Place Based Planning Webinar – Summary Notes
Inland Rogue Water Resiliency Group (IRWRG)
January 30, 2026
1:30 – 2:30 pm

Welcome and Introduction*: Jill Smedstad*

- Talked about general housekeeping, main talks will be recorded

Introduction to Place-Based Water Planning: *Sue Parrish and Lili Prahl*

- History of Place Based Water Planning in Oregon:
  - 2012: Place Based Water Planning was first recommended
  - 2021-2022: Pilot programs were formed (unofficially 5) with extensive stakeholder input
  - Various studies and resources, workgroup recommendations available on OWRD website
  - Legislature used lessons learned to establish a permanent Place Based Water Planning Program, and informed a Place-Based Water Planning Handbook
- Goal of Place Based Water Planning (PBWP) is to create an integrated water resources plan for your specific area:
  - The plans are locally adopted and agreed upon by local water interests, state recognized, and consensus driven
- Highlighted some PBWP Planning Principles (see handbook for complete list)
- State agencies support the region: as resources and capacity allow, they offer data, technical assistance, and participation (OWRD, OWEB, Dept Land Conservation & Development, Oregon Health Authority, and more). Once a plan is adopted and state recognized, the agencies determine how to best support the local group.
- **4 main phases of planning**
  - **1) Planning Readiness Evaluation and Preparation (PREP)**
    - Time to build relationships and determine whether PBWP is the best option for them - can include data assessments and determine capacity; grants for this phase designed to be smaller to get started
  - **2) Plan Development – 5 steps in this phase**
    - Step 1: Build a collaborative, inclusive, & integrated process
    - Step 2: Develop a shared understanding of water resources. Examine the existing and future instream and out-of-stream water needs for people, the economy, and the environment.
    - Step 3: Identify critical issues and explore potential solutions

        - Step 4: Develop a workplan to implement integrated solutions for meeting long-term water needs
        - Step 5: Adopt the Plan and request State Recognition

    3) Plan Implementation – These grants are provided to PBWP areas with an approved plan to help with implementation of activities.
        - Collaboratives work together to implement the planned work, tracking progress and biennial reporting.

    4) Plan Updates
        - Frequency based on local need, recommended to update every 10 to 15 years.
- OWRD will have grant applications available to support the PREP, Plan Development, and Plan Coordination grants in 2026 (funding cycle specifics to be announced).
- Visit website at www.owrd.info/planning for more information or email pbwp@water.oregon.gov OR lili.k.prahl@water.oregon.gov and sign up for mailing list.

Questions on PBWP Presentation (answered by Sue, Lili Prahl, Jill Smedstad)

Q: How are stakeholders determined?
A: OWRD wants to make sure the planning groups represent the various interests of the community; the people engaged in the consensus votes have input along the way and the collaborative represents a balance of interests.

Q: How best would a person express interest in being involved in basin planning efforts?
A: The Water Forum and this webinar is the first scoping phase; by participating in these activities and participating in opportunities to give input, you will be on the list :). A more formal collaborative structure would be developed as part of any PREP or planning process if a grant was provided.

Experience of a Place-Based Planning Pilot: *Herb Winters – Lower John Day, Place-Based Planning Co-Convener and District Manager, Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District*
Introduction:

- District Manager for Gillam SWCD, been working for SWCDs for over 17 years, gets to work in area he was raised
- Likes action rather than just planning

- Planning is how Gillam SWCD has built a runway for implementation
- Not here to tell folks in the Rogue what to do, just what has worked for the Lower John Day, and lessons learned, so the Rogue can begin place-based planning in the most efficient way
- Lower John Day (LJD) Basin = planning area
- LJD has water scarcity issues, steelhead, irrigation, etc. their issues may not be the same in the Rogue
- Origin story of how LJD got into the place-based planning process
    - Proactive process – we planned early so local decisions could stay local
    - Once the PBWP pilot opportunity arose, they were able to utilize existing connections to take action
    - Group build intentionally, started with stakeholder lists, had clear roles and structure
- Governance & Participation
    - Wrote the rules early so they weren't renegotiating processes every meeting
    - Kept the governance simple, consensus minus 10%
    - Had 17 parties, such as SWCDs, Watershed Council, Cattlemens Assoc, Water Watch, DEQ, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, etc.
    - Having an outside facilitator was critical for capacity assistance, helped with the process so the members could focus on substance
- Timeline & Prioritization
    - Sustained work rather than a sprint
    - Worked on steps 1 through 5 in a steady structure
    - Relied on sub committees, then brought recommendations back to greater group
    - Key of the process was transparency while developing priorities and decisions
- Surprises;
    - Surprise 1: Data Gaps & Technical Writing Bottlenecks
        - The amount of technical writing to take data and put it into a document was a bottleneck, luckily they had a strong tech savvy partner involved
        - Technical assistance is critical to developing feasible concepts and relationships, so you don't chase perfection
    - Surprise 2: Participation Fatigue
        - Fatigue isn't a moral failure, it is a capacity reality

