

Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee Stakeholder Engagement Group Charter July 2019

Background

The Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC) works collaboratively to help the region better understand, manage, utilize, and protect our groundwater resources through research, educational outreach, and implementation of the Ground Water Implementation Plan. However, there continues to be a lack of understanding in the community about the role of PBAC and we must educate the public about our mission, research-driven programs, and collaborative, multi-institutional foundation. Community members (water users) must be encouraged to become part of the aquifer conversation and to take a proactive role in the solution as good stewards of water.

Presently, PBAC is evaluating four alternatives derived from previously studied water supply projects to determine the most promising alternative(s) for meeting existing and future water supply needs in the Palouse Basin. As we pursue these alternatives, it's imperative that we increase community-wide awareness about the depth, breadth, significance and long-term impact of the decreasing groundwater supply and the important role our communities play in helping support our efforts.

PBAC has developed a work plan for evaluating these alternatives, and we would like to establish a Stakeholder Engagement Group (SEG) to provide input on elements of these alternatives, the environmental review process, and associated education and outreach efforts.

Additionally, the SEG should also align with PBAC's Communication Action Plan's Goals and Strategies including:

- ***Build community awareness and understanding of the Palouse Basin's groundwater supply***
- ***Engage the community and build public support of and involvement in PBAC's mission to ensure a quality, long-term water supply***
- ***Strengthen PBAC's reputation and credibility as the Palouse Basin groundwater authority***

Mission

The mission of the SEG is to provide input to PBAC through dialogue among a broad range of interested parties focusing mainly on the four water supply alternatives and associated engineering and environmental evaluations and analyses, research activities, and public involvement efforts.

Objectives and Meeting Frequency

The primary objective of the SEG is to develop recommendations and provide constructive comments for consideration by PBAC in evaluating water supply alternatives, conducting the environmental review, assist in coordinating public involvement and ultimately helping build widespread community support.

The SEG will meet quarterly and receive updates on progress made on tasks identified in the PBAC Action Plan and Schedule for Additional Water Supply Alternative Evaluations, provide input on the findings from these activities, and provide guidance on planned next steps. Meetings are expected to be held in January, April, July and October of each year for the duration of the supply alternatives evaluation process, currently planned through at least 2025.

Representation

Members of the SEG will serve at the pleasure of PBAC. Vacant seats will be filled by PBAC appointment on an as-needed basis. SEG representation includes a broad and diverse range of interests and could include but would not necessarily be limited to:

- Universities—Research and centers of excellence (e.g., UI Sustainability, WSU Water Research Center)
- Conservation Districts
- Latah and Whitman County Farm Bureaus and ag-related interests
- Environmental and Conservation—Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute, Palouse Land Trust, Palouse Water Conservation Network
- Professional, Commercial, Hospitality and Industrial business interests
- Large landowners—forest and agriculture
- Chambers of Commerce, EDCs and Port of Whitman County
- UI/WSU Cooperative Extensions

Reporting Responsibilities

The Chair of the SEG will provide an update on the recommendations and comments of the SEG at each regularly scheduled PBAC meeting. Likewise, the SEG Chair will report back to the SEG on the proceedings of PBAC meetings.

Oversight Responsibilities

The Executive Manager of PBAC, in consultation with the PBAC Chair and PBAC Vice-Chair, will cooperate with the SEG Chair and representatives to assist the SEG in operating effectively within the guidelines of this charter.

Budget

PBAC may set up regular funding for the SEG at its discretion.

Meeting Notes

The PBAC Executive Manager will prepare draft and final notes for the SEG. Draft and final notes will be published on the PBAC website. PBAC will periodically submit information on the four alternatives for SEG analysis and feedback. The analysis and feedback may contain both objective and subjective content. The SEG may also present findings and input of its own production for consideration by PBAC.

Operation Rules

The SEG will finalize its rules for operation and deliver a copy to the PBAC Executive Manager. The following is provided as a starting point for discussion:

1. **Operate by Consensus:** All members are expected to participate in all phases of discussions to develop PBAC recommendations. The SEG will operate by consensus. Consensus is defined as a decision that falls within the “endorsement” to “formal disagreement but will go with majority” continuum.
 - a. A simple majority is required for a quorum; informational meetings can still be held without a full quorum present. If a quorum does not exist, the members present shall decide whether to continue with an informal discussion of the agenda topics for the meeting.
 - b. A simple majority quorum must be present for consensus advice or recommendations to be made.
 - c. Agendas will be distributed in advance.
 - d. If the SEG is unable to reach consensus on a recommendation, it will consider the following options:
 - Table the topic temporarily, and revisit it during a subsequent meeting.
 - Take an advisory or “straw” vote to help the SEG decide what action to take next.
 - Leave the topic and associated recommendations unresolved and note it as such. The option of providing a minority report is available as an option.

2. **Respect for Interests:** The SEG members represent a full range of interests and acknowledge that every idea has merit and in discussions will suspend assumptions, listen carefully, and speak to educate and create understanding.
3. **Creativity:** The SEG members commit to search for opportunities, options, and alternative ideas in providing PBAC recommendations.
4. **Open Dialogue:** The members agree that they have a responsibility to discuss the issues, plan development, and to use open and candid communication with each other.
5. **Open Meetings:** All SEG meetings will be open to the public. Observers are welcome to attend the SEG meetings and provide public comment at specified opportunities during each meeting. Written comments are also welcome. Summaries of each meeting will be shared with an Interested Parties email distribution list.
6. **Speaking:** One person will speak at a time, and the SEG Chair will make every effort to ensure that everyone will have an opportunity to speak. The SEG Chair will recognize each speaker.
7. **Attendance:** Attendance is important to successfully provide input and recommendations to PBAC on this alternatives evaluation process. Each member will take the responsibility to get the information they missed due to an absence.
8. **Responsibility to Meet Needs:** Each member will take the responsibility for getting their needs met, for getting the needs of those they represent met, and for getting the needs of the other members met. Additionally, SEG members are responsible for the statements that they make to the other SEG members as well as to the public regarding the work of the SEG.
9. **Start on Time:** SEG members agree to start the meetings on time and end them on time.
10. **Use of Cell Phones:** Unless there's an emergency, responding to pagers, cell phones, telephone messages, etc., will wait until the members are on a break or the meeting is over.

Duration

The SEG will operate at the pleasure of PBAC and will continue in existence until such time that it no longer serves a beneficial purpose as determined by the members of PBAC.

Idaho Department of Water Resources/Washington State Department of Ecology Involvement

It is anticipated that the Idaho Department of Water Resources and Washington State Department of Ecology representatives will act as consultants/liaisons to the SEG to ensure that any recommendations made by the SEG are crafted in accordance with applicable state laws. These representatives will not act as advocates for or against any particular interest groups represented on the SEG.

Adopted by the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee:

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2019