



CHAPTER 1 – THE PLANNING PROCESS

PHASE 1 – THE ORGANIZING PHASE

DESIGNATION OF LEAD AGENCY

RCW 90.82 – Watershed Planning authorizes initiating governments to designate an entity that will serve as the lead agency for the planning effort and indicate how the planning unit will be staffed.¹ The County took the initiative on behalf of the other initiating governments, to approach the Okanogan Conservation District in early 2004 requesting that the District be lead agency for the Okanogan River Basin watershed planning process under RCW 90.82. They did so, in part, because of the District’s reputation for having cooperative and relationships with landowners, and also because the District was quite successful in the process and preparation of the Okanogan Watershed Water Quality Management Plan adopted in 2000. After a series of meetings among the initiating governments and the Conservation District, the “Intergovernmental Agreement for Okanogan County Watershed Planning and Designation of Administrative Facilitator” (Appendices) was created and signed by the Okanogan Board of County Commissioners, the Omak City Council, the Board of the Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District, and the Board of Supervisors of the Okanogan Conservation District in the fall of 2004. This agreement identified the Okanogan Conservation District as the “Administrative Facilitator” for the planning process. The initiating governments invited the Colville Tribes to participate in the watershed planning process, but the Tribes formally opted out by resolution of the Tribal Business Council.

FORMATION OF THE PLANNING UNIT

Composition

As part of the intergovernmental agreement, the initiating governments indicated how the planning unit was to be staffed. As required by RCW 90.82.060(6), initiating governments provided for representation of a wide range of water resource interests. The Okanogan Conservation District subsequently sent formal invitations to the identified

¹ The initiating governments for the Okanogan River Basin (WRIA 49), Okanogan County, the City of Omak as the largest city, and the Oroville-Tonasket irrigation district as the largest water purveyor, were authorized by RCW 90.82.060(2) to designate the entity that will serve as the lead agency for the planning effort and indicate how the planning unit will be staffed.



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organizations asking them to participate and designate a representative and an alternate. The list of invited entities, organizations, and interest groups is included in the appendices.

The Planning Unit recommended to the initiating governments (and the initiating governments concurred) that Washington State agencies serve in an advisory role rather than as members. In a letter sent to the Governor on behalf of the initiating governments, the Okanogan Conservation District stated that input from these agencies would be critical and valued, but that the initiating governments and the Planning Unit intended to do their best to make the watershed plan about local solutions from local residents that do not speak for agencies and governments outside of the County (Appendices). The Governor's office responded acknowledging this local determination and stated that the Washington State Department of Ecology would represent the State of Washington and its various agencies. The letter included a reminder that the decision that the State serve as a non-member, advisory role. This meant that the State (and, in particular, the Department of Ecology as the manager of state waters) is not bound by the recommendations of the watershed plan as it would be if it were a member of the Planning Unit.

Ground Rules

One of the first tasks of the Planning Unit was to create ground rules by which it would conduct its meetings and make decisions. The Planning Unit examined examples of ground rules used by other planning units before formally deciding on its ground rules. At its January 11, 2007 meeting, the Planning Unit amended its rules to provide for an optional, rather than a mandatory, change of a member if a particular water resource interest had not been represented at meetings.

An important aspect of these ground rules established that decisions would be made by consensus whenever possible with provisions for voting if consensus could not be reached.

SCOPE OF WORK OF THE WATERSHED PLAN

The Planning Unit held extensive discussions about the scope of its planning efforts. Ultimately, it decided to recommend to the initiating governments that the Okanogan Watershed planning efforts encompass all of the optional elements: water quality, multi-purpose water storage, and instream flows. The initiating governments concurred.



PHASE 2 – DATA ASSESSMENT PHASE

LEVEL 1 TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

The Planning Unit decided to seek consultant help for the Level 1 technical assessment. The Level 1 assessment was a summary of existing knowledge and data, an evaluation of the knowledge and data based upon specific assessment criteria to determine the adequacy and validity of the data, and an identification of data gaps or inadequacies along with recommendations for additional short-term (Level 2) and long-term (Level 3) studies to collect additional and more adequate data.

After interviewing four different respondents to a request for qualifications, the Planning Unit chose ENTRIX, Inc. of Seattle, WA to conduct the Level 1 technical assessment. Okanogan Conservation District staff prepared a contract, which was approved by the Planning Unit, that stated the scope of work and performance responsibilities of ENTRIX (Appendices).

Over the course of the next ten months, ENTRIX gathered, analyzed, and discussed its finding with the Planning Unit. A report issued in September 2006 detailed its findings and recommendations for further data acquisition (Appendices).



LEVEL 2 ASSESSMENTS

Using the Level 1 Technical Report prepared by ENTRIX, the Planning Unit decided upon scopes of work for acquiring additional useful information about the water quality, multi-purpose water storage, and instream flow optional elements. Reports generated from these assessments are in the appendices.

Plan element	Who conducted work – specific task – dates
Water Quantity	ENTRIX and Dr. Jim Lutz, UW – Water Balance Calculations - 2006 and May 2009, respectively
Water Storage	Entrix – contract and subcontract with MWH – summer 2008 through winter 2008-2009
Instream Flows	USGS – ground and surface water relationships in Bonaparte, Tunk, Antoine, and Tonasket Creek sub-basins – summer 2008 through winter 2008-2009
Water Quality	<p>Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation – water temperature sampling on selected tributaries of the Okanogan River – 2005--2007</p> <p>Ed Zapel, Pacific Hydraulic Engineers & Scientists – Mapping sediment sources along the Okanogan River between Oroville and Tonasket – Examination of the Okanogan/Similkameen Rivers for possible means of controlling erosion was contracted out to an engineer who floated the river between Oroville and Tonasket and prepared a summary report on his findings and recommendations – fall 2008</p> <p>Prepare maps of temperature data – winter 2008-2009</p> <p>Map other water quality data including fecal coliform – Due to weather and time constraints, acquiring new water quality data was deferred for possible inclusion in the detailed implementation plan (Phase 4) – summer 2009 through spring 2010</p>

PHASE 3 – PLAN PREPARATION PHASE

During the plan preparation phase, the Planning Unit suggested goals and objectives for each of the plan elements as well as over-arching goals that influence water management in the Okanogan Basin. Okanogan Conservation District Staff prepared numerous drafts of various sections of this plan during this iterative process. These sections, which became chapters within the proposed final draft plan, were prepared and distributed to Planning Unit members beginning in February 2009. A final draft was submitted to the Initiating Governments for their consideration in late May 2009.