a local public agency formed under RCW 90.92, which enables the Partnership to operate as an independently-funded entity and provide for its own funding. Since it was established in 2009, the Partnership's primary funding objective has been to secure monies to support Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership operations, implementation of strategic actions, and leverage resources for watershed projects.

In 2009, Partnership start-up funding was provided by a Walla Walla County and Port of Walla Walla Economic Development grant. Also that year, the Washington State Legislature provided a \$450,000 budget proviso for the first two years of Partnership operations, administered by the Department of Ecology as an Implementation/Operations grant. Ecology prioritized the

Partnership in its 2011-2013 budget to provide bridge funding during the first part of the state fiscal year 2011 Implementation/Operations grant; funding was increased to carry-through the remainder of the biennium, totaling \$359,000 for the 2011-2013 timeframe.

Other sources of funding include the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board coordination grants (2009-2013) and Department of Ecology Administrative Support grant (2009-2010). In 2011, Walla Walla County Watershed Planning carryover funding was transferred to the Partnership to convey assets and complete dissolution of the planning unit. Fees were collected under the Partnership's role as local administrator of the exempt well mitigation exchange; the one-time payment of \$2,000 for each new participating mitigant was collected for one new well credit in 2011. Grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program and Washington State Department of Ecology capital funding supported the Partnership's instream flow acquisition program, providing funds for transaction costs beginning in 2011 with continuing grants in place through 2013. This move toward a more diverse funding approach is a continuing effort, bringing new opportunities to leverage Partnership resources for flow enhancement projects and bolster local capacity for watershed improvement projects by basin implementers.

In 2012, the Partnership financial operations and grant compliance activities were the subject of a routine accountability audit conducted by the Washington State Auditor's Office. No findings were reported from the 2009-2011 timeframe, and the audit report No. 1007747 is accessible at the Washington State Auditor's Office website of audit reports downloadable from: [www.sao.wa.gov/auditreports/auditreportfiles/ar1007747.pdf](http://www.sao.wa.gov/auditreports/auditreportfiles/ar1007747.pdf).

For 2013-2015, the resources required to maintain the Partnership's local water management program and support its basic activities will be approximately \$450,000. This funding is being requested from the 2013 Ecology watershed planning implementation grant funds. In addition, resources in 2013-2015 will be required to support implementation of the flow from flexibility projects, develop paid trust water right transactions and Agreements Not to Divert, and administer the water bank. These additional resources have been sought from the Ecology capital acquisition grant funding as well as other funding sources.

Secure funding in years 2013-2019 is required for sustained progress toward the Partnership's goals, and to launch new activities to improve watershed conditions. The Partnership will develop a comprehensive funding strategy in the 2013-2015 period to identify funding options to enhance financial viability of the organization. Potential outcomes may include seeking dedicated funding from a combination of sources including the Washington State Legislature; establishing a long-term funding commitment from an environmental foundation focused on watershed management; or developing a fundraising committee to pursue more diverse grant opportunities and raise project funds through partner entities with taxing authority. Based on the Walla Walla Watershed's achievements thus far, there exists a substantial level of local support for this effort and recognition that the Partnership has the potential for providing greater public benefits in the future as a vehicle to promote locally-based watershed management.

## **Actions and Accomplishments: Implementing Innovative Water Management**

The Partnership's ten-year pilot for local water management is modeling flexibility in managing water for flow enhancement, with local leadership and an integrated approach to address the Walla Walla Watershed's water resource challenges for fish, farms and people. During these initial three years of operation, the Partnership focused on establishing and implementing innovative water management programs consistent with the Partnership's authorities provided as a local water management board under RCW 90.92. In 2009 and 2010, the primary focus of Partnership was to work with water users to develop and implement reach-scale "Flow from Flexibility" Local Water Plans and launch the Walla Walla Water Bank to more efficiently and effectively manage water through banking of voluntary water contributions. The Partnership's "Flow from Flexibility" water management programs are achieving success in enhancing stream conditions, encouraging water conservation, and protecting participants from relinquishing their water rights by offering flexibility and cooperation as the currency of innovation.

The Partnership realized new achievements in 2011 and 2012 through growing participation and expanded programs for an exempt well mitigation exchange, compensated trust water right acquisitions, and developing a mechanism to protect water instream through Agreements Not to Divert. With momentum growing, stakeholder integration of efforts contributed to innovative problem-solving and coordination to consider all basin needs as the Partnership advanced its local water management pilot effort. Information on how to participate in Partnership programs is available on the Partnership website at: [www.wallawallawatershed.org/participate](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/participate). The major activities and accomplishments for each area of water management program development implementation are summarized below.

### ***Water Banking***

The Partnership's Walla Walla Water Bank offers an opportunity for water users to conserve water and preserve their water rights through participation under RCW 90.92.070. Under Washington State law, five or more years of successive non-use may trigger relinquishment of agricultural water rights; this "use-it or lose-it" system can encourage people to use their water even when it's not needed. The Partnership's water banking program provides a balanced alternative, offering a mechanism for preserving water rights and sanctioning conservation.

The Partnership is uniquely authorized to accept water rights into the water bank, hold it for environmental benefit while the water right holder chooses to conserve water, and return it to the water right holder with its original priority date and other conditions intact when the agreement ends. Water banking is available for surface water rights and groundwater rights within the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership planning area, with voluntarily participation on a temporary or permanent basis, under terms and conditions agreed upon by the water rights holder and the Partnership as provided in RCW 90.92.

The Partnership’s water banking program was established for implementation in phases, with the initial focus on enrolling water right holders to bank a portion or the entirety of their water right in exchange for relief from relinquishment of that water during the banked term. In 2009 and 2010, water banking program development activities were coordinated with the Water Resource Panel and included preparation of draft procedures for reviewing, approving and monitoring water banking non-use agreements. Draft agreement templates were developed, and coordination with Ecology occurred to identify procedures for documentation of participation. Draft guidance documents, including criteria and processes, were developed and finalized, with adoption in January 2010 to launch the water banking non-use agreement program.

Participation in the Partnership’s water bank is designed to be a simple process to encourage participation, starting with a water right holder working with Partnership staff to identify their water right information as part of the brief application. With approval of the water right holder and the Partnership, the water rights (or portion of a water right) enter the bank but are still owned by the water right holder and not subject to relinquishment for non-use during the agreement term. When the water banking agreement term ends, water rights return to their same status as was held prior to participation; the agreement period is simply deemed as a “tolling of the clock” during the authorized non-use period and participation does not permanently change a water right. Because these water banking agreements do not include an “extent and validity” review, banked water rights are not available for reallocation out-of-stream but instead are held by the Partnership for environmental enhancement. Enhanced flows from banked surface water rights benefit endangered fish species that rely on local streams for passage and instream habitat.

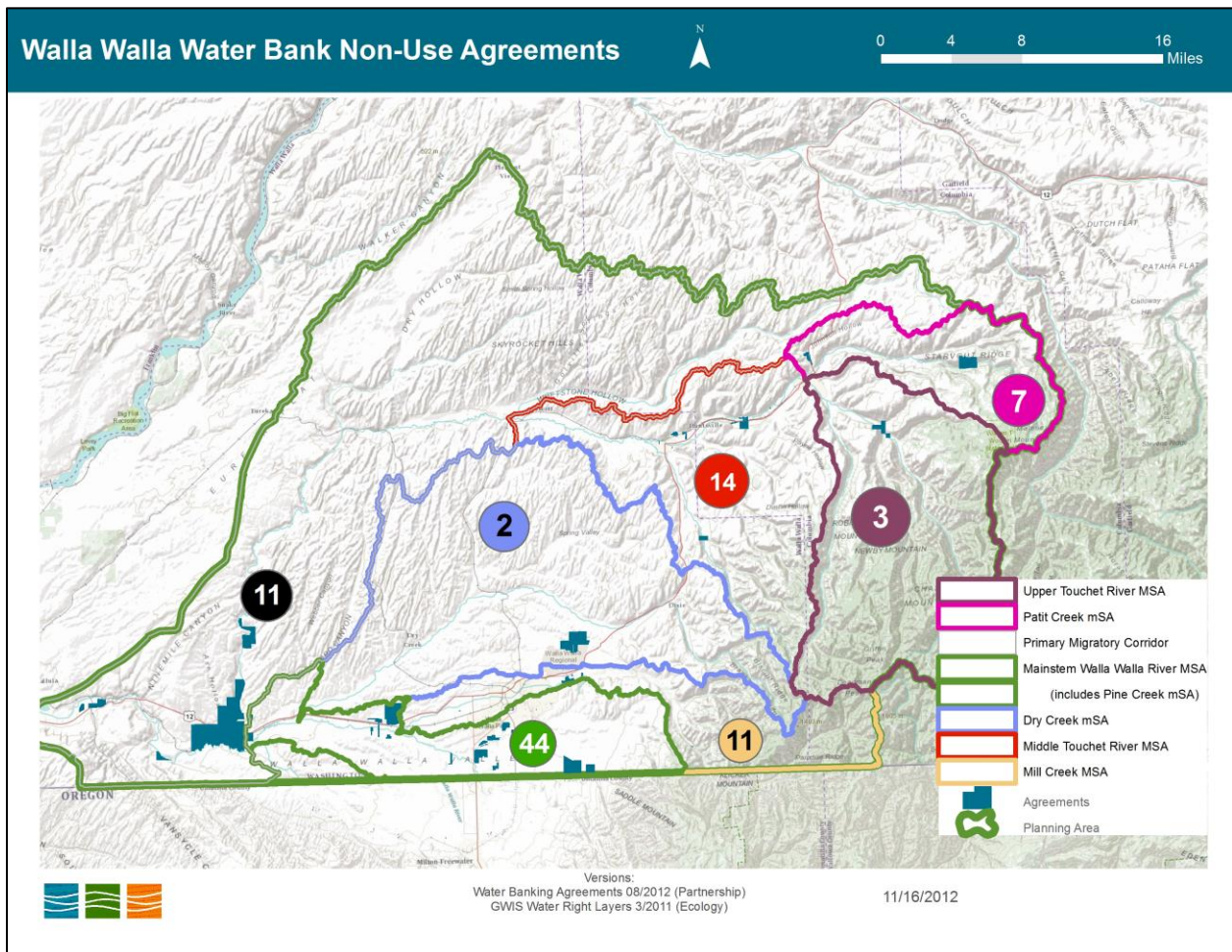
The water banking non-use agreement program has enjoyed eager adoption by water right holders, with 92 water banking non-use agreements executed between local water users and the Partnership through November 2012. Within these 92 banking agreements, groundwater and surface water rights totaling 8,418 acre-feet annually are deposited in the Walla Walla Water Bank. These water banking agreements represent an instantaneous total of banked water rights adding up to 29 cubic feet per second (cfs) and up to 5,689 gallons per minute (gpm) basinwide, depending on the time of year. Table 1 identifies the annual quantity and monthly instantaneous quantity of water rights conserved and banked through non-use agreements.

Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Water Bank Non-Use Agreements													
Annual Banked Water Rights (acre-feet)	Instantaneous Banked Water Rights by Month and Source in CFS (cubic feet per second) and GPM (gallons per minute)												
	Source	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<b>8,418</b>	Surface Water (CFS)	14.2	14.2	14.2-28.4	25.3	23.5	23.5	22.3-23.3	23.3	21.4-20.4	14.2	14.2-29.2	14.2-29.2
	Alluvial Groundwater (GPM)	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715	2,715
	Basalt Groundwater (GPM)	1,925	1,925	2,974	2,974	2,974	2,974	2,974	2,974	2,974	1,925	1,925	1,925
	Total Groundwater	4,640	4,640	5,689	5,689	5,689	5,689	5,689	5,689	5,689	4,640	4,640	4,640

**Table 1: Walla Walla Water Bank Non-Use Agreements.** Summary of banked water rights from water banking non-use agreements through November 2012.



Water banking participants include individuals, multi-owner water right holders, municipalities, and state agencies. Outreach to water right holders and communications about Partnership program options to promote conservation have been well-received, with presentations made to engage participants and answer questions among water users, the environmental community, landowners, community business owners, basin partners, and Tribal representatives. To-date, both surface water and groundwater rights have been banked, with the oldest banked water rights dating back to 1861. All water banking program participants must submit an annual report, with 100% compliance in reporting by participants documented over the last three years. The Partnership planning area map in Figure 2 depicts the location and stream reach of all water rights banked through non-use agreements.



