

Recommendation to Entiat Watershed Planning Unit Development of an Entiat Water Bank Program

June 22, 2009

A waterbank working group was established in 2008 to consider options and provide feedback for developing a waterbank in the Entiat Basin. Their recommendation was to survey all water right holders in the Entiat River about potential interest in the formation of a water bank for their basin. A survey was sent out in February 2009 and based on responses to the survey and a subsequent public meetings, it was clear that water right holders in the Entiat River watershed are interested in pursuing the development of a waterbank. This idea is not new to the Entiat Watershed as several water right holders developed a model for a proposed water bank in 2003 as a means of exchanging water supplies within the basin.

Multiple goals and ideas were identified as reasons for forming a water bank. These goals, suggested by waterbanking subcommittee members and Entiat water right holders included the following:

- There is interest in keeping water in the Entiat River watershed if possible and a waterbank could serve this purpose. This goal aligns with a goal expressed through the Entiat Watershed Planning process.
- Allow for strong local input in how a water bank is managed and run. A bank needs to have support from the local Entiat community to be successful.
- A water bank needs to be managed by a local entity but should include participation by the Department of Ecology to ensure state water law is complied with.
- There is a need for an easier exchange of water from one water right holder to another irrigator in the basin,
- Existing water right holders may be subject to the “use or lose” condition if they have not used their water right in five years. A water bank could provide an additional option as a place for a water right holder to lease or donate their water right, therefore protecting their right from relinquishment.

Based on these goals it is recommended by the water right holders in the Entiat River and the Steering Committee to the Entiat Watershed Planning Unit to pursue the development of a water bank in the Entiat River.

Next Steps:

Seek funding opportunities for assisting in the formation of the water exchange in the Entiat.

Develop a committee to create framework, structure and determine actual feasibility for the water exchange in the Entiat.

Facilitate and guide the formation process and development of by-laws with Water Bank Sub-Committee.