        - Built multiple onramps for folks to stay engaged, even if they couldn't attend every meeting, such as ways to vote, 1:1 meetings, etc.
- Benefits
    - Great process
    - Balanced Representation: The plan doesn't belong to one group, it belongs to the area
    - Clear rules fostered decision-making, not just meetings
    - Shared stories for success
- Lessons Learned/What they would do differently
    - Start with governance: write rules early otherwise you will renegotiate over and over
    - Partner alignment beats perfect technical work
    - Facilitation isn't optional, integral for capacity
    - Multiple ways to participate – not everyone can attend a bunch of meetings
    - Partner early with OWRD to align expectations - write out roles, review points, and what success looks like
    - Would have explored other funding, such as an OWEB TA grants, to pay for a consultant to help with the process and writing the plan
- What is better now
    - OWRD guidance has improved since pilot process
    - Understand state agency capacity, be prepared to handle some of the barriers locally (they can't always provide what you want them to)
    - LJD is in the implementation mode now
    - Want to help other basins be successful

Questions on Herb's talk (answered by Herb, Lili Prahl, Debbi Bunch, and Jill Smedstad)

Q: Are state funds more difficult now?
A: Yes, we have to be more creative and flexible now.

Q: How did Lower John Day find a facilitator?
A: We used the OWRD grant funding. We had Sustainable Northwest involved as a partner and helped early on, and it seemed like an easy transition to help with their plan.

Q: Do they have details on implemented plans/what are they working on?
A: Native Fish Habitat work was a focus/issue we wanted to address, very natural resource focused. We came up with instream habitat work we needed to do and that rose to the top

for planning process. Have implemented over 35 miles for process restoration/beaver dam analog. This is a huge footprint for native salmonid streams, this success wouldn't be possible without the PBWP Plan. This helped us leverage other resources - Focus Investment Partnerships, regional NRCS partnerships, able to leverage those partnerships for this process. All state recognized plans are available on the PBP website – for folks to see detail in the implementation efforts.

Q: Can you explain why plan early so local decisions stay local?
A: They jumped on the opportunity for the pilot program to plan locally, so they could address their local needs directly.

Q: Are there templates or examples for governance/committee structures?
A: Each of the state recognized plans has shared governance agreements (MOU, Collaborative partnership agreements), in the plans themselves they outline the committee structures that they use; OWEB, NRCS, and tribes were the primary groups they relied on.
Q: How did you solicit external help for technical support as you were ramping up your efforts?
A: We utilized existing players already involved in the planning process, then reached out to other stakeholders for specifics.

Q: What (if any) difficulties did you encounter conflicting priorities or strong beliefs during governance development?
A: It didn't happen overnight, we had a Declaration of Cooperation document, which had agreed upon working agreements and structure. Having a facilitator really helped the entire process, they distilled all of the brainstorm session notes into a cohesive format. The Rogue is more in our beginning stages for engagement of all players, whereas LJD had already a larger cooperative group prior to the PBP process.

Q: Are Place Based plans focused on on-the-ground implementation? What about policy? Law, legislation, regs, practices, outreach/ed?
A: It is on the ground, we worked under the existing PBP regulations, to work within those to meet the needs for the existing water users, also had some outreach and education information; policy laws and regulations outside of scope.

- One participant commented on WISE and Rogue Basin Partnership groups that come and go. This leads to working at cross-purposes despite the collaboration – ex - Different planting projects get mowed down later by other interests. How do we

avoid this from happening in the future? We have a lot of urbanization and property owners.

Q: Are there other Place-Planning groups focused on more out-of-stream needs in their implementation phase - supporting municipal, irrigation districts, agriculture. Etc? Also How did you evaluate in-stream versus out-of-stream projects for implementation?
A: Most of the LJD are working with Ranchers and Farmers, there is in-stream work but our efforts help the landowners; ridgetop to ridgetop planning effort, different players will have different water needs. Harney county also has a critical groundwater issue, the Harney County example is way smaller scale, but more focused on out-of-stream needs. Every basin is different.

Craig Wrap-Up

- Thanks to all who spoke
- We would like to continue this webinar series with other topics of interest to the many water interests in the region.
- Please take survey

Links shared in chat

- Place Based Planning Program Website https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/programs/Planning/PlaceBasedPlanning/Pages/default.aspx
- Lili contact: lili.k.prahl@water.oregon.gov
- Sign-up for PBWP Announcements: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORWRD/signup/48041
- Webinar Survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SSYV8P8