

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting
June 16, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Board Members: James Baker, Jerimiah Bonifer, Caty Clifton, Jack Ferrise, Joel Huesby, Steve Irving, Mark Medina, Kevin Scribner, John Zerba

Staff: Michelle McClellan, Tara Patten, Luke Adams, Colin Meister

Guest(s): Randal Son, Judith Johnson, Jean Dolling, Jim Rowan, Sarah Hewitt, Constanza Kremer, Akshita Sobhun, Tanvire Ahmed

(2:28 PM) Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Chair James Baker. A quorum was present.

(2:29) Business

- May 2026 meeting minutes
 - Motion: John Zerba moved to approve the minutes.
 - Second: Kevin Scribner
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
- Mill Creek Water Quality project
 - Motion: John Zerba moved to approve the Project Committee's recommendation to pursue this project.
 - Second: Joel Huesby
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
- Executive Officer elections
 - Motion: James Baker moved to elect Ed Chesnut as Treasurer, continuing his service in that role; Joel Huesby as Secretary; and Mark Medina as director at large.
 - Second: Kevin Scribner
 - Motion passed unanimously.
- Committee membership review and Chair elections
 - Discussion: Current membership of WWBWC's three standing committees (Fiscal, Personnel, Project) was reviewed.
 - Fiscal:
 - Ed Chesnut (Chair)
 - James Baker
 - Caty Clifton
 - Joel Huesby

- Ralph Perkins
 - Kevin Scribner
- Personnel:
 - James Baker
 - Ralph Perkins
 - Chair: vacant
- Project:
 - James Baker
 - Caty Clifton
 - Ed Chesnut
 - Jack Ferrise
 - Joel Huesby
 - Steve Irving
 - Ralph Perkins
 - Chair: vacant
- Michelle McClellan noted that some Board members might wish to join a different committee. She also noted that with Vern’s passing, the Personnel Committee is down to two members and asked if anyone would be willing to join.
 - Jack Ferrise volunteered to join the Personnel Committee.
- Discussion: Per the WWBWC bylaws, the Personnel and Project committees require election of a Committee Chair by the Board of Directors. The Treasurer serves as Chair of the Fiscal Committee.
- Motion: Kevin Scribner nominated Mark Medina to serve as Chair of the Project Committee.
- Second: James Baker.
- Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
- Discussion and decision: The nomination for Personnel Committee Chair is postponed to a later date (“TBD”).

(2:38) MAR update – Tara Patten, WWBWC Deputy Director

- Tara reported on the status of WWBWC’s MAR program.
 - Funding: Hudson Bay District Improvement Company is likely to fund MAR operations this year.
 - Limited license application: In response to guidance from OWRD, we are narrowing the scope of the current application to align with spatial and temporal limitations of the current MAR sites. We are also updating the monitoring plan to be very specific about how we are going to analyze the data and define success. Finally, the required draft bypass flow monitoring plan is nearly ready to send to ODFW and OWRD, pending internal Aquifer Recharge Committee review.
 - Timing. The State of Oregon will need a few weeks or a month to review the updated draft application; operate recharge this winter as soon as river flows are adequate to meet bypass flow requirements, likely in December.
- Kevin Scribner suggested that he could provide an update at the next Board meeting about preliminary discussions with the American Groundwater Trust concerning the group’s next annual meeting in Walla Walla.

(2:46) Flow & Conditions Report – Luke Adams, WWBWC Project Manager – Monitoring

- **Streamflow Conditions**

- Luke provided streamflow updates for the period May 13 through June 12.

Snowpack

- Basin snowpack is approximately 0% of median / not applicable (no snow).

- **CTUIR Drought Early Warning System – Current Conditions, Weather Outlook, Climate**

- **Current conditions:**

- Much of the Walla Walla Basin is in Severe (D2) or Moderate Drought (D1)
- Parts of Walla Walla County remain Abnormally Dry (D0)
- Little or no improvement generally, and some degradation in Umatilla County
- 1-month outlook: persistent drought, worsening in some areas

- **Precipitation:**

- For the water year that started in October:
 - Lower Snake River / WW is 84% of normal
 - Umatilla / WW Willow is 88% of normal
- 1-month outlook: below-normal precipitation (33%)

- **Temperature:**

- 40-50% above normal

- **Wildland fire potential:**

- Progressively worsening across the Pacific Northwest in July and August

(2:58) Mill Creek water quality monitoring – Judith Johnson & Randal Son, Kooskooskie Commons

- Judith shared the history of Kooskooskie Commons (KC), the organization's focus on riparian restoration and water quality testing in Mill Creek tributaries, and their interest in the Forest Service Tiger Mill project and potential impacts on water quality and quantity.
- Related to tracking impacts from the Tiger Mill project, Randal shared details on monitoring sites that will provide baseline air and water temperature data in the Mill Creek watershed. As data is generated, KC is interested in cooperating with WWBWC and sharing data so that together we can build a more complete picture of how the Mill Creek area is performing as conditions change.

(3:18) Big Basin Issues

- Kevin asked to be removed as a point of contact for the anchor project.
- Issues discussed: the Blue Mountain Forest Plan; the proposed Amazon data center near Burbank, Washington; and local bridge closures. It was suggested that those interested in the forest plan might convene informally with Caty Clifton (and Ralph Perkins, if available) in July or August to learn more about the proposed alternatives as a precursor to providing comment.

- Tara provided an update on upcoming grant deadlines and funding proposals in development, including for the Highway 11 stormwater project and Couse Creek RM 7 restoration.
- Tara reported that we finally received a contract from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development for our Waterwise landscaping pilot in Milton Freewater.

(3:54 PM) Announcements & Closing

- Office is officially closed on the 19th for the Juneteenth holiday (typo in agenda)
- Hydromania started today
- Walla Walla Drought Preparedness community workshop will be held on June 24th
- Kevin Scribner shared that salmonids' chemical detection ability is equivalent to one part per trillion
- Frazier Farmstead Summer Festival is on June 20th, tickets are still available
- At Caty Clifton's invitation, the four college/university students joining as guests introduced themselves and discussed their respective area(s) of study

(4:02 PM) Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 4:02 PM by Chair James Baker.