**Figure 2: Geographic Location of Water Bank Non-Use Agreements.** Water rights from across the Walla Walla Basin are banked through non-use agreements, with the number of participating water rights identified in each stream reach.

The Partnership’s water banking non-use agreement program is achieving success in reducing water withdrawals, encouraging water conservation, and protecting participants from future relinquishment. Expansion of the water banking program is underway as well, with the Partnership positioned to use RCW 90.92.070 authority to facilitate innovative lease and purchase transactions, provide mitigation, and enable reallocation of water.

## ***Local Water Plans***

The fundamental basis for the “Flow from Flexibility” concept is embodied within the Partnership’s authority under RCW 90.92.080 to pilot Local Water Plans, which are designed to incentivize conservation among water users by allowing flexible water management resulting in instream flow enhancement through cooperation outside of the regulatory framework. These reach-scale, customized water management plans are designed to enable sustainable management of groundwater, and preclude impacts on other water right holders.

Within the voluntary Local Water Plan framework, a water user may propose to change water management activities such as a point of diversion, place of use, time of use, or source of water. Through these locally-approved and Ecology-endorsed temporary changes to water use practices, this program enables stream flows to be augmented while still providing sufficient water for participants. Local Water Plan participants may operate their flexible water management within the Partnership’s ten-year pilot period, with the potential for seeking permanent status of a successful plan after at least five years of successful implementation. Within a plan, water conserved for instream flow enhancement is banked in the Partnership’s Walla Walla Water Bank and participating water rights are preserved from relinquishment during the plan.

As a priority in its first year of operation, the Partnership created the Local Water Plan program with assistance from the Water Resource Panel. The process included developing an overall process for Local Water Plans including public notice and approvals timeline, dispute resolution approach, monitoring and reporting procedures, and template agreements. In addition, the Partnership drafted guidelines and criteria for filing, review and approval of Local Water Plan proposals; established a definition of baseline water use with consultation from the Water Resource Panel; created criteria for commitment to a plan; and identified water user organization guidelines. Efforts were initiated to identify water users as potential program participants, develop the program message and communication materials, and provide briefings and presentations directly to water users and partners working in related programs. Strategic program integration occurred with other related flow enhancement and water user coordination efforts, and procedures for Local Water Plan administration and implementation were developed.

With this extensive framework drafted, the Partnership’s unique pilot program was launched in January 2010 with adoption of the Local Water Plan guidelines and criteria. Each Local Water Plan is a one-of-a-kind voluntary agreement between the three approving parties (water user, Partnership and Ecology) including an individualized water management approach to enhance stream flows for fish and improve flexibility in water use for the irrigators.

In 2011, three Local Water Plans were approved by the water right holders, the Partnership, and Ecology. The combined impact of the three approved Local Water Plans is up to 20 cubic feet per second of seasonal water is left instream for flow enhancement and 452 acre-feet of water rights are deposited into the water bank, across approximately 7,500 acres of participating irrigated agricultural land. The three approved Local Water Plans are summarized below:

**Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13:** Within the Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 Local Water Plan, up to 5 cfs of winter/spring shallow aquifer recharge is authorized, and conjunctive use at alternative points of diversion provides flexibility to leave instream up to 20 cfs of water instream over a 15-mile stretch of the Walla Walla River between the primary diversion and downstream wells/pumps. Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 seeks to improve early summer flow conditions for Chinook salmon and provide flexibility to irrigation district patrons in the use of water rights for shallow aquifer recharge.

**“The irrigators and Tribes are in this together. We want to help the Tribes restore salmon in the Walla Walla basin, and the Tribes have promised to work with irrigators to keep farms viable in this valley. Aquifer recharge is a good tool for achieving those goals, and the Gardena District’s Local Water Plan will benefit the fish and farms by expanding recharge in winter months and improving early summer flows.”** *Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 Board Member, Mark Wagoner, sees local water planning as a win-win effort.*

**Stiller Pond Site:** The Stiller Pond Site Local Water Plan provides for conservation of summer surface irrigation water through a change in season of use and additional purpose to recharge the shallow aquifer with 32 acre-feet of winter/spring water. Implementation of winter recharge at the existing pond site is expected to improve base flows to lower Mill Creek and the Walla Walla River during summer months. Groundwater recharge in the off-season at Stiller Pond is expected to enhance conditions for fish and wildlife habitat without compromising irrigation water availability and productivity of agricultural lands.

**Pepper Bridge:** On Yellowhawk Creek, through flexible use of surface and groundwater rights, the Pepper Bridge Local Water Plan enhances flows in a critical reach for Steelhead and Bull Trout. Surface water contributions total almost 1 cfs seasonally with 29 acre-feet of direct flow enhancement, and an additional 423 acre-feet of water rights deposited in the water bank. Flexibilities include adding a new point of withdrawal from the shallow aquifer for commercial/industrial use in a winery tasting room, and authority to toggle between surface and basalt groundwater to leave water instream for flow enhancement.

Each of these voluntary plans include temporary, flexible changes in water management activities with elements to enhance stream flow conditions. Water contributions for flow enhancement are banked with the Partnership with assurance for water right holders that participation does not jeopardize their water right. The plans are approved for five years, with annual reporting and monitoring for impacts on surface water and groundwater in surrounding areas. More information on the Local Water Plans is available in Appendix C.

Throughout the process to review and negotiate Local Water Plans, the Water Resource Panel met regularly for technical review, recommendations for baseline determinations, and updates to the Partnership’s guidelines and criteria for filing, review and approval of plan proposals. Ecology engaged directly with the participating water users and the Partnership to negotiate the final agreements, with all three agreement parties taking action in May 2011 to approve the final

Local Water Plans. Throughout the year, Partnership staff led the effort to facilitate the Local Water Plan development, negotiation, and implementation process, provide briefings and presentations directly to water users and partners working in related programs. A public comment period occurred for each plan, with one plan undergoing a State Environmental Policy Act review because its project scope was relatively substantial. The Partnership website provided public information on the status of the Local Water Plans through their development and negotiation; and processes and procedures for plan administration and implementation including annual reporting were developed.

During these early years of implementation, no impacts to other water right holders have been documented through the Partnership's dispute resolution process. The outreach effort to water users is building, with ongoing work to identify potential program participants, share the program message, and establish connections to communicate with water users and basin partners about water management opportunities within the Partnership's Local Water Plan program.

**“The Partnership is about local control of local water, and it’s great to have these three water plans now approved and underway. We are making real headway in this pilot program, working with Ecology in a new way outside of the more cumbersome state process.”**  
*Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Chairman, Ed Chvatal, Jr., recognizes the benefits of innovation in water management.*

### ***Innovative Transactions***

Since the Partnership was established in August 2009, the Partnership's water management programs have been developed in phases, with the initial focus on local water planning and water bank development. Expansion of the Partnership's water management programs in 2011 and 2012 launched the Partnership into new areas of innovative water rights transactions. Working with key partners, the Partnership achieved Qualified Local Entity status for acquisition of water rights through leases and purchases for instream flow enhancement. In addition, a new program was developed to plan for critical low flow situations and enable execution of Agreements Not to Divert with water right holders. These program areas are described below, serving as valuable additions to the Partnership's menu of water management tools and building toward a more comprehensive local water management approach.

**Water Right Acquisition Program:** Working in coordination with key basin partners including Ecology and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, in 2011 the Partnership initiated an expansion of its water right transactions and acquisition program to capitalize on the unique authority provided under RCW 90.92 to bank water beyond the non-use agreements program. With input from the Water Resource Panel and the Policy Advisory Group, the Partnership approved five strategies to address low stream flows and identified preferred methods for the Partnership to implement the strategies. The Partnership worked with the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program to identify capacity whereby the Partnership would join the limited number of entities across the region designated as Qualified Local Entities for the purposes of conducting water transactions for instream flow enhancement

under the Program. The Partnership began working as a Qualified Local Entity for acquisitions in October 2011 with Program funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Bonneville Power Administration) and an Ecology state capital acquisition grant, providing support for program administration and transactions to leverage local efforts to enhance stream flows consistent with Partnership goals of managing water for farms, people and fish.

The Partnership's work under this new transaction and acquisition program included adopting program guidelines and evaluating transaction tools. While focusing on developing and pursuing an acquisition strategy based on Partnership priorities, the Partnership sought to capitalize on Partnership resources including local expertise to guide decision-making. One area of early work initiated in 2011 was development of a Critical Low Flow Plan to address stream needs and drought conditions, integrating fisheries priorities with potential flow enhancement strategies and water user coordination efforts. Efforts commenced to identify and develop water transactions, provide outreach about the Washington State Trust Water Rights Program and encourage market-based approaches to instream flow improvement through work with basin partners on project opportunities to improve stream flows. In July 2012, the Partnership approved a transaction agreement to lease up to 14 cfs of senior water rights on the Walla Walla River during spring and autumn months for a four-year period, with the leased water to be placed in trust for instream flow. The transaction is undergoing funding review at this time, with the transaction expected to be funded and effective beginning in spring 2013.

Future work in the transactions and acquisition program will include collaborating with basin entities to use the Partnership's water bank as a companion to the Trust Water Rights Program, enhancing creation of projects with secondary reach benefits and supporting implementation of projects that address critical low flows. The Partnership's leadership in local water transactions enjoys strong support by the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program and Ecology, as well as entities represented on the Partnership, including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Conservation Districts, local governments, environmental interests and irrigators.

**Critical Low Flow Plan:** In 2011 and 2012, the Partnership coordinated with basin partners to develop a comprehensive strategy to address critical low flows from a fisheries perspective. Within a collaborative working group of fisheries co-managers, water users, and Water Resource Panel members, a Critical Low Flow Plan "drought response" strategy was drafted to include target species, life-stages, priority stream reaches, and trigger flow conditions. Coordination and flow enhancement tools were reviewed, and strategies included plans for flow pulsing, source substitution, trap-and-haul of fish, and coordination Agreements Not to Divert to improve fish passage during critical low flow periods. The Critical Low Flow Plan was developed to include identification of processes for implementation of the various tools, coordination with basin partners to monitor trigger conditions, and seek cooperation in program implementation.

With revisions and approval on the Washington side of the basin in 2012, an Oregon complement to the Critical Low Flow Plan is under development to encourage a bi-state, coordinated approach to flow enhancement in critical low flow situations. Next steps include creating an outreach plan to identify potential water user participants, conduct outreach, and evaluate acquisition tools and agreements to enhance instream flow during critical flow periods. Implementation and monitoring of snowpack and flow indicators in winter months will occur to prepare for possible execution of the Critical Low Flow Plan when trigger flow conditions occur.

**Agreements Not to Divert:** The Partnership is authorized under RCW 90.92.050(1) to enter into agreements with water rights holders to not divert water that becomes available as a result of Local Water Plans, water banking activities, or other programs and projects. Where other flow enhancement activities have occurred (such as a source substitution where water is left instream, or a trust water right's secondary reach), an Agreement Not to Divert may be a useful tool to protect water from diversion at a downstream point where another water user would be subject to relinquishment for simply leaving the water instream. Under these circumstances where other flow enhancement efforts are responsible for the additional water instream, water would not otherwise be available to downstream users; so participating irrigators entering into an Agreement Not to Divert are not expected to contribute additional water but rather leave another's contribution instream.

An Agreement Not to Divert is designed to be quickly implementable to respond to emerging developments, such as unforeseen drought situations or another group's coordinated effort to leave water instream for pulse flows. Because these agreements are typically short-term, there may be unpaid or paid agreements depending on circumstances. An Agreement Not to Divert is most useful in situations when coordination of water users can provide the maximum impact, providing for flexibility and protection for water users from relinquishing their water rights when they participate by leaving water instream. The Partnership's strong commitment to enhancing stream flows and coordinating with basin partners is reinforced with this tool, and it is a complement to existing program goals of managing water for fish, farms and people.

