



North Yakima Conservation District

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To Whom It May Concern,

August 26, 2009

Having attended two of the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Program meetings over the past couple of months, I'm very optimistic about the outcomes of the overall process. Having worked for the North Yakima Conservation District for twenty years as both a technician and District Manager I have always had to balance multiple natural resource concerns, funding rules/constraints, cooperator/landowner/agencies opinions/perceptions/and policies all of which can be a monumental task for even the smallest of projects. It is because of this knowledge that I can grasp the actual magnitude of what is before you. I use the word "you" because we (NYCD) doesn't know how to be part of "you" at this time.

As part of the NYCD's function, its Board and Staff are charged with taking "available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user(s) for conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources". In the State of Washington, conservation districts are formed under RCW 89,08 and within that RCW natural resources are defined as "...land, air, water vegetation, fish, wildlife, wild rivers, wilderness, natural beauty, scenery and open space;..." . NYCD sees YRBWEP's function is to serve the needs of the watershed and you will do it by implementing conservation actions of the seven issues to be addressed. However, what NYCD's doesn't see is a process to gather ideas from the infinite corners of the Yakima Watershed for consideration in the first "generational" wave of projects to be implemented upon the successful outcome of this process.

To be proactive to this point the NYCD will provide a series of "projects" or just call them a brainstormed list that ranges from small to large, to those that sound to daunting or like non-starters to those that make common sense. I apologize for the fact that this letter will not be in any technical form, it is intended to share ideas and thoughts only. NYCD is including ideas where in some cases even the effected or implementing individuals or entities may not even know that they can participate in achieving the goals of this YRBWEP process. This is the number one reason for this letter.

- Ahtanum Watershed Plan: This plan has been started by the Ahtanum Irrigation District and has included many State funded steps and processes to date. Moving this plan forward includes the Pine Hollow Reservoir project and piping as well as many other habitat and watershed health items. A three party discussion without lawyers present would be a great place to re-start this project to discuss water right "opportunities". Perhaps

including in the plan the use (through a co-managed irrigation entity) of purchased existing ground water wells to supplement irrigation needs in low water years or to allow for greater in-stream flow.

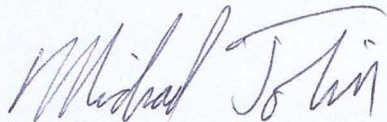
- Yakima Valley Canal Company: Consider automation and opportunities to line and or pressurize. Consider its location in the watershed and its ability to serve multiple purposes such as conveyance of water to water short areas (Ahtanum Irrigation District, Nob Hill Water, and City of Yakima?)
- Yakima Tieton Irrigation District: System capacity improvements that could result in pressurized water to areas (with complimentary power potential) such as the South Naches Irrigation District or any water need that might exist down gradient or adjacent to them. Perhaps the location of re-regulating reservoirs for the Ahtanum, Cowiche, Tieton or Naches Watersheds.
- Naches –Selah Irrigation District: Automation, development of re-regulating reservoirs, piping/pressurizing the system. Moving water to the Wenas Watershed. Looking to encompass smaller irrigation entities to provide more efficient service (this could work for any irrigation district discussion).
- Wenas Watershed Project: Work with the Wenas Irrigation District to develop passage and more storage at Wenas Lake for both fish and irrigation needs. Look to up-grade the irrigation Districts conveyance infrastructure and/or automation so that stream flow and irrigation are separated. Look to expand or at least deliver other water rights via improved/common pipeline etc... Look to the Naches-Selah ID for partnering opportunities to supplement irrigation needs so that fish benefits are also expanded. Remember that the YRBWEP owns the first two miles of stream and habitat of the Wenas Creek.
- Naches Valley Irrigation entity: Develop 1 large irrigation entity and construct re-regulating and piping infrastructure based on withdrawal of water from a dual diversion (one on the Tieton River and one on the Naches River near the “y”. Use common rights of way and public easement to serve all diversions (left bank and right bank) within the stretch of the Naches River between the confluence and the “y”.
- Taylor Ditch Co.: Work with the water right holders and adjacent landowners on providing mitigated certainty for development needs in return for (under prescribed conditions) the conversion of nearly 5 miles of side channel habitat in the Selah floodplain. What this really amounts to is a “zoning plan” for a very specific area of concern.
- City of Yakima Irrigation systems: Upgrade, consolidate, automate implement their plan(s), etc....
- Selah Moxee Irrigation District: Implement their CWCP plans or parts of it, automate, line canals/pipe, etc... Use the Roza for “wheeling” water to “four-bay”. Mitigate by developing the Moxee Drain as a managed fishery to complement the YRBWEP’s Yakima floodplain acquisitions. Doesn’t the SMID have storage water that could be what is negotiated with that could then be used for fish needs (late summer flows or maybe out

migration). Also there has been massive on-farm conservation (furrow to drip) where there maybe a discussion of conveyance and consumptive use based on current crop type needs vs. adjudication amounts.

- Union Gap Irrigation District: Pipe, automate, etc...
- Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program: Continue to look to it as a way to achieve goals of the YRBWEP process through its actions alone or by providing complimentary funds, technical support or policy/legal actions.
- As an idea to expand water marketing processes, wouldn't it be easier for the responsible entity (the Irrigation District and or Company under certain legal set-up) to manage an individual's water right if it were pressurized or an "on demand system". If that were the case wouldn't the individual want to be paid a "dividend check" at the end of the season for idle lands or deficit irrigation. It's not to say that the irrigation entity itself could charge a service fee for this and provide multiple services to its constituents and find another revenue stream to pay for their overhead.
- Floodplain Conservation Easement Program: Develop a Program whereby the use of Conservation Easements is used rather than purchasing the land. I know it's just easier to buy the land but that then creates a potential burden to the public for access, maintenance, etc.... Look to have a non-regulatory entity actually implement the Program and use the Non-Regulatory Program Framework developed by Yakima County or something similar to hold the easements. Opportunities to develop a set price for specific zoned/developed lands with specific habitat values via some sort of set matrix should be used (a programmatic approach) so that we don't waste funding on appraisals and speculation. Simply set the price with an environmental "bonus" and use willing conservation easement offering and purchasing processes rule.

These are just some basic ideas that may or may not be at the table at this time. NYCD knows that too many of these ideas are in conflict with current laws and policies but laws and policies change every year and the people at the "table" are the ones to change them or not. NYCD knows that these ideas and the projects that may come from them can be a part of YRBWEP's first generation (20 years + / -) of implementation activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this simple letter as part of your public comment process.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Tobin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Tobin" clearly distinguishable.

Michael Tobin,
NYCD Manager