

## WRIA 25/26 Planning Unit

### Revised Operating Charter

**Purpose:** The purpose of the planning unit is to further the management of water resources through the implementation of the WRIA 25-26 Watershed Management Plan and the supporting Detailed Implementation Plan. Toward this end, the planning unit will:

- Coordinate, facilitate, and advise implementation efforts by state agencies, counties, cities, public water purveyors, and other water related interests within the planning area;
- Will promote and support cooperation and partnerships among parties to implement the Watershed Management Plan;
- Monitor and assess the implementation of the Watershed Management Plan;
- Propose revisions to the Watershed Management Plan and the supporting Detailed Implementation Plan as deemed necessary to ensure the prudent use of the region's water resources.

**Background:** Pursuant to RCW 90.82, the WRIA 25-26 Watershed Management Plan was prepared by the planning unit. The goal of the planning unit was to "develop and implement a watershed management plan for the responsible use of water to balance the needs of people and natural resources." Planning unit members included state and federal agencies, local governments, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and other water-related interests within the planning area. The final plan was adopted by the Boards of County Commissioners of Lewis, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, and Skamania counties on July 21, 2006. Following adoption of the plan, the planning unit adopted a Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) in 2008. In 2013, the planning unit recommended revisions related to water supply and stream flows in the Cowlitz River basin. In 2014, the counties adopted the planning unit's recommendations.

The Watershed Management Plan addresses water quantity and quality, stream flow, and fish habitat. It set the following objectives for the management of water resources and the enhancement of watersheds:

- Provide long-term reliable and predictable water supplies for human uses.
- Improve certainty, timeliness, and efficiency in water rights decisions.
- Manage stream flows to effectively support fish recovery and habitat enhancement plans.
- Provide for improved stormwater and flood control through improved land use practices.
- Protect surface water quality for designated uses, with an emphasis on protection of fish and supporting aquatic biota.
- Protect surface and ground water quality needed for public drinking water supplies.
- Maintain productive habitat and enhance degraded habitat for indigenous/native fish species in all life stages.
- Ensure public waters are accessible for recreational uses.

The Plan also set forth the following implementation objectives:

- Manage water resources in a cost-effective manner, taking into account existing programs, potential partnerships, cost/benefit principles, and opportunities to achieve multiple objectives.
- Ensure fairness in distributing costs and burdens of water-resource management actions.
- Improve public understanding of water resources and encourage responsible stewardship.
- Provide for extensive and meaningful public participation.
- Improve scientific basis for decision-making on water-resource issues, through sound data, accepted technical methods, and effective quality assurance/quality control protocols.
- Develop effective protocols, administrative arrangements and funding sources for long-term monitoring to support adaptive management of water resources.

With the completion of this work, the focus of the planning unit has shifted to implementation of the Plan's various strategies and actions. The purpose of this document is to provide a framework through which key implementing partners and interested parties will work together to implement the Plan.

**Participants:** Core membership in the planning unit will consist of:

- Lewis, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, and Skamania counties;

- Cities of Morton, Mossyrock, Winlock, Toledo, Vader, Castle Rock, Kelso, Longview, and the town of Cathlamet;
- Beacon Hill Water District;
- Citizen representation;
- The Cowlitz Tribe;
- WA Department of Ecology;
- WA Department of Fish and Wildlife; and
- The Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

Other water-related interests may become members with the consent to the core membership.

**Planning Unit Convener:** To the extent that resources are available, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board shall serve as the planning unit convener and, in doing so, shall:

- Develop meeting agendas in consultation with the planning unit;
- Arrange and provide notice of meetings;
- Facilitate quarterly meetings;
- Distribute meeting materials and serve as an information clearinghouse;
- Will apply for, receive, and administer funds received for the operations of the planning unit or to conduct any projects undertaken collectively by the planning unit.

**Functions:** The planning unit will perform the following functions:

- Advise the Washington Department of Ecology on matters relating to the implementation of the WRIA 25/26 Water Management rule or other cooperative agreements that may be developed and associated mitigation strategy, including the issuance or transfer of water rights and review and revision of the rule.
- Coordinate, facilitate, and advise implementation efforts by state agencies, counties, cities, public water purveyors, and other water related interests within the planning area;
- Report annually to the implementing authorities (Boards of County Commissioners) the planning unit's progress.

- Will promote and support cooperation and partnerships among parties to implement the Watershed Management Plan and Detailed Implementation Plan;
- Coordinating efforts to seek funding for Plan actions, to avoid duplication of effort and ensure the State legislature and funding agencies see well-organized and unified support for funding requests on an ongoing basis;
- Promote public understanding of and participation in water resource issues and encourage responsible stewardship;
- Providing information to the public on Plan implementation and resulting improvements in watershed conditions;
- As funding allows, undertake studies or assessments needed to address key issues or uncertainties associated with the implementation of the Watershed Management Plan;
- Provide a forum for the discussion of water management issues within the planning area;
- Track and assess implementation of Plan actions by the many organizations involved, to ensure actions are being carried out in a timely fashion; that the balanced nature of the plan is retained as actions are implemented; and that the most important priorities defined by the planning unit are being addressed;
- Monitor watershed conditions across jurisdictional boundaries, facilitate appropriate data management, and provide appropriate data access; and
- Propose revisions to the Watershed Management Plan and the supporting Detailed Implementation Plan as deemed necessary to further the prudent use of the region's water resources.

**Ground Rules and Decision Making:** The planning unit shall operate under the ground rules in Attachment A. Decisions will be made by consensus as defined in Attachment A. Meetings will be held once a quarter provided that the planning unit may choose to meet more frequently if necessary.

**Funding:** To the extent that funding is available, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board will provide the services of the planning unit convener. Each participant shall be responsible for the costs associated with its participation in planning unit meetings. Grant funding will be sought to support planning operations and projects. The planning unit members may choose to contribute to the operation of the planning unit or specific projects. Such contributions are voluntary.

Attachments:

Ground rules and definition of consensus approved 12/9/1999