### ***Exempt Well Mitigation Exchange***

The predecessor to the Partnership, the Walla Walla County Watershed Planning Unit, worked closely with the State Department of Ecology and Washington Water Trust to develop a mitigation exchange to support rural development of new permit-exempt wells in areas of the Walla Walla Basin which were closed to new appropriations under WAC 173-532.<sup>5</sup> With the

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<sup>5</sup> WAC 173-532 is the Walla Walla Instream Flow Rule, amended in 2007 to close the basin to future surface and alluvial groundwater withdrawals. Under the Rule, new permit exempt wells in the gravel shallow aquifer were limited in high-density areas. A state-assisted mitigation program was established to provide a mechanism for new well owners to acquire water-for-water mitigation to enable outdoor water use under the Rule. More information is available: [www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/activity/wac173532.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/laws-rules/activity/wac173532.html).

Partnership's formation in 2009, the Partnership was uniquely equipped to fill the role of locally administering Ecology's state-assisted mitigation program to offset impacts from future rural development. The Partnership took action in December 2010 to approve a framework and tools to administrator the mitigation exchange, including: an agreement with Ecology on roles, responsibilities and funding; final Partnership guidance for program implementation; and a fee structure with budget to accommodate the new program. Implementation of this program is now underway, including providing community education on the new Partnership program and seeking acquisition of water rights to expand available mitigation. In serving as the local lead in this unique mitigation exchange, the Partnership is setting a statewide example for partnering with local and state governments in an innovative, local solution to a challenging water problem.

The Partnership's administration of the Walla Walla Exempt Well Mitigation Exchange included receipt in early 2011 of a transfer of funding from prior mitigation credits sold, providing seed money for the local administration of the exempt well mitigation exchange. In addition, one exempt well mitigation exchange transaction was processed through the Partnership program in April 2011, with the Partnership approving the mitigation credit application and Ecology processing the mitigation certificate in May 2011. Partnership staff continues to work with potential sellers of water rights to identify additional water for the exchange, with the November 2012 mitigation exchange balance at 5.85 acre-feet (enough for at least ten new exempt well mitigation credits, with each new well debiting the exchange balance by 0.55 acre-feet).

The Partnership plays a key role in coordinating between Ecology and the Walla Walla Joint Community Development Agency to provide outreach and educational materials to landowners, builders, realtors and well drillers. Two community workshops on this important topic have been hosted in cooperation with the Walla Walla Community College William A. Grant Water & Environmental Center, with over 100 attendees participating in the dual-session workshops each in 2011 and 2012. The Partnership is also participating in the statewide Exempt Well Workgroup in coordinated discussions with Ecology and the Washington State Association of Counties to address the issue on a statewide level.

### ***Integration of Efforts***

Since its formation, the Partnership has played a key role in supporting local integration of watershed planning, water management programs and salmon recovery efforts. Strategic program integration is occurring to advance flow enhancement and fish recovery efforts. During its first three years, the Partnership embraced its legislative mandate to participate in basinwide planning initiatives and pursue actions by building on the Watershed Plan. In considering priority areas for focusing resources for flow enhancement, the Partnership recognizes the priorities identified in the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan and Walla Walla Watershed Plan.

Many of the basin partners engaged with the Partnership are working on large-scale projects such as Mill Creek Channel Fish Passage, streamside habitat restoration, shallow aquifer recharge, and irrigation district piping projects. These activities, which are highlighted in Appendix D, are

serving to improve watershed conditions, enhance investments, and leverage strengths through implementation and monitoring of basin projects. The Partnership's advocacy of partner efforts in support of funding requests gained recognition as an important tool for improving integration of project implementation. Partnership letters of support provided acknowledgement that basin implementers working in the Walla Walla Watershed are independently funded and focused, and that Partnership objectives are aligning (and not competing) with other basin efforts. These efforts are serving to better integrate flow enhancement and fish recovery projects, contributing to the development and implementation of more effective local water management programs.

In support of basinwide efforts, the Partnership has worked with the Department of Ecology to provide online access to Walla Walla basin water rights, which includes the 3,545 Washington State water right certificates and more than 2,500 claims for groundwater and surface water in the basin. In 2011, Ecology launched the Water Resources Explorer database; the Partnership regularly uses and contributes updates to the water right information maintained by Ecology, and it is estimated that more than 85% of the Walla Walla Watershed water right information is currently organized for public access through Water Resources Explorer.

The Partnership is regularly updating Walla Walla Watershed project information contained in the Snake River Salmon Recovery Region projects database and three-year work plan. The Partnership also maintains a database to track and report completion status of Walla Walla Watershed Plan actions; currently, over 47% of all Watershed Plan actions have been completed, with another 38% of actions characterized as active and ongoing. Changing project prioritization was the most commonly cited reason that 11% of the actions were considered active but pending; and approximately 4% of projects were identified as delayed.

As various projects basinwide are improving streamflow conditions, the Partnership is beginning to track and report on flow enhancement activities. The Partnership's Water Resource Panel has identified a set of base flow data metrics to be used in tracking streamflow conditions for the Walla Walla Watershed planning area. This "Base Flow Tracking" effort is described in Appendix D as a monitoring focus for the duration of the Partnership's ten-year pilot program, to capture streamflow trends at seven gauging stations during the summer low-flow season. Additional streamflow metrics may be developed to address some of the challenges inherent to simple flow analysis, such as tracking trust water rights and projects contributing to instream flow improvements, Oregon streamflow contributions, and additional monitoring, studies and modeling to analyze flow trends. The Partnership website is updated with current information on Walla Walla basin flow trends at [www.wallawallawatershed.org/files/flow-trends](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/files/flow-trends).

The Partnership is advancing integration of efforts through implementation of strategic planning, coordination and communications with stakeholders, as described in Appendix E. The outcomes of these strategic activities by the Partnership is a more integrated approach with involved stakeholders, building upon the diverse perspectives represented among Partnership entities, for a more effective local water management program.



## Recommendations for Improvement of the Local Water Plan Process

During the first three years working as a water management board under RCW 90.92, the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership has successfully developed and implemented the pilot local water management program “Flow from Flexibility” activities through execution of reach-scale Local Water Plans and voluntary non-use agreements within the Walla Walla Water Bank. The Partnership has galvanized its role as a backbone agency serving to coordinate and track flow restoration efforts in the Walla Walla Watershed, maintaining partnerships and leveraging on-the-ground project investments. Expanded programs to efficiently and effectively manage water include local administration of the Walla Walla exempt well mitigation exchange, trust water rights program, and low flow planning. Moreover, the network of partners and collaborators working within the Partnership provides a secure foundation for successfully piloting local water management as a model for innovation through 2019 and beyond.

In developing recommendations for improvement of the Local Water Plan process, the Partnership considered stakeholder feedback collected in a basinwide Survey of Partners conducted in May 2012. The Partnership Board reflected on the original goals of the Walla Walla Water Management Initiative: to improve stream flows, provide water management flexibility and reliability, and demonstrate performance-based water management at a reach-scale. The RCW 90.92 overall program implementation during 2009-2012 is characterized as successful; however, there were challenges recognized that evoke submission of four recommendations for consideration by the Legislature:

- 1. Maintain funding for implementation of RCW 90.92 throughout the remainder of the ten-year pilot period, with targeted investment through legislative budget proviso or dedicated grant funds through the Washington State Department of Ecology to support program operations of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership.** The Partnership’s programs under RCW 90.92 have demonstrated value to stakeholders and streamflows are enhanced through this pilot program; secure funding during the 2013-2019 remaining pilot period will help the programs expand its benefits. The Partnership’s work is of primary importance in the Walla Walla Basin, complementing Ecology’s efforts through improved local coordination and community outreach. Since 2009, the Partnership’s effectiveness and efficiency has been hampered at times when grant funding and economic instability have resulted in work slow-downs. The Partnership has addressed prior funding problems by seeking more diverse funding sources; however, the primary work of the Partnership under RCW 90.92 is to serve in a water management capacity under Washington State authority that only state funding may support. A commitment of Washington State funding throughout the remainder of the ten-year pilot period will ensure this successful program continues for a full assessment of its value at the end of the pilot.
- 2. Support the Washington State Department of Ecology in their effort to appoint a local Watermaster in the Walla Walla Basin.** The Partnership appreciates the collaborative

support that Ecology is providing in implementation of the local pilot water management program authorized under RCW 90.92. Ecology's leadership and staff participation is one of the reasons that the Partnership is well on its way to fully implementing the program. But for three years, the Watermaster position has been vacant in Walla Walla; and the local Ecology office was closed in 2012 due to Ecology budget cuts. It is very important that Ecology is staffed to adequately participate in the Partnership committees and Local Water Plan review; assistance received to-date has been valuable and it remains a high priority for the Partnership to closely collaborate with Ecology. In addition, the Walla Walla Basin's water management challenges necessitate local Ecology oversight and regulation at times, due to the over-appropriation of water rights in adjudicated streams and rivers. For a successful pilot program and functioning conventional application of the water code in the Walla Walla Basin, a local Watermaster is needed and should be supported as part of Ecology's base-level budget beginning in 2013.

3. **Support enhancement and coordination of the Walla Walla Basin monitoring network to enable more robust tracking and reporting of flow restoration achievements of the Partnership and other partners.** While flow enhancement during the first three years is evident, the Partnership seeks to be able to clearly demonstrate flow enhancement achievements throughout and at the end of the pilot phase. The Partnership is working with basin partners to identify and maximize existing tools and opportunities to enhance capabilities, as identified in Appendix D within the "Base Flow Tracking" section.
4. **No changes to RCW 90.92 are recommended at this time, but early success suggests the Partnership's flexible water use approach will provide valuable insight when looking at ways to improve Washington water management.** The Partnership is in a unique position and will continue to use that position to gather information that can be used to improve the water code. While premature to make state-wide adoption recommendations, the success of the Partnership programs indicate streamlining processes and providing flexibility regarding relinquishment, banking mitigation water and beneficial use are promoting conservation and efficiency. The Partnership's continued experience in piloting local water management will clarify insights into ways to improve the Washington State water management system and reduce inefficiencies in water code application.

Reflecting on the accomplishments of the first three years of the RCW 90.92 ten-year pilot local water management program, the Partnership appreciates the collaborative support that Ecology has provided, and is motivated to continue the high priority work under RCW 90.92. The Partnership welcomes constructive feedback and suggestions, maintaining a forward-looking posture as the Partnership pursues its mission into 2013 and beyond throughout the remainder of the 2009-2019 pilot period.

## APPENDIX A:

### RCW 90.92 Pilot Local Water Management Program

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#### Chapter 90.92 RCW Pilot local water management program

##### **90.92.010 Findings. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

The legislature finds that the Walla Walla watershed community faces substantial challenges in planning for future water use and meeting the needs of fish, farms, and people. The legislature further finds that the participants in the Walla Walla watershed planning group have demonstrated exceptional cooperation in developing an innovative water management concept that enhances flexibility in water use while protecting ecological functions. The legislature also recognizes the significant contribution of representative William Grant's leadership in the creation of a Walla Walla pilot design to authorize local water management activity.

[2009 c 183 § 1.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** "This act expires June 30, 2019." [2009 c 183 § 20.]

##### **90.92.020 Definitions. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (1) "Basin" means the WRIA where the planning area is located.
- (2) "Board" means a water management board created under this chapter.
- (3) "Department" means the department of ecology.
- (4) "Director" means the director of the department of ecology.
- (5) "Initiating entities" means the county boards of commissioners within the planning area, the city council of the largest Washington city in the planning area, the largest water user in the planning area, and all affected federally recognized tribes within the planning area.
- (6) "Instream flow" means a minimum flow under chapter 90.03 or 90.22 RCW or a base flow under chapter 90.54 RCW that has been set by rule.
- (7) "Local water management program" means the water banking mechanism, any local water plans authorized by the board, and any other activities authorized by RCW 90.92.050.
- (8) "Local water plan" means a voluntary water management plan developed by local water rights holders within the planning area to manage their water use in a manner that enhances stream flows in exchange for greater flexibility in exercising the water rights.
- (9) "Planning area" means the entirety or a subsection of a single or multiple WRIA as identified in the creation of a board under this chapter.
- (10) "Trust water right" means any water right acquired by the state under chapter 90.42 RCW for management in the state's water rights program.
- (11) "Watershed plan" means a plan adopted under chapter 90.82 RCW.
- (12) "WRIA" means a water resource inventory area established in chapter 173-500 WAC as it existed on January 1, 1997.

