

Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council Meeting

August 17, 2026

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

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

Staff: Michelle McClellan, Tara Patten, Luke Adams, Sara Harris, Cat Garza

Guest(s): Chris Kowitz (via Teams)

(7:00 PM) Call to Order

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

(7:00) Business

- July 2026 meeting minutes
 - Motion: John moved to approve the minutes.
 - Second: Ralph seconded.
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.
- Project Committee Chair election
 - Motion: Kevin moved to nominate Mark Medina to serve as Project Committee Chair.
 - Second: John seconded.
 - Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

(7:01) Flow & Conditions Report – Luke Adams, WWBWC Project Manager – Monitoring

- **Streamflow Conditions**
 - Luke provided streamflow updates for the period July 15 to August 14.
- **CTUIR Drought Early Warning System – Current Conditions, Weather Outlook, Climate**
 - **Current conditions:**
 - Our watershed is mostly in Severe Drought.
 - 4-week change in Drought Intensity: Mostly no change; one class one degradation in WW County.

- **Precipitation:**
 - Monthly outlook is equal probability of above or below normal
- **Temperature:**
 - Monthly outlook is 33% probability of above normal
- **Wildland fire potential:**
 - Progressively worsening across the Pacific Northwest through September; outlook for October is normal

(7:11) Staff & Committee Reports

- Project Committee. Deputy Director Tara Patten reported on the August 4 Project Committee meeting. Agenda items included periodic review of multi-phase, multi-year projects; Tara's upcoming presentation to the Hudson Bay District Improvement Company board of directors seeking funding for MAR operations during the upcoming season; a summary of proposals recently submitted to OWEB and the Basin Advisory Committee; conversations with Lower Dry Creek landowners impacted by the recent fire; the Private Forest Accord tour of the North Fork project on September 1; the BAC's withholding of a letter of support for our funding application to OWEB for the next phase of the North Fork project; modifications to the Couse Creek project in response to the high-flow event in March; and WWBWC's role in supporting Upper Mill Creek landowners after the spring high-flow event.
- Outreach & Education. Outreach Specialist Sara Harris reported on outreach and education activities and events from spring/summer and previewed the upcoming schedule.
- Clean Water. Project Manager Cat Garza shared updates about Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) and Salmon Safe activities. The next PSP workshop for producers and applicators will be held January 21, 2027 at the Milton Freewater Community Building. Regarding the Dry Creek and Pine Creek assessment, summer field work and landowner visits are continuing to identify conditions, priorities, and potential future projects. Following the wildfire, staff are coordinating with partners, sharing available resource information, and documenting longer-term recovery needs. Staff are also identifying potential funding opportunities for needs such as erosion control, reseeding, invasive-plant management, and site-specific restoration. Any formal funding request will come through the Project Committee before it moves forward. Our OWEB-funded Dryland Agriculture Water Quality Support project is getting underway through coordination with Kyle Waggoner at the Umatilla County Soil & Water Conservation District.

(7:47) Issues Engagement & Next Steps

Board members continued their discussion of the American Groundwater Trust 2027 conference and the Blue Mountains Forest planning process. Public comments are due on the forest plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement by September 30. Caty said that she is continuing to work on her comments and offered to be a resource to anyone with questions.

(8:04) Big Basin Issues

Among other issues discussed, Mark reported he'd attended the Amazon Web Services Open House about the proposed data center in Burbank.

(8:30 PM) Announcements & Closing

- Michelle said the agenda she emailed to Board members had incorrect information about the BAC meeting on August 19. Print copies of the agenda have the correct information, including the Zoom link.
 - Ralph reminded the group that the Bureau of Reclamation will be presenting on the “anchor project” at the BAC meeting.

(8:31 PM) Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:31 PM by Chair James Baker.