

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Port of Whitman County

Date: 06/04/20

Observer Reporting: Carolyn Joswig-Jones

Length of Meeting: 45 minutes

Members Present/Absent:

Commissioners: John E. Love (District 1); Kristine Meyer (District 2); Tom Kammerzell (District 3)

Staff:

Joe Poire - Executive Director

Brenda Stav - Finance Director

Kara Riebold - Chief Operating Officer

Sarah Highfield - Communications Director

Debbie Snell - Properties & Development Manager

Matthew Johnson - Port Attorney

Others Present: James Thompson from WPPA (Washington Public Ports Association)

Recap of Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest:

- The Port passed a motion to fund \$5,000 to the “Our Power is Water”.
- Port’s new Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Scheme and the Report Card will be valuable and comprehensive documents for understanding the Port’s goals and progress.
- July 21 new PortWhitman.com site to go live
- Connect America Fund Auction – obtaining FCC funds to help with telecommunication/fiber project.
- Port to help small towns obtain funding from CARES Act.
- Dams to meet the federal Clean Water Act. The EPA will accept public comments on the TMDL from May 21 through July 21, 2020 by email to ColumbiaRiverTMDL@epa.gov.

Below, cut and pasted, are segments of the Agenda and supportive materials supplied by the Port in **Black**

My additional comments are in **Red**. Potential areas of interest to LWV are in **Green**

To view FULL Meeting Agenda, Minutes and all supportive materials follow this link:

<http://www.portwhitman.com/about/commissionmeeting>

Port meeting calendar: http://www.portwhitman.com/pdf/Port_Calendar_2020.01.01-2020.06.30_Revised.pdf

Port of Whitman County Commissioners Meeting took place via **video and teleconference**. Participation could be online, by phone, or a combination of both. Public are muted during the meeting except during public comment periods at the beginning and before the end of the meeting. All people present were accounted for before the meeting continued. There was an addition to the agenda in the executive session, the minutes were approved from May 21st meeting and a few vouchers were questioned by Commissioner Kammerzell and answered by Ms. Riebold.

Commissioner and Staff Updates:

Commissioner Kammerzell attended the WPPA (Washington Public Ports Association) round table meeting. He questioned whether the Port might be seeking **retail broadband authority** (selling use of broadband) but Director Poire said the Port is not at this time. It was stated that broadband will be an interesting conversation. Goal is to improve connectivity across the state.

Director Poire discussed the **possibility of face-to-face Port meetings** happening in July and that they should be looking into facility availability to handle the appropriate COVID distancing rules.

Old Business:

Northwest RiverPartners Media Campaign continues to seek funding to increase the audience for its “Our Power is Water” media campaign. They report the campaign video has received 1.1 million views already. **The Port passed a motion to fund \$5,000 to this campaign.** Commissioner Kammerzell feels it important to be aware, while focus is electrical production, that PNW navigation is also of Port interest.

Comp Plan Changes Review

First drafts of the **Port’s 2021-2025 Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements** were presented to the Commission on May 21, 2020. Port staff are working on a third document, a **Strategic**

Plan Report Card, which will be published once every year to evaluate the Port's progress toward its strategic goals. Commissioners Meyer stated that they are a lengthy read but that they are more digestible and thanked Communications Director Ms Highfield for putting this all together. Commissioner Kammerzell stated the addition of the report card is good.

2020 Port Calendar

2nd Draft was approved and will be prepared as resolution for approval next meeting.

Website Maintenance and Reconfiguration

The project to reconfigure the Port's website to a Content Management System was awarded to Codespeed in Spokane, Wash. for \$15,600. Projected 7/21 for final review and the [new PortWhitman.com site to go live](#).