[2009 c 183 § 2.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

##### **90.92.030 Establishing a water management board. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

- (1) Initiating entities may collectively petition the department in order to establish a water management board.
- (2) The department, in consultation with the initiating entities, may create a board if:
  - (a) The initiating entities demonstrate to the department that the following criteria are satisfied:
    - (i) Community support for the development of a local watershed management plan, including the affected federally recognized tribes, local governments, and general community support;
    - (ii) There is commitment on the part of the initiating entities and the affected community to enhance stream flows for fish; and
    - (iii) An adequate monitoring network is in place, as determined by the department;
  - (b) The department determines the following:
    - (i) An instream flow rule for the WRIA or WRIs in the planning area has been adopted since 1998;
    - (ii) The planning area is located within one of the sixteen fish-critical basins designated by the department in its March 2003 "Washington Water Acquisition Program" report and demonstrates a significant history of severely impaired flows; and
    - (iii) The watershed planning unit has completed a watershed implementation plan adopted under chapter 90.82 RCW and salmon recovery implementation plan adopted under chapter 77.85 RCW.
- (3) The department, in determining whether to create a board, must give strong consideration to basins that have completed a judicial proceeding to adjudicate water rights under chapter 90.03 RCW.

[2009 c 183 § 3.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.040 Composition of board — members' terms — policy advisory group — conflicts of interest. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

- (1)(a) Each board must be composed of the following members:
  - (i) All affected federally recognized tribes within the planning area will be invited to participate and may appoint one member each;
  - (ii) The following entities must each appoint one member:
    - (A) Each county board of commissioners within the planning area;
    - (B) The city council of the largest Washington city in the planning area; and
    - (C) The board of directors of the entity or the person who uses the greatest quantity of water in the planning area;
  - (iii) The conservation districts' board of supervisors in the planning area must jointly appoint one member; and
  - (iv) The members under (a)(i) through (iii) of this subsection must appoint the remaining three members of the board. These three members must be residents of the planning area. One member must be a planning area water rights holder. One member must represent environmental interests in the planning area. One member must be a citizen at large.

(b) If for any reason one of the required governments or entities to be represented on the board declines to participate, the remaining board members may invite another local government within the planning area to join the board.

(2) Each member of the board serves a two-year term and may be reappointed for an additional term. Members may continue to serve on the board until a new appointment is made.

(3) The board must create a policy advisory group and a water resource panel.

(a) For the policy advisory group, the board must invite participation from the department and the department of fish and wildlife, other affected state agencies, and other interests as appropriate. The board may also appoint members from local government agencies, academia, watershed and salmon recovery entities, businesses, and agricultural and environmental organizations as the board deems appropriate.

(b) The policy advisory group must assist and advise the board in coordinating and developing water resource-related programs, planning, and activities within the planning area, including the coordination of efforts with all jurisdictions of the planning area and development of the board's strategic actions.

(c) For the water resource panel, the board must appoint members to the water resource panel who have expertise and understanding regarding surface water and groundwater monitoring and hydrological analysis, irrigation management and engineering, water rights, and fisheries habitat and economic development. The board must invite participation from the department and the department of fish and wildlife.

(d) The water resource panel must provide technical assistance for the development of the local water plans and provide advice to the board on the criteria for establishment of local water plans and the approval, denial, or modification of the local water plans.

(4) A board member, employee, or contractor may not engage in any act that is in conflict with the proper discharge of their official duties. Such conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, holding a financial interest in a matter before the board.

[2009 c 183 § 4.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW [90.92.010](#).

**90.92.050 Board's authorities, duties, and responsibilities. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

(1) The board has the following authority, duties, and responsibilities:

(a) Assume the duties, responsibilities, and all current activities of the watershed planning unit and the initiating governments authorized in RCW [90.82.040](#);

(b) Develop strategic actions for the planning area by building on the watershed plan;

(c) Adopt and revise criteria, guidance, and processes to effectuate the purpose of this chapter;

(d) Administer the local water plan process;

(e) Oversee local water plan implementation;

(f) Manage banked water as authorized under this chapter;

(g) Acquire water rights by donation, purchase, or lease;

(h) Participate in local, state, tribal, federal, and multistate basin water planning initiatives and programs; and

(1) Enter into agreements with water rights holders to not divert water that becomes available as a result of local water plans, water banking activities, or other programs and projects endorsed by the board and the department.

(2) The board may acquire, purchase, hold, lease, manage, occupy, and sell real and personal property, including water rights, or any interest in water rights, enter into and perform all necessary contracts, appoint and employ necessary agents and employees, including an executive director and fix their compensation, employ contractors including contracts for professional services, and do all lawful acts required and expedient to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

(3) The board constitutes an independently funded entity, and may provide for its own funding as determined by the board. The board may solicit and accept grants, loans, and donations and may adopt fees for services it provides. The board may not impose taxes or acquire property, including water rights, by the exercise of eminent domain. The board may distribute available funds as grants or loans to local water plans or other water initiatives and projects that will further the goals of the board.

(4) The ability of the board to fully meet its duties under this chapter is dependent on the level of funding available to the board. If sufficient funding is not available to the board to carry out its duties, the board may, in consultation with the department, establish a plan that determines and sets priorities for implementation of the board's duties.

(5) The board, and its members and staff, acting in their official capacities, are immune from liability and are not subject to any cause of action or claim for damages arising from acts or omissions engaged in under this chapter.

(6) Upon the creation of the board, and for the duration of the board, the existing planning unit for the planning area, established under RCW 90.82.040, is dissolved and all assets, funds, files, planning documents, pending plans and grant applications, and other current activities of the planning unit are transferred to the board.

[2009 c 183 § 5.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.060 Report to the legislature. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

The board, in collaboration with the department, must provide a written report to the legislature by December 1, 2012, December 1, 2015, and December 1, 2018. The report must summarize the actions, funding, and accomplishments of the board in the previous three years, and submit recommendations for improvement of the local water plan process. The 2018 report must also contain recommendations on the future of the board.

[2009 c 183 § 6.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.070 Water banking. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

(1) The board may establish a mechanism to bank water for the holders of water rights within the planning area to voluntarily deposit them on a temporary or permanent basis.

(2) The board has the following authority regarding banked water in the planning area:

(a) The board may accept a surface water right or a groundwater right on a permanent or temporary basis under terms and conditions agreed upon by the water rights holder and the board.

(b) On a temporary or permanent basis, the board may accept a water right, or portion thereof, that will be made available under local water plans for stream flow enhancement under the terms of the local water plan, as provided in this chapter.

(c) Except as provided in (d) of this subsection, the board must accept a water right temporarily banked for instream flow without conducting a review of the extent and validity of the water right. Such a water right may not thereafter be authorized for any other purposes. A banked water right that has not been tentatively determined as to its extent and validity is not entitled to be protected from impairment by another water right.

(d) The board may manage a water right that has been banked as mitigation for impairment to instream flows and other existing water rights. However, the water right may only be available for mitigation to the extent the department determines the water right is valid and use of the water right for mitigation will not cause detriment or injury to existing water rights.

(3)(a) A water right banked on a temporary basis remains in the ownership of the water rights holder and not the state of Washington or the board.

(b) A water right banked on a permanent basis must be transferred to the state of Washington as a trust water right consistent with RCW 90.42.080.

(4) A water right or portion of a water right banked under this chapter is not subject to loss by forfeiture under RCW 90.14.130 through 90.14.200. When a temporary water right is withdrawn from banking, the time period that the water right was banked may not be calculated as time water was not used for purposes of RCW 90.14.160, 90.14.170, and 90.14.180.

(5) When a temporarily deposited water right is withdrawn from banking, the time period that the water right was banked may not be included in the five years of prior water use for purposes of applications to add acreage or purposes of water use under RCW 90.03.380(1).

(6) Nothing in this chapter forecloses or diminishes the rights of any person to apply to the department to transfer a water right to the state trust water rights program under the authority of chapter 90.42 RCW or to apply for a change of a water right to the department or to a water conservancy board authorized under chapter 90.80 RCW.

[2009 c 183 § 7.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.080 Local water plan — board to adopt guidelines and criteria for filing, review, and approval — annual reports — term. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

(1) The board shall adopt guidelines and criteria for filing, review, and approval of a local water plan. The board shall also develop a dispute resolution process that provides for water users, the board, and the department to resolve disputes regarding the implementation and enforcement of a local water plan.

(2) A water user or group of water users within the planning area, organized as provided in guidelines adopted by the board, may submit a proposed local water plan to the board.

(3) A local water plan must include:

(a) A determination by the board of the baseline water use for all water rights involved in the local water plan, based on the guidelines adopted by the board, and in consultation with the water resource panel. The baseline documents regarding water use that are submitted by the water

users may not be used by the department to determine the validity of the water rights in any future administrative or regulatory actions;

(b) A clearly defined set of practices that provide for flexibility of water use as defined in subsection (4) of this section;

(c) An estimate of the amount of water that would remain instream either long term or during critical flow periods for fish;

(d) Performance measures and options for achieving reductions in total water use from baseline;

(e) Performance measures for tracking improved stream flows either long term or during critical flow periods for fish; and

(f) Measurement, tracking, and monitoring measures and procedures that ensure the implementation and enforcement of the measures for flexibility of water use, enhancement of the stream flows, and other elements, terms, and conditions in the local water plan.

(4) The local water plan may have elements and provide rights to the use and application of water that are not otherwise authorized in the water rights, including:

(a) The ability to use the quantity of water defined as baseline in RCW 90.92.120(1)(a) on new or additional places of use, from new or additional points of diversion or withdrawal, and at different times of the year;

(b) The ability to change or add a source of water supply including the use of groundwater to supplement surface water rights and the ability to implement the conjunctive use of the groundwater and surface water; and

(c) The storage of water and infiltration of the water to the groundwater to supplement shallow groundwater withdrawals or for the purpose of replenishing the aquifer.

(5) To participate in a local water plan, water rights holders must: (a) Agree to allow a portion or all of their baseline water use to remain instream, as specified in the approved local water plan;

(b) have existing operable water conveyance infrastructure in place and available for use; (c) agree that any water made available for stream flow enhancement may not be diverted from the water source and used during the term of the local water plan, but instead must be deposited into the water bank or, upon request by the water rights holder, transferred to the trust water rights program consistent with chapter 90.42 RCW; (d) measure and monitor their water use, stream flows upstream and downstream of the boundaries of the plan, and groundwater levels within the boundaries of the plan; and (e) commit to staying in the program consistent with criteria established by the board.

(6) Unless agreed upon by the water rights holder, nothing in this chapter diminishes or changes existing water rights.

(7) The water users must submit annual reports to the department and the board regarding contract performance, consistent with the guidelines adopted by the board.

(8) A local water plan may be effective for a term of one to ten years.

[2009 c 183 § 8.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.090 Local water plan — public notice period — other requirements. (expires June 30, 2019.)**



- (1) The board must provide a thirty-day public notice period for the proposal for a local water plan and accept comments from all interested persons during that period.
- (2) To become effective, the local water plan must be approved by both the board and the department. A proposed local water plan must not be approved if the board and the department determine the local water plan will not substantially enhance instream flow conditions.
- (3) The approved local water plan must be signed by the executive director of the board, by the director, and by all water users participating in the local water plan. The local water plan is a contract among the board, the department, and the water users in which all parties agree to abide by all terms and conditions of the local water plan.
- (4) If an approved local water plan is not in compliance with its terms and conditions, the board shall, consistent with the dispute resolution process adopted by the board, seek compliance. If the board revokes a local water plan due to noncompliance, the water users in the local water plan must thereafter exercise the water rights only as the water rights were authorized and conditioned prior to the approval of the local water plan, and all rights and duties that were terms in the local water plan lapse and are not valid or enforceable.

[2009 c 183 § 9.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.100 Appeal — review of a claim of impairment. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

- (1) Any person not party to the local water plan and aggrieved by the director's decision may appeal the decision to the pollution control hearings board as provided under RCW 43.21B.230.
- (2) A water rights holder who believes the holder's water right has been impaired by any action under this chapter may request that the department review the impairment claim. If the department determines that some action under this chapter is impairing existing rights, the department, the board, and the water users must amend the local water plan to eliminate the impairment. Any decision of the department to alter or not alter a local water plan is appealable to the pollution control hearings board under RCW 43.21B.230.

