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Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Phase II – Status

July 15, 2009

Legislative History

- P.L. 96-162 Feasibility Study, December 28, 1979
- P.L. 98-381 Section 109 of Hoover Power Plant Act of 1984, August 17, 1984
- P.L. 103-434 Title XII Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project, October 31, 1994, as amended by P.L. 105-62, October 13, 1997, and P.L. 106-372, October 27, 2000

Purposes of YRBWEP

- To protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife through improved water management; improved instream flows; improved water quality; protection, creation and enhancement of wetlands; and by other appropriate means of habitat improvement;
- To improve the reliability of water supply for irrigation;
- To authorize a Yakima River Basin water conservation program;
- To provide for implementation by the Yakama Nation of an irrigation demonstration project, Wapato Irrigation Project improvements, and a Toppenish Creek Corridor enhancement project.

Recent Accomplishments

- Diversion Reductions
 - Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (Phase I) – installed 15 automated check structures and built two reregulation reservoirs resulting in 9,850 acre-feet of water left in the Yakima River for the 2009 irrigation season (funded by a YRBWEP grant). (Project is still in progress—total diversion reductions will be 19,440 acre-feet annually when Phase I is complete in fiscal year 2012.)
 - YRBWEP funds used to purchase the power water right formerly owned by Pacific Corps; powerplant was decommissioned, resulting in 260,000 acre-feet of water being left in the Naches River.
 - YRBWEP funds used to purchase land and water in locations throughout the basin, resulting in an additional 1,100 acre-feet of water being left in the Yakima River.
- Land/Habitat Restoration
 - YRBWEP funds used to purchase almost 2,000 acres of ecologically significant area for restoration. Reclamation consulted with the University of Montana (Stanford) prior to purchasing lands. Lands are being restored to native grasses and trees; levees will be moved on some lands to restore the natural floodplain of the Yakima River.
- Yakama Nation
 - YRBWEP funds have been granted to the Yakama Nation for installing gaging stations and planning work to restore Toppenish and Satus Creeks.



Near-Term Projects

- Diversion Reductions
 - Benton Irrigation District - converting from open canal and laterals to a new pumping plant and pressurized pipe system; also, a downstream change in the point of diversion; will keep 21,000 acre-feet in a 72-mile stretch of the Yakima River and will reduce overall diversions by about 5,500 acre-feet (@ \$19.5 million in YRBWEP funds; 2009-2012).
 - Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (Phase II) – converting from open lateral to a closed piped system; will reduce diversions by over 16,970 acre-feet in the Yakima River (@ \$44.7 million in YRBWEP funds).
 - Roza Irrigation District – construction of reregulation reservoir and conversion from open lateral to closed pipe system; project is still being designed; therefore, diversion reductions and costs are still estimates (10,000 acre-feet in diversion reductions and possibly about \$27 million in YRBWEP funds).
 - Kennewick Irrigation District – project is still being planned, but will likely include a downstream change in point of diversion, electrification of a pumping plant, construction of four reregulation reservoirs and conversion of open laterals to a closed pipe system; no firm acre-feet or cost data is yet available.
- Land/Habitat Restoration
 - Gap-to-Gap reach – cooperative effort with Yakima County, Yakama Nation U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington State Department of Transportation, etc., to set back levees along the Yakima River, restore the natural floodplain, and reduce risk of damaging floods. YRBWEP funds have been used to buy land, reduce weeds and restore natural vegetation. Other entities are contributing funds to move levees and to reconstruct road bridges over the river to allow widening of the river channel. Most of the YRBWEP funds for land acquisition in this reach have been expended.
 - Schaake – restoration of former spray fields and feedlots; work will include levee setback, floodplain restoration, and native vegetation reestablishment.
- Yakama Nation
 - WIP implementation (Satus) – construction of pumping plant, pressurized pipe delivery system and measuring devices; costs may be up to \$5 million per year.
 - Toppenish Creek – construction to separate creek from irrigation canals and restore floodplain habitat; planning work in process, so no estimate yet on costs.
 - Demonstration Project – still in beginning stages to improve irrigation efficiencies; will apply for a planning grant in fiscal year 2010 or fiscal year 2011.
- Cle Elum Fish Passage
 - Future construction of permanent upstream and downstream fish passage; \$96 million estimate.
- Tributaries
 - Currently working with numerous entities to help purchase water, remove barriers, and deliver water through Reclamation facilities to improve habitat and passage conditions in key tributaries such as Manastash, Taneum, and Cowiche Creeks.
- Wapatox Canal
 - Reclamation owns and maintains this late-1800s canal to deliver water to Lower and Upper Wapatox water users. Original wood stave pipe; plan to convert to closed conduit system beginning in 2011 or 2012; will significantly reduce chance for failure of canal that could damage orchards and interrupt ability to deliver water; will result in additional diversion reductions of over 28,000 acre-feet.

YRBWEP Budget

- YRBWEP budget has been @ \$8.5 million/year.
- Requests for \$17+ million/year for at least the next 5 years.