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 904 Auction – Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)

At the last commission meeting, the board voted to moved forward to engage Reid Consulting Group to help the Port of Whitman County navigate the upcoming FCC reverse auction (Connect America Fund Auction), including working out the business plan on [possible port partnerships with carriers to build rural area telecommunications infrastructure](#). The Port of Whitman County is primarily looking at Century Link's territory, along with a couple of small areas in the new Zippy (formerly Frontier Communications) territory. Port is currently working on adding the Zippy customers into the business plan to evaluate how a possible collaboration between the Port and possibly more than one telecommunications company will serve the areas they might bid during this auction. [A map of the Whitman 904 Auction Fiber Mock-Up is below. More information on this is on the Port's website in the meeting agenda supported materials.](#) The Port is trying to move this project forward and will further discuss at next meeting.

New Business

Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) Funding

As Petrichor researches all broadband opportunities for the state of Washington, the recent Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) from state's allocation of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) [funding provides an opportunity for cities and counties to build out broadband infrastructure](#). Port staff would like to work with the county and cities in Whitman County to identify broadband infrastructure projects that qualify for the funding and help manage the project to expedite delivery of services in the CARES Act timeline. ... [With funds only be disbursed on a reimbursement basis, this provides a possible role the Port to help smaller communities access these funds.](#)

Here is a link that shows the award amounts for each county and city statewide:

<https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/cq8de48g63pcdqm6dy59igbnch1zv4ph>

[It was stated the relief fund is offered at \\$25,000/small town.](#)

Discuss CARES Act Funding and answer following questions for staff/next steps:

1. Would the Commissioners consider staff time or financial matching of funds for CARES Act authorized projects that also fit in the Port's legal authority to help communities? [Commissioners Meyer stated the county could hire a temp staff to help with this money.](#)
2. Would the Commissioners consider providing a financial appropriation to communities if they are unable to fund projects and wait for reimbursement? [Yes - Executive Director Poire stated that the Port could offer money front loaded and Port would be reimbursed.](#)

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Temperature in the Columbia and Snake Rivers

[For the first time, the state Department of Ecology will require federal operators of eight dams, four on the lower Columbia and four on the lower Snake, to meet the federal Clean Water Act.](#)

Ecology last week issued Clean Water Act 401 Certifications for Bonneville, John Day, McNary and The Dalles, as well as Little Goose, Ice Harbor, Lower Granite and Lower Monumental. The certification enables Ecology to work with dam operators to review studies and plans for meeting the state's water quality standards, which include a rule to keep river temperatures below 68 degrees.

In a separate but related process, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency just published an analysis of heat pollution in the river. The report identifies a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for temperature on the Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers. A TMDL is a calculation that identifies the amount of a pollutant (in this case, heat) that a river or other waterbody can receive and still meet specific standards developed by a state or tribe to protect water quality.

The attached press release ([See below](#)) from Northwest RiverPartners describes the challenges of the temperature standards that have been set by Washington and Oregon. Findings from the TMDL report show that water entering the U.S. from Canada, as well as [water entering the lower Snake River dams from Idaho, is already too warm by a “substantial margin” to meet the Washington state standard in the summer months.](#)

Therefore, these standards may be unachievable without the dams in existence

[The EPA will accept public comments on the TMDL from May 21 through July 21, 2020 by email to ColumbiaRiverTMDL@epa.gov.](#)

Port staff reached out to our partners to see if and how they plan to address this public comment period.

Northwest RiverPartners has taken a very active role through the entirety of this process. The organization provided comments on the Washington State 401 Water Quality process and on the EPA’s NPDES permit process. They are currently working to develop a strategy around this TMDL process, and will make their public comment available to members once complete.

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association has not yet decided if they will formally weigh in on the issue, as their previous research has not delved into temperature control.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to monitor news coverage surrounding the dams. Staff will also plan to write a public comment on the TMDL that draws from Northwest RiverPartners’ research and expertise on this issue, once the organization shares their public comment with members.