[2009 c 183 § 10.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.110 Local water plan — expiration — making elements of the local water plan permanent. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

- (1) A local water plan expires by its terms, by withdrawal of one or more water users to the local water plan, or upon agreement by all parties to the contract. Upon the expiration of a local water plan that has been operating for five or more years, the water users may request that the board and the department make the elements of the local water plan, including water deposited to the water bank for placement in the trust water rights program, permanent authorizations and conditions for use of the water rights.
- (2) The request under subsection (1) of this section must be evaluated based on whether:
  - (a) The determination of the baseline water use adequately analyzed the extent and validity of the donated water right; and
  - (b)(i) Whether there is injury or detriment to other existing water rights; or
  - (ii) The written approval obtained from the holder of an impaired water right is continued or renewed.

(3) If the board and the department approve the request under subsection (1) of this section, the department shall issue superseding water rights consistent with the management and uses of the water under the local water plan. That portion of the water rights deposited in the water bank for placement in the trust water rights program must be made permanent and transferred in accordance with chapter 90.42 RCW.

(4) If the local water plan expires and the water management and uses under the local water plan are not granted approval to be permanent, the water users in the local water plan must thereafter exercise the water rights only as the water rights were authorized and conditioned prior to the local water plan, and all rights and duties that were terms in the local water plan lapse and are not valid or enforceable.

[2009 c 183 § 11.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.120 Local water plan — status of water rights. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

(1) The water rights in the local water plan as authorized for the uses described in RCW 90.92.080(4) are:

(a) Not subject to either the approval of the department under RCW 90.03.380 through 90.03.390, 90.44.100, and 90.44.105, or a tentative determination of the validity and extent of the water rights;

(b) Not subject to loss by forfeiture under RCW 90.14.130 through 90.14.200 during the period of time from when the local water plan is approved to the expiration or nullification of the local water plan as provided in RCW 90.92.110; and

(c) Not to be exercised in a manner that would result in injury or detriment to other existing water rights unless express written approval is obtained from the holder of the impaired water right. To allow impacts to existing instream flow rights, the board and the department must agree that the flow benefits provided by a local water plan outweigh the impacts on existing instream flow rights.

(2) The years during the period of time when the local water plan is operational may not be considered or calculated as a period of time that the water was not applied to use for purposes of RCW 90.14.130 through 90.14.200. Further, the years during this period of time may not be considered or calculated as a period of time that the water was not applied to use and for purposes of future applications to change the water right for additional purposes or acreage under RCW 90.03.380.

[2009 c 183 § 12.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

**90.92.130 Location of pilot program. (expires June 30, 2019.)**

The local water management program authorized by this chapter must be piloted in WRIA 32, as defined in chapter 173-500 WAC as it existed on January 1, 1997.

[2009 c 183 § 13.]

**Notes: Expiration date -- 2009 c 183:** See note following RCW 90.92.010.

## APPENDIX B:

### Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board and Committee Members

#### Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board Members and Alternates

**Edward “Ed” Chvatal Jr. (Chair)**

Representing the Walla Walla County and Columbia Conservation Districts

**Jim Hanger (Alternate)**

**Michael D. Buckley**

Water Rights Holder Representative

**Judith S. Johnson**

Kooskooskie Commons, appointed to represent Walla Walla Watershed environmental interests

**Michael S. Ingham** Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13, the entity using the greatest quantity of water

**Mark Wagoner (Alternate)**

**N. Kathryn “Kat” Brigham**

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

**John Barkley (Alternate)**

**Perry L. Dozier**

Walla Walla County Board of Commissioners

**Gregory “Greg” A. Tompkins (Alternate)**

**Richard “Dick” W. Jones**

Columbia County Board of Commissioners

**Steven W. Martin (Alternate)**

**Chris Plucker**

City of Walla Walla, representing the largest Washington city

**Frank Nicholson (Alternate)**

**Greg P. Farrens\***

Citizen at large Representative

*\*in memoriam*

#### Water Resource Panel (Technical Advisors)

**Gerald “Jerry” Anhorn**

Walla Walla Community College: Water & Environmental Center

**Greg Kinsinger**

Walla Walla County Conservation District

**Victoria Leuba**

WA Department of Ecology

**Mitch Wallace (Alternate)**

**Jack Myrick**

WA State Conservation Commission  
Irrigation Efficiencies Program

**Thomas E. Glover**

Walla Walla Joint Community Development Agency

**Paul LaRiviere**

WA Department of Fish & Wildlife

**Jonathon Kohr (Alternate)**

**Chris Marks**

Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

**Gary James (Alternate)**

**Steven Patten**

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council

## Policy Advisory Group

**Hedia Adelsman**

WA Department of Ecology  
**Grant Pfeifer** (*Alternate*)

**Mike Bireley**

Tri State Steelheaders  
**Brian Burns** (*Alternate*)

**Andrea Burkhart**

Walla Walla County Citizen  
Blue Mountain Land Trust

**Sheryl Cox**

Walla Walla County Citizen / Irrigator

**Diane Driscoll**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service

**Stuart Durfee**

Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13  
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

**Paul Hartwig**

City of College Place

**Jon Hooper**

Walla Walla County Citizen / Braden Road Irrigation  
District No. 20

**Teresa Kilmer**

Walla Walla River Irrigation District (OR)

**Chris Marks**

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian  
Reservation

**Eric Quaempts** (*Alternate*)

**Yancey Reser**

Walla Walla County Citizen / Irrigator  
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

**Ernie Schrader**

Walla Walla County Citizen / Irrigator

**Paul Wemhoener**

Walla Walla County Citizen

**Fred Bennett**

Walla Walla County Citizen  
Former Port of Walla Walla Commissioner

**Phil Brick**

Walla Walla County Citizen  
Whitman College

**Bob Carson**

Walla Walla County Citizen  
Whitman College

**Amanda Cronin**

Washington Water Trust

**Ron Dunning**

Port of Walla Walla Commissioner / Irrigator

**Mark Grandstaff**

WA Department of Fish & Wildlife  
**Mark Wachtel** (*Alternate*)

**Melissa Holecek**

WWCC Water & Environmental Center  
**Jim Peterson** (*Alternate*)

**Rebecca Kalamasz**

US Army Corps of Engineers  
**Stanley Heller** (*Alternate*)

**Kay Mead**

Walla Walla County Conservation District

**Tom Page**

Walla Walla County Citizen / Irrigator  
Native Creek Society

**Ronald Schirman**

Columbia County Citizen  
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

**Gene Warren**

Port of Columbia Commissioner / Irrigator

**Jerri Lyn Westphal**

Walla Walla County Citizen / Irrigator

**Brian Wolcott**

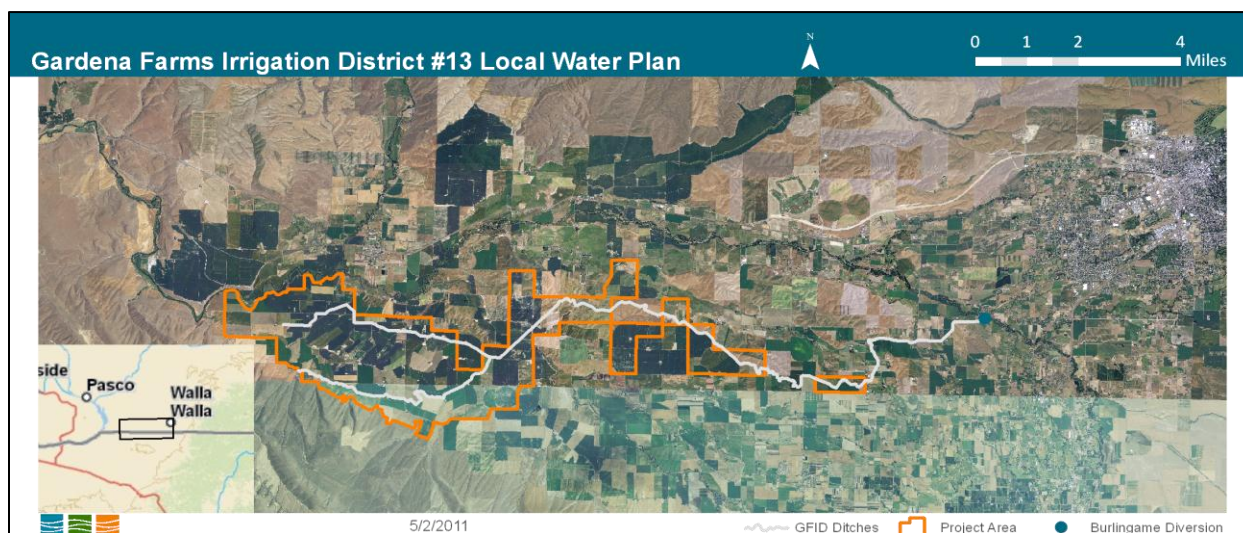
Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council

## APPENDIX C: Summary of Local Water Plans

The unique pilot effort to locally manage water in Washington registered approval of three Local Water Plans by the water right holders, the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership, and Washington State Department of Ecology. Each approved Local Water Plan is a one-of-a-kind voluntary agreement between the three approving parties detailing an individualized water management approach to enhance stream flows for fish and improve flexibility in water use for the irrigators. The three approved Local Water Plans are summarized below.

### **Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 Local Water Plan**

The Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 Local Water Plan enhances instream flow conditions in a critical reach of the Walla Walla River between the district's diversion and several alternate points of diversion located approximately 15 miles downstream, below the confluence with the Touchet River. This is accomplished by foregoing diversion of up to 20 cubic feet per second (cfs) of irrigation water at the existing diversion, with the option of diverting the same amount of water downstream at the alternate points when conditions allow. The Gardena Farm Irrigation District #13 water rights over three irrigation seasons range from 70 cfs to 140 cfs, for irrigation of 7,000 acres in the southwest portion of the Walla Walla Basin.



**Figure C-1. Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 Local Water Plan Project Area**

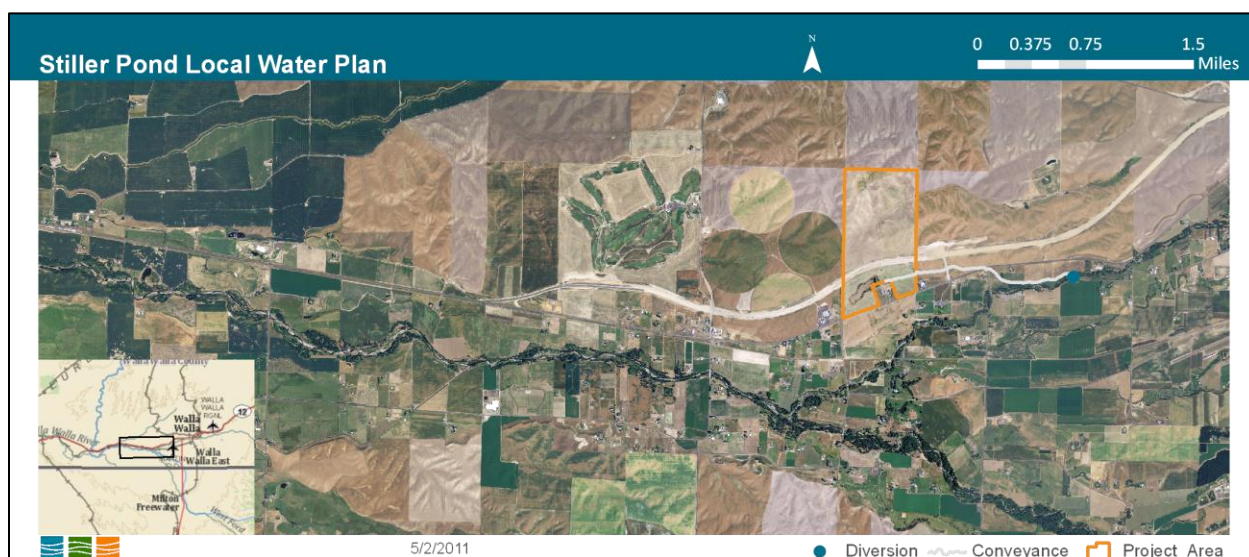
There is an additional element to the plan authorizing up to 5 cfs of water to be diverted for shallow aquifer recharge during periods of high flows. Shallow aquifer recharge mimics the natural function of floodplain in seasonally recharging the alluvial aquifer, and helps compensate for water that would normally be lost to seepage during conveyance through ditches or from groundwater withdrawals (for which there are current water rights) that are substituted for surface water under this Local Water Plan. This Local Water Plan allows more water to flow through a critical habitat reach of the Walla Walla River during low flow periods before being diverted for irrigation purposes, and authorizes diversion of water during periods of higher stream flows to provide environmental enhancement through shallow groundwater recharge. This Local Water Plan improves instream flow conditions in the Walla Walla River during fish critical times for Steelhead, Spring Chinook and Bull Trout; and grants flexibility to irrigators by

allowing for alternate points of diversion. Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 is piloting the plan through June 30, 2016, in compliance with monitoring/reporting requirements, the baseline water determination, and consistent with existing rules and regulations. More information is available at: [www.wallawallawatershed.org/projects/local-water-plans/126-lwp-10-01-gfid](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/projects/local-water-plans/126-lwp-10-01-gfid).

