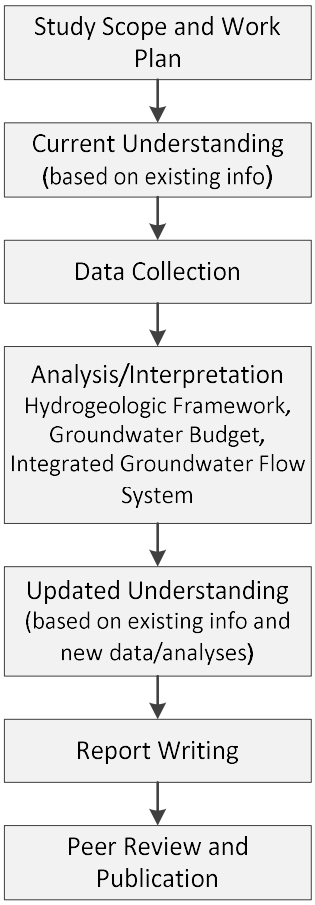
Walla Walla River Groundwater Study Public Participation Plan Overview

Study Basics

- The ultimate objective of the study is to develop an updated, comprehensive understanding of the Walla Walla River Basin groundwater system based on accepted scientific methodology so that there is a solid technical foundation for future planning, policy, and management.
- The study is a collaboration between the Oregon Water Resources Department (Department), the US Geological Survey (USGS), and the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), in close coordination with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR).
- No decisions about policy or management will be made in this process. Information gathered through the groundwater study may be used in policy and management decisions made by Oregon and Washington, but those will have separate public participation processes.
- The current study timeline is 2021-2024 and assumes a 4-year study beginning in early 2021.

Overview of Groundwater Study Steps



Public Participation Objectives

- Information about the study process and findings is shared at key milestones and there are opportunities for public input and feedback.
- Basin stakeholders have opportunities to share data, information, knowledge, and insights that inform and improve the groundwater study.
- The public and basin stakeholders:
    - Have an improved understanding of the groundwater system and groundwater budget.
    - Trust the groundwater study process and finding/resulting information is useful for water planning and management.
- The groundwater study process facilitates dialogue and cooperation.

Communication Objectives

- The public and basin stakeholders know what is happening, when, and why, especially as it relates to data collection efforts.
- The public and basin stakeholders are made aware of opportunities to learn more about the study and provide input and feedback at key milestones in the groundwater study.
- Materials summarizing the study process and findings are developed and distributed to help facilitate a shared understanding of the groundwater study investigation and results.
- Communication activities are well coordinated between cooperating agencies to avoid duplication or confusion when sharing information and opportunities with the public.
- Public input and feedback shared with the groundwater study team is made available as well as whether and how that input and feedback are considered and/or incorporated into the study.

Expected Public Participation Activities

This plan may need to be modified if there are any changes associated with the scope, schedule, costs, and resources of the study. Modifications will be communicated via the email distribution list. In general there will be two public events held each year, a virtual event in the spring, and an in-person event in the fall. In addition a Technical Advisory Group will be convened two times a year to facilitate a deeper exchange on topics of interest.

Description	Public Participation Activities
Study Scope and Work Plan	• Public scoping meeting and survey • Public feedback on Work Plan and Public Participation Plan
Current Understanding	• Public Workshop: Groundwater data "show and tell" for basin stakeholders to share data and information with groundwater study scientists • Public Workshop: What is your current conceptual understanding? • Basin Tour: Exploring areas of interest • Virtual Presentation: High-level summary of available studies, current understanding of the basin, key questions and data gaps • Technical Advisory Group meeting(s)
Data Collection	• Volunteer Opportunity: Volunteer your well or provide access to your property for data collection • Quarterly updates via email • Public Open House: What data did we collect? Why? How? What is it telling us? • Technical Advisory Group meeting(s)

Analysis/ Interpretation	• Three Virtual Presentations on the Hydrogeologic Framework, Water Budget, and Integrated Groundwater-Flow System
	  ○ Current understanding, data to be collected, methods for analysis
	  ○ Updates on data collection and analysis, key insights and questions
	  ○ Preliminary findings/updated understanding, including draft graphs and figures
	• Potential Field Tour: Highlight and explore specific areas of interest
	• Technical Advisory Group meeting(s)

Updated Understanding	• Public Open House: What is the updated understanding of the groundwater system and budget? • Technical Advisory Group meeting(s)
Report Writing	• Updates on report writing
Peer Review and Publication	• Updates on peer review and publication process • Public Open House: Walk through study results, celebration of project completion

Expected Communication Activities

- Quarterly updates summarizing past, current, and upcoming activities will be sent via email to the distribution list (see right).
- Press releases announcing activities will be drafted and distributed to local media outlets in Washington and Oregon.
- Concise, easy to understand, summary materials describing the study process and findings will be developed and distributed as time and resources allow.
- The cooperating agencies are committed to an open and transparent process.
- Summary materials will be maintained and shared to ensure transparency and accountability to public input and feedback received over the course of the groundwater study.

Stay Connected and Informed

- Sign up for the email distribution list for all individuals who express interested in water management activities in the Walla Walla River Basin: http://eepurl.com/hb4cmL.
- Visit the Department web-page dedicated to the groundwater study: https://www.oregon.gov/OWRD/programs/GWWL/GW/WallaWallaSubbasin/Pages/default.aspx .
- Visit the USGS web-page dedicated to the groundwater study at: https://www.usgs.gov/centers/wa-water/science/walla-walla-groundwater.