[Commissioner Kammerzell stated the Port should position to comment and that the river temps were not met even before the dams were in place according to Jeff Sayer \(?\) who posted info about that at one point.](#)

[Director Poire will follow up on finding that reference.](#)

Annual Financial Report

[Update can be seen on the Port’s website in the meeting agenda supported materials](#)

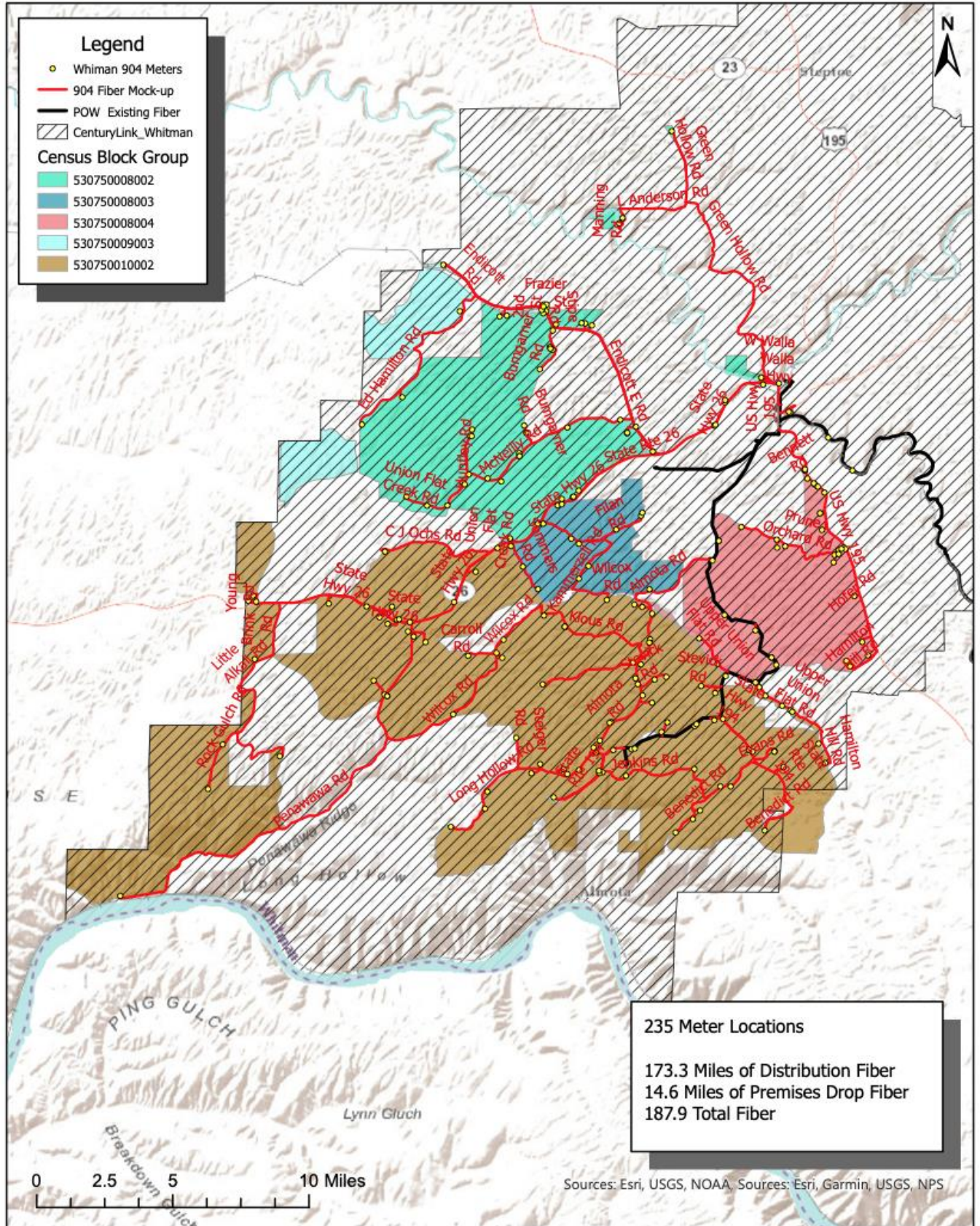
Executive Session

[Was closed to public and public part of meeting was adjourned.](#)

Upcoming Meetings

WPPA Commissioner Seminar, July 21-22, Marcus Whitman Hotel, Walla Walla, WA (will probably not be happening).