### Stiller Pond Site Local Water Plan

The Stiller Pond Site Local Water Plan is enhancing instream flow conditions on a 250 acre irrigated farm downstream from the surface water point of diversion on Mill Creek to the confluence with the Walla Walla River, and continuing on the Walla Walla River as far downstream as river mile 37. This is accomplished by:

- (1) adding aquifer recharge as a purpose of use to existing surface water rights contained in the Local Water Plan;
- (2) diverting a minimum of 32 acre-feet annually for shallow aquifer groundwater recharge at the Stiller Pond Site; and
- (3) changing the season of use of 32 acre-feet annually from summer irrigation diversion to winter/spring, leaving up to 0.127 cfs of surface water instream June 15-September 30.



**Figure C-2. Stiller Pond Local Water Plan Project Area**

Stiller Pond is a shallow aquifer recharge site utilized in the winter and spring for increasing groundwater storage in the underlying alluvial aquifer which is hydraulically connected to the surface water. The recharge enhances the discharge of groundwater to surface water during summer months, contributing to higher summer base flows in the river.

The local group is piloting local water management through September 30, 2016 under the Stiller Pond Site Local Water Plan, complying with monitoring and reporting requirements, and operating consistent with the baseline water determination and existing rules and regulations. The Local Water Plan is enhancing flows in a critical reach for Steelhead, Spring Chinook and Bull Trout. More information on the Stiller Pond Site Local Water Plan is available at: [www.wallawallawatershed.org/projects/local-water-plans/135-lwp-10-02-stiller](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/projects/local-water-plans/135-lwp-10-02-stiller).

### Pepper Bridge Local Water Plan

The Pepper Bridge Local Water Plan is providing flexibility and enhancing instream flow conditions from the surface water point of diversion on Yellowhawk Creek downstream to the confluence with the Walla Walla River, with continuing benefit to flow conditions on the Walla Walla River downstream as far as river mile 31 or further depending on river conditions and diversion patterns. This is accomplished over 250 acres by:

- (1) leaving instream a portion (0.866 cfs and 29 acre-feet) of the existing surface water rights from October 1 – April 1;
- (2) adding a point of diversion/withdrawal and water source to existing surface water rights to enable withdrawal from a hydraulically connected alluvial aquifer well for a new purpose of use, allowing commercial and industrial use of 65 gpm and 15 acre-feet in a winery and tasting room;
- (3) depositing additional water rights of 423 acre-feet into the Partnership water bank; and
- (4) enabling a switch from surface water diversion to basalt water withdrawal to enhance streamflow conditions during periods beneficial to fish; and

This Local Water Plan builds upon successful efforts in recent years to implement irrigation efficiencies and improve instream flows on the Walla Walla River, which are resulting in a dramatic reduction in calls for regulation by water right holders. Consequently, water placed instream through implementation of this plan will likely remain instream. The Local Water Plan is enhancing flows in a critical reach for Steelhead, Spring Chinook and Bull Trout. The local group is piloting local water management through September 30, 2016 under this plan, complying with monitoring and reporting requirements, and operating consistent with the baseline water determination and existing rules and regulations. For more information, visit: [www.wallawallawatershed.org/projects/local-water-plans/140-lwp-11-01-pepper-bridge](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/projects/local-water-plans/140-lwp-11-01-pepper-bridge).

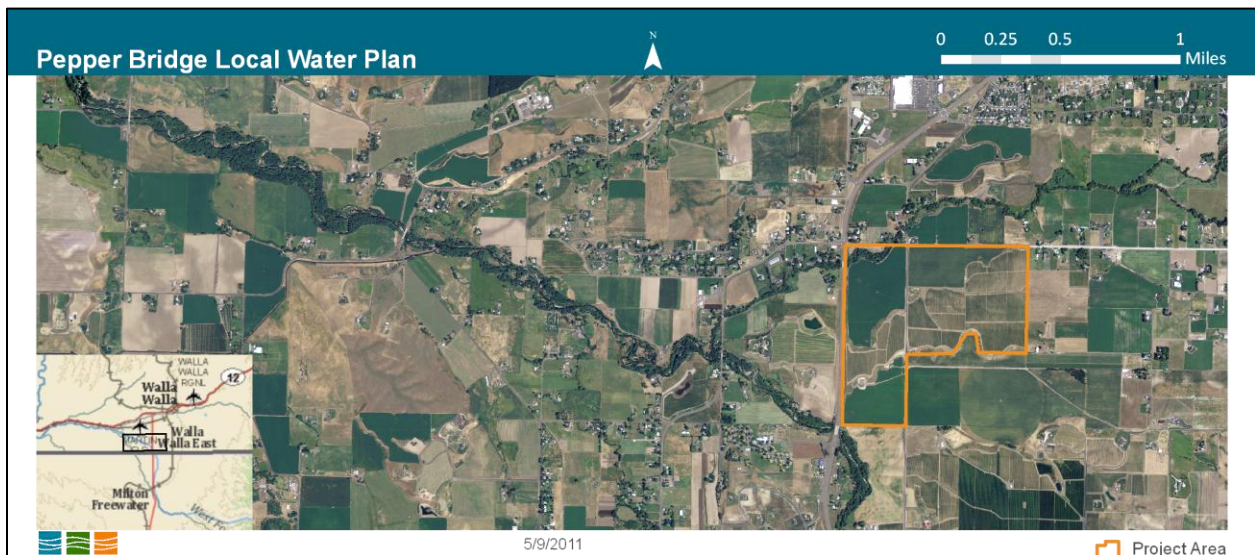


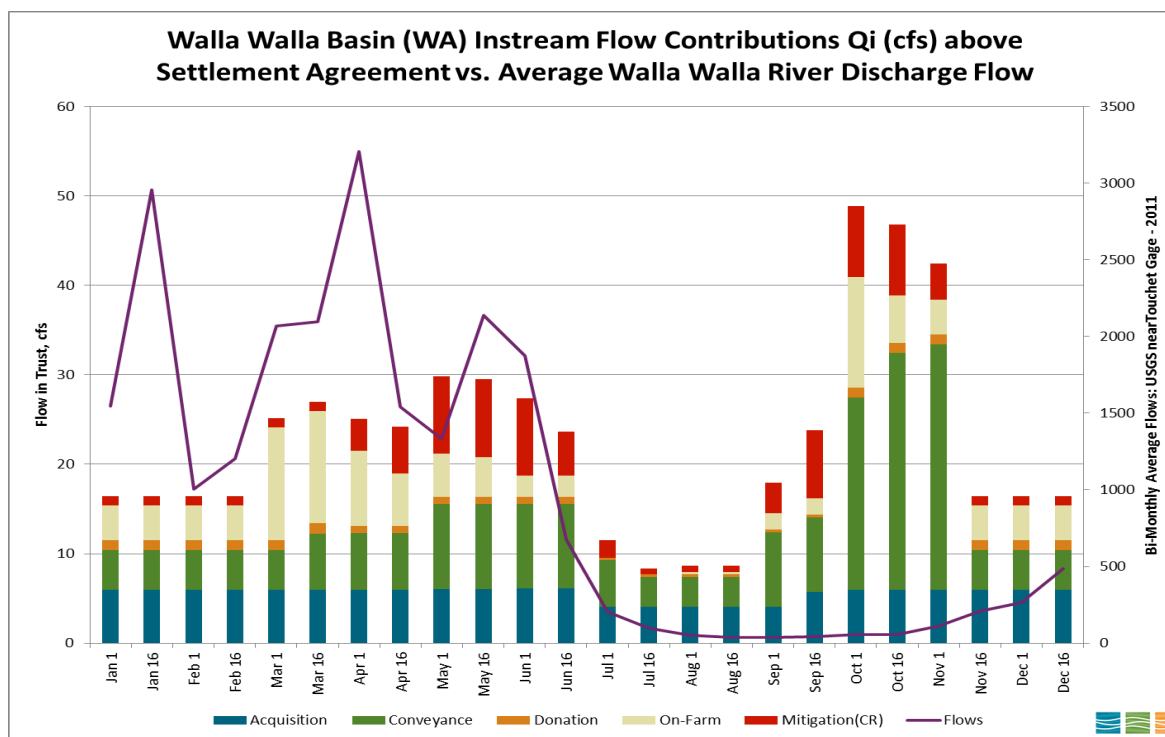
Figure C-3. Pepper Bridge Local Water Plan Project Area

## APPENDIX D:

### Walla Walla Partner Activities - Leveraging Strengths and Enhancing Investments

Walla Walla Basin partners and landowners are continuing a legacy of collaboration to improve watershed conditions, enhance investments, and leverage strengths through implementation and monitoring of basin projects. Since 2000, a wide range of local, tribal, governmental and private entities have partnered to improve Walla Walla Watershed conditions. Three significant milestones have resulted from these efforts:

- ✓ **FLOW IS IMPROVING:** Basinwide instream flow trust water contributions currently range between 8 to 48 cubic feet per second (cfs) at different times of year (see Figure D-1). These flows are *above and beyond* the 18 to 19 cfs of surface water rights that Washington irrigators agreed to bypass and leave instream as a result of a settlement agreement in 2000 to improve conditions for fish listed under the Endangered Species Act. Numerous irrigation efficiency projects and Washington State Trust Water Right transactions have placed additional water in the mainstem Walla Walla River and tributaries throughout the basin, resulting in over 10,764 acre-feet of ‘wet’ water currently documented as trust water rights, enhancing streamflows across the basin. As a result of cooperative efforts to improve flows, the Walla Walla River is now flowing year-round throughout its entire length for the first time in more than one hundred years. Figure D-1 also compares the volume and timing of the trust contributions relative to the discharge flows of the lower Walla Walla River. Noting the difference in axis scales, this chart shows flow contributions are building to improve conditions during the seasonal low-flow period and months of October/November each year.

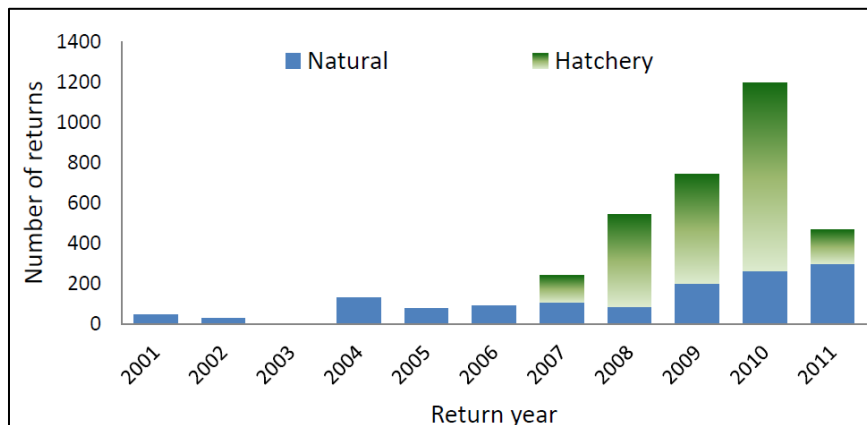


**Figure D-1: Walla Walla Basin (Washington) Instream Flow Contributions vs. Average Walla Walla River Discharge.** Timing/volume of stream flow contributions (Washington Trust Water Rights) relative to 2011 Walla Walla River flows at US Geological Survey (USGS) 14018500 gauge near Touchet (note different axis scale).