Whitman 904 Auction Fiber Mock-Up



Northwest RiverPartners Urges Practicality and Transparency Over EPA River Temperature Report for Columbia & Snake River Dams

Vancouver, WA, May 20, 2020 – A report released by the Environmental Protection Agency on May 18 entitled “Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Temperature in the Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers” outlines river temperature limits and seeks public comment. The report is related to a recent decision by the Washington State Dept of Ecology to add a river temperature provision into an EPA permit for Columbia River Basin dams.

The TMDL is required because Washington and Oregon identified portions of the Columbia and lower Snake Rivers as impaired because temperatures exceed the states’ water quality standards. These temperature requirements are designed to protect the beneficial uses in these waters, in particular salmon migration and spawning.

River temperatures are a significant concern. In 1994, due to record high temperatures, approximately 466,000 adult fish perished in the undammed Fraser River before reaching their spawning grounds. In 2015, a quarter of a million Snake River sockeye salmon died during a heatwave. Large fish die-offs were also recorded in Alaska last summer due to heatwaves.

Northwest RiverPartners supports efforts to protect salmon from extreme temperatures but takes issue with the standards that have been set by Washington and Oregon. The TMDL report clearly demonstrates that the water entering the U.S. from Canada is already too warm “by a substantial margin” to meet the Washington state standard in the summer months. The same is true for the water entering the lower Snake River dams from Idaho.

This means that the Washington and Oregon standards cannot be met, regardless of the existence of the lower Columbia and lower Snake dams.

Given these conditions, the EPA notes the significant challenge of meeting the water quality standards in Washington and Oregon and has suggested that the states reconsider their respective standards.

While this is a sophisticated and often complex process between state and federal entities, what remains clear is that the newly proposed burden for regional hydropower operators is unrealistic, unworkable, and unfair to the communities that depend on affordable hydroelectricity to help make ends meet.

Conflicting Research

As part of this report, the EPA attempted to estimate river temperatures with and without dams in place. The agency also tried to allocate temperature responsibility to each dam but acknowledged the task as difficult and imperfect.

The EPA's model estimated that the dams can cool or heat water, depending on the month and the air temperature condition. In general, the model predicted that during the August-September period, dams cause river temperatures to exceed established targets. It's important to note, however, that the great majority of salmon smolts and adults do not migrate during these peak temperature months.

Other studies have shown that the dams have a neutral or moderately positive effect on water temperature. As an example, a 2002 peer-reviewed study performed by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory showed that dams within the Columbia and Snake river basins tend to moderate extreme water temperatures.

Again in 2002, researchers compared pre-lower Snake River dam measurements of water temperature from 1955-1958 to measurements taken after the lower Snake River dams were constructed. They found no evidence that river temperatures had increased as a result of the dams, and instead appeared to have remained unchanged or slightly lower, even though air temperatures had increased. The team identified air temperature and flow levels as the biggest influences on temperatures in the river.

Washington and Oregon's decision to include river temperatures in their permitting process threatens to needlessly reduce the availability of a carbon-free energy resource and increase electricity bills for millions of customers. These decisions could also directly contradict efforts by both states to reach their bold clean energy goals.

That outcome would be a step in the wrong direction for the climate, for salmon, and for the social welfare of the region.

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About Northwest RiverPartners

Northwest RiverPartners (NWRP) is a member-driven organization that serves not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Wyoming. We also proudly represent partners that support clean energy, low-carbon transportation, and agricultural jobs. <http://nwriverpartners.org>