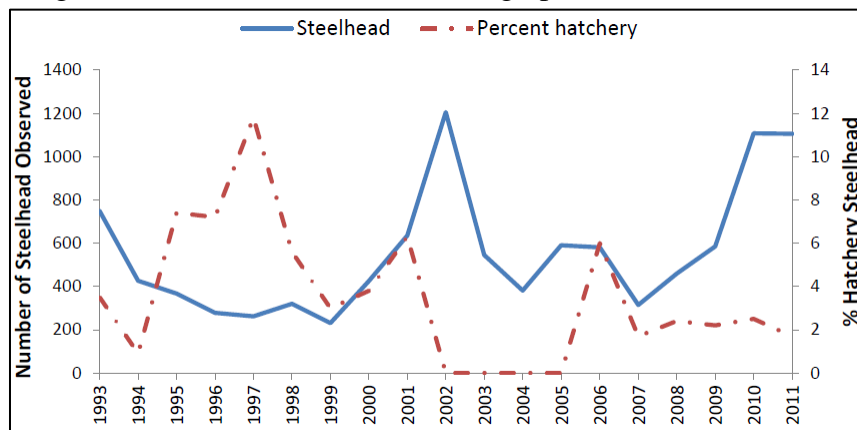
✓ **FISH COUNTS ARE INCREASING:** Collaborative efforts among fish co-managers are resulting in increased fish counts in the Walla Walla Basin, as documented in annual reports for the monitoring and evaluation of salmonids in the watershed.<sup>a</sup>

- **Chinook Salmon:** As a result of cooperative outplanting efforts by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, over 1,000 adult Spring Chinook returned to the Walla Walla River in 2010 (see Figure D-2). This was the first harvestable Spring Chinook fish run in 100 years for the Walla Walla Basin. Returning adults from outplanting will vary each year, with natural stock returns continuing to trend upward.



**Figure D-2: Walla Walla River Spring Chinook Adult Returns, as measured at Nursery Bridge Dam at river mile 44.**

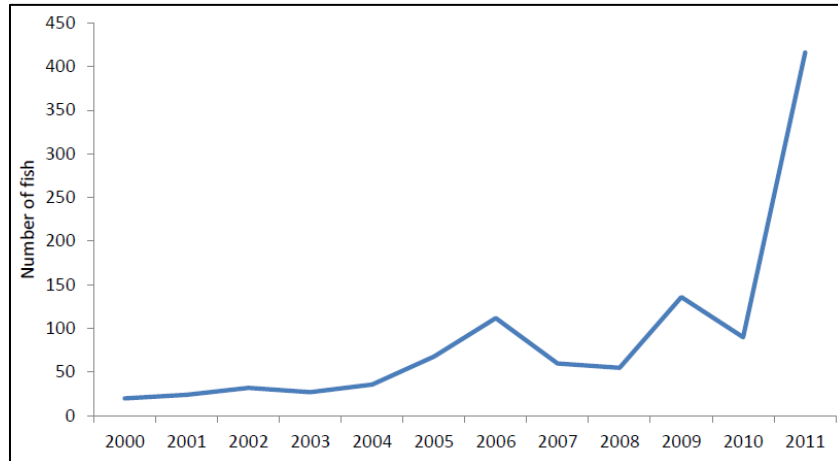
- **Summer Steelhead:** The Walla Walla and Touchet Mid-Columbia River Summer Steelhead populations are threatened under the Endangered Species Act. With substantial watershed improvement efforts resulting in improved flow, passage and habitat for Steelhead, Figure D-3 shows returns are trending upward in the Walla Walla River.



**Figure D-3: Walla Walla River Summer Steelhead Adult Steelhead Counts, as measured at River Mile 44 at Nursery Bridge Dam. No fish origin data was collected 2003-2005.**

<sup>a</sup> Mahoney, et al. 2012. Walla Walla Subbasin Salmonid Monitoring and Evaluation Project: 2011 Annual Report. Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Report submitted to Bonneville Power Administration, Project No. 2000-039-00.

- **Bull Trout:** The upper reaches of the Walla Walla River, Touchet River, and Mill Creek are core populations for Bull Trout, which are listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Bull Trout counts on the Walla Walla River are trending upward, which likely reflects a combination of improved passage and counting methods, as well as increased numbers of Bull Trout (see Figure D-4).



**Figure D-4: Walla Walla River Migratory Bull Trout Adult Counts at River Mile 44, at Nursery Bridge Dam.**

- ✓ **COORDINATION IS MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE:** The Partnership was established to provide basinwide leadership and streamline coordination for effective and efficient implementation of watershed improvements. The Partnership is elevating watershed management to a higher level, providing strategic coordination, a unified vision, and focused efforts to improve habitat conditions while preserving the community’s economic and cultural values. The Partnership is integrating and implementing work from over 17 basin planning, assessment and feasibility studies completed since 2000, including: Walla Walla Subbasin Plan (2004); Walla Walla Watershed Plan (2005); Watershed Detailed Implementation Plan (2006); and Salmon Recovery Plan (2011). Examples of Partnership coordination include: working with Ecology and Walla Walla County under the Permit Exempt Well Mitigation Exchange Agreement (2010); organizing local partners to assist Ecology in stream flow monitoring, and; expanding outreach and communications to serve as a community resource among constituents after Ecology’s local Walla Walla office closed in 2012.

Numerous activities and accomplishments contributed to these promising achievements in fish returns, habitat improvements and coordination. On-the-ground projects for irrigation efficiency, water conveyance piping, shallow aquifer recharge, aquifer storage and recovery wells, and removal of at least 16 fish passage barriers are positively impacting the Walla Walla Basin. Local project implementers have partnered to install more than 390 water meters, 370 fish screens, 201 miles of riparian buffer, and 300 in-stream structures to improve fish habitat. In addition, irrigation districts are voluntarily by-passing about 30 percent of their legally divertible water to benefit streamflows in the Walla Walla River. Project investments underway by various Walla Walla Basin partners are highlighted below:

**Instream Flow Restoration:** Within the Touchet River subbasin, a major instream flow trust water rights acquisition was completed by the Washington Water Trust in 2010. The permanent purchase of instream flow water at river mile 29 resulted in 1.5 to 2.2 cfs (depending on the time of the year) of irrigation water rights entering the Washington State Trust Water Rights Program, with 387 acre-feet of water left instream annually. This trust transaction enabled the landowners to continue to farm the land as a dry-land wheat crop, maintaining the agricultural value of the land while conserving water for fish. For more information about this project, visit the Washington Water Trust website at [www.washingtonwatertrust.org](http://www.washingtonwatertrust.org).

**Fish Passage:** The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Tri-State Steelheaders have completed numerous fish passage improvement projects on Mill Creek as far back as 2005 with the removal of Kooskooskie Dam in the upper reach of the watershed. Efforts now focus on improving Mill Creek passage through the city of Walla Walla, which is a flood control channel built by the US Army Corps of Engineers in the 1940s. Migratory fish utilization has been limited in Mill Creek through the flood control channel, so work is underway to test changes to the channel configuration to identify the best design. Results to-date include: 270-feet of channel improvements, creation of 4 resting pools, addition of 150-foot boulder lined channel, and five weirs notched for low flow passage. Projects funded for completion in the next few years build on previous channel improvements, including at the Gose Street Bridge, all constructed in cooperation with local partners. Visit the Steelheaders' website for more information: [www.tristatesteelheaders.com/index.php/restoration/millcreekfishpassage](http://www.tristatesteelheaders.com/index.php/restoration/millcreekfishpassage).

**Irrigation Efficiency:** The Walla Walla County Conservation District has completed major projects to improve stream flows through irrigation conveyance efficiencies. These projects have upgraded on-farm systems or converted ditches to an efficient, piped system to conserve water:

- The Touchet River Eastside/Westside Irrigation Districts piping project conserved 3,100 acre-feet of trust water in the lower Touchet River beginning in 2009, improving the diversion and fish passage to allow salmonid access to the entire length of the Touchet River.
- From 2003-2005, three Walla Walla Basin irrigated farms were converted from flood irrigation to center pivots, resulting in savings of 1,800 acre-feet instream annually.
- The Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13 south lateral piping project is estimated to save up to 4 cfs over the 7.4 miles of ditches, reducing annual diversion by about 1,700 acre-feet.

Most of these irrigation efficiency projects are administered through the Washington Conservation Commission with a variety of partner matching funds, including Bonneville Power Administration and Department of Ecology. Projects pending include consolidation of diversions and piping of ditches on the Walla Walla River at Lowden, and additional conveyance infrastructure for Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13. For information on Walla Walla irrigation efficiency programs, see: [www.wwccd.net/programs/irrigation-efficiency](http://www.wwccd.net/programs/irrigation-efficiency).

**Monitoring:** In an example of bi-state cooperation, the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council located just south of the border in Milton Freewater (Oregon) has expanded their footprint of data gathering and monitoring in recent years. As funding has dwindled for stream gauges and other monitoring activities, the Council has shouldered more of the workload through their

comprehensive surface and groundwater monitoring programs. The Council now manages the operation of three stream flow gauges in Washington; one of these gauges is positioned for use in measuring flow for a pending trust water right transaction on the mainstem Walla Walla River, which is critical in determining the effectiveness of the instream flow lease. Additionally, the Council operates numerous groundwater monitoring stations throughout the basin, helping to determine the effectiveness of shallow aquifer recharge and generate data for modeling surface and groundwater interaction. The Council is also acting as a repository for all of the water/stream gauge data being collected in the basin, creating a centralized data storage and analysis portal for flow in “real-time” on the Council’s website; this enables all stakeholders to access current data. More information about the Council’s recharge and monitoring work is at [www.wwbwc.org](http://www.wwbwc.org).

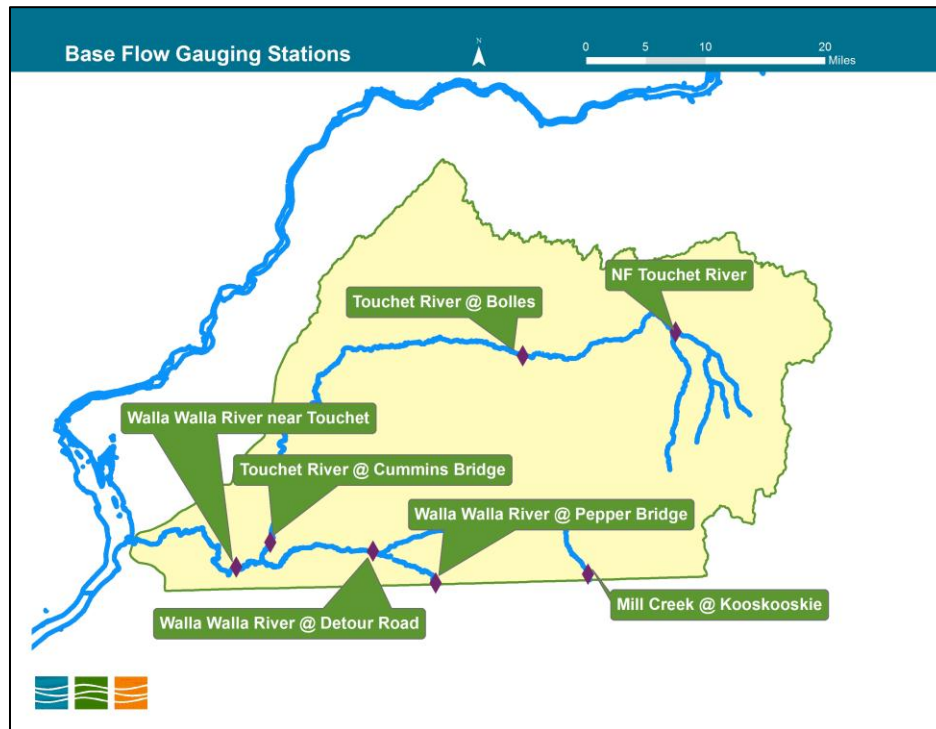
**Salmon Recovery Plan Implementation:** The Snake River Salmon Recovery Board is focused on regional restoration and protection of fish habitat to achieve salmon recovery. Priorities established in the 2011 Southeast Washington Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan, which was developed by the Board and approved by the Washington State Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office and federal fisheries agencies, provide a road-map for allocation of funding for plan implementation. Where the Recovery Plan identifies the factors limiting salmon and Steelhead recovery, there are identified actions needed to improve those factors such as streamflow, water temperature, fish passage, and channel complexity in the Walla Walla Basin. The Salmon Recovery Board also tracks all project work across the region; for more information, visit the Salmon Recovery Board website at [www.snakeriverboard.org](http://www.snakeriverboard.org).

**Urban Greenways:** One effort focused on improving water quality in urban creeks through installation of riparian buffers and outreach is the *Creating Urban Riparian Buffers* program, a partnership between Tri-State Steelheaders, Kooskooskie Commons, and the Walla Walla County Conservation District. Educational outreach focuses on natural lawn care, storm water management, proper disposal of waste, and the value of riparian areas. Backyard buffers improve water quality by providing shade, stabilizing banks, and filtering runoff. Since 2007, 41 riparian restoration projects have been implemented through the riparian buffers program, with the resulting placement of 7,200 native plants on 11,900 feet of urban streams. For more information on riparian projects, see: [www.tristatesteelheaders.com/index.php/restoration/curb](http://www.tristatesteelheaders.com/index.php/restoration/curb).

**Comprehensive Flow Improvement Strategy:** The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have been working with basin partners and the US Army Corps of Engineers over the last decade to design and implement a Walla Walla Basin Flow Improvement strategy focused on a source exchange with the Columbia River.

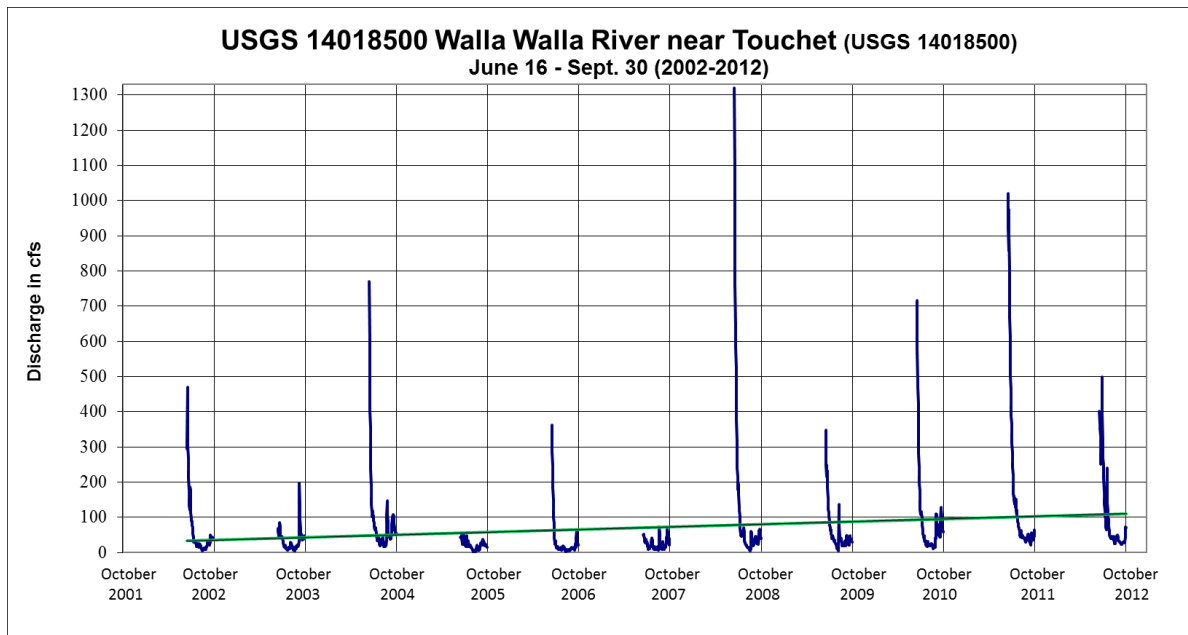
**Base Flow Tracking:** The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership is focused on tracking improvements in basin streamflow conditions, and considering measures of performance of Partnership flow enhancement programs on the Washington side of the basin. The Partnership’s Water Resource Panel has identified a set of base flow data metrics to be used in tracking streamflow conditions for the Walla Walla Watershed planning area. This “Base Flow Tracking” effort will be maintained throughout the duration of the Partnership’s ten-year pilot program, and the Partnership website will provide current information at [www.wallawallawatershed.org/files/flow-trends](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/files/flow-trends). The Base Flow Tracking effort includes:

- Detailed annual flow data will be collected from available resources at seven base flow gauging stations (see Figure D-5) identified by the Water Resource Panel as strategically located basinwide. Three gauging stations are on the Walla Walla River; one station is on Mill Creek, and three stations are on the Touchet River. The historical record at these stations range from the youngest (Detour Road) recording stream flows since 2007 to the oldest (Kooskooskie) recording since 1913.



**Figure D-5: Walla Walla Watershed Base Flow Gauging Stations.**

- The Water Resource Panel identified the summer season (June 16 – September 30) as the most valuable timeframe for tracking flow trends; this is expected to focus resources on the critical low-flow months when relative impacts of instream flow improvements could be most beneficial. In contrast, including winter flows could result in misleading trends, since the December through April timeframe is when stream flows are largely driven by precipitation and rain/snow events which can skew hydrograph trends for the entire year. The initial base flow hydrographs and trend analysis is developed with a ten-year look-back (when data is available), with the beginning timeframe of 2002-2012 for the June 16 – September 30 season. As an example, the hydrograph for the Walla Walla River USGS Gauge near Touchet (14018500) is provided in Figure D-6, with the increasing summer flow trend-line included to characterize the initial base flow condition at this lowest basin gauging station, which captures all basin discharge.
- Additional stream flow metrics may be developed over time to address some of the challenges inherent to the simple base flow analysis. For example, there are numerous other activities occurring basinwide which are affecting instream flows, such as shallow aquifer recharge, piping of irrigation ditches, hydrogeological conditions where gaining and losing reaches impact flows, and climate change or drought conditions over time.



**Figure D-6: Walla Walla River Hydrograph and Flow Trend-Line, USGS 14018500.**

The availability of stream flow data is also limited in some critical reaches, with funding cuts affecting maintenance and expansion of monitoring activities. Comprehensive water diversion information is currently not readily available for analysis; and complex modeling of diversions and reach conditions would be necessary to capture the net impacts of diversions throughout the basin. In spite of the challenges of flow analysis, the use of a starting point base flow metrics are deemed to be the most effective way to begin capturing instream flow changes over time. Other metrics that may be tracked to add context to the base flow metrics could include:

- The number of June to September days annually that stream flows meet the minimum instream flow set by Ecology’s Walla Walla Stream Flow Rule (WAC 173-532).
- New trust water right transactions and instream flow improvements projects.
- Oregon streamflow contributions through trust water right transactions or other projects which increase flow at the stateline, which can be tracked at the Pepper Bridge gauging station on the Walla Walla River.
- Additional monitoring, studies and modeling to identify seepage losses and other factors affecting instream flows; possibly to include a basinwide water balance analysis correlating gauge data, out-of-stream withdrawals, and surface/groundwater interactions through losing and gaining reaches.

These activities cumulatively are improving basinwide conditions for fish and flow, and provide a cooperative foundation to advance future watershed restoration work. Through focused efforts to leverage basin strengths and enhance investments, collaborative activities and projects are reversing downward trends seen over the past century and demonstrating the capacity of Walla Walla Basin entities to work together to achieve watershed goals for fish, farms and people.

## APPENDIX E:

### Strategic Planning and Communications

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Since its formation, the Partnership has played a key role in strategic planning and initiating stakeholder communications to sustain essential partnerships and inform the public. The Partnership's work in strategic planning and communications activities is summarized below, with documents available at [www.wallawallawatershed.org/partnership/strategic-plan](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org/partnership/strategic-plan).

**Strategic Planning:** The Partnership focused significant effort on developing a strategic plan containing actions for implementing the local water management pilot, with consideration of all basin needs including environmental, agricultural, economic and cultural. The Partnership initiated its strategic planning effort in December 2009 drawing upon the Policy Advisory Group to engage the collective wisdom of the 27-member PAG in strategic thinking. Exercises were completed to develop a vision statement, review the Partnership's mission and purpose, identify the focus for Partnership efforts and take into account complementary basin initiatives and priorities, with consideration of the CTUIR First Foods mission. The Partnership's vision, goals, strategic actions and metrics of success were developed to build on the Walla Walla Watershed Plan actions adopted in 2005 for the planning area. With multiple meetings held and input collected from basin stakeholders and community members, comments were incorporated from various resource perspectives. The final 2009-2012 Strategic Plan was approved by the Partnership in September 2010.

This initial strategic planning effort enabled the Partnership to develop a clear vision with well-defined goals to guide implementation of strategic actions during the first three years of Partnership operations. By focusing Partnership efforts to implement near-term strategic actions with an eye toward long-term results, the Partnership became equipped to successfully pilot local water management and advance toward achieving the vision for a healthy river system in the Walla Walla Watershed. The Partnership's 2009-2012 Strategic Plan was implemented over the three-year period, with an annual evaluation of progress by the Policy Advisory Group considering the effectiveness, appropriateness and completeness of the strategic plan's goals and objectives. In addition, the Policy Advisory Group convened annually in open "Discussion Forums" to focus on key topics to develop an issue statement and recommendations for Partnership action; topics covered to-date include shallow aquifer recharge and water quality with consideration of Total Maximum Daily Loads. The Partnership implemented the Policy Advisory Group's recommended actions in both of these resource management areas, calling for tracking of water quality improvements and development of an integrated aquifer recharge plan basinwide. It is through these focused efforts to implement the Partnership's strategic actions with consideration of all basin needs that the Partnership is finding success in its pilot local water management approach.

In 2012, the Partnership developed a Strategic Plan Update for the 2012-2015 period. The updated strategic plan builds on the Partnership's initial three years of work and first strategic planning effort, and enabled the Partnership to renew its commitment to a clear vision with well-defined goals and objectives to guide implementation of actions in the next three years.

**Communications:** The basin partnerships and working relationships built over many years in the Walla Walla Watershed have proven to be a valuable asset in implementing the local pilot water management program. The Partnership strives to expand communications, sustain collaborative partnerships, and seek opportunities to develop new cooperative efforts to provide innovative, adaptive solutions to Walla Walla’s complex water allocation challenges. The Partnership capitalizes on opportunities for communications to encourage relationship building and increased understanding among the constituents of the stakeholder groups represented by Partnership members. In 2012, the Partnership adopted a Communications and Outreach Plan to identify outreach priorities, focus resources for effective message delivery to key audiences, and leverage basin partnerships to achieve communications goals.

Partnership staff members regularly provide in-person updates on water management to local governments, civic groups, and in community forums. Partnership staff engages often with visitors to the William A. Grant Water & Environmental Center, providing updates on Partnership progress to elected officials, business leaders, and agency interests. Basin partners and stakeholders engage in a variety of community meetings, including a Partnership-hosted Water Smart Forum and Roundtable Discussion with Ecology Director Ted Sturdevant; project tours with field visits to flow enhancement projects; educational workshops on water rights and exempt well limitations, and public Partnership meetings.

The Partnership has grown into a primary resource for community members with water rights questions, supporting partners and stakeholders in problem-solving and outside agency coordination after Ecology’s local Walla Walla office closed in 2012. Improving access and expanding understanding of Partnership programs is an in-basin priority, while broader outreach efforts focus on maintaining effective communications with the Department of Ecology, the Washington State legislature, and all affected local, state and federal jurisdictions. Press releases on Partnership activities are regularly published in three local newspapers, with special emphasis to highlight Partnership program opportunities and accomplishments. Monthly meetings of the Partnership Board are publicized and well attended, with information presented on Partnership programs and general water management issues. Each issue of the Partnership’s quarterly newsletter is distributed electronically to more than 150 recipients, with a dedicated section in each newsletter for stories and information from partnering organizations on basin water management efforts. Weekly updates of the Partnership website at [www.wallawallawatershed.org](http://www.wallawallawatershed.org) and Facebook page provide current information on meetings, participation and comment opportunities.

Where strategic planning and communications activities are reaching local stakeholders and community members, the result is a more effective pilot local water management program. Through these local, cooperative water management efforts, the “Walla Walla Way” has become a common description for how this community works together in problem solving.