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Board of County Commissioners BENTON COUNTY

David Sparks
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Deputy County Administrator



December 22, 2009

Derek Sandison
Washington Department of Ecology
Office of Columbia River
15 W. Yakima Ave., Suite 200
Yakima, WA 98902

Dear Mr. Sandison:

The Work Group has identified seven elements of an Integrated Water Resource Management Plan (Integrated Plan). It has also identified potential projects within each element for consideration and has, in the draft Work Group report, proposed phasing of certain projects and identified a preliminary Integrated Plan. Some of the potential water supply projects have been considered for many years, others were included in the recently completed storage study, and still others represent new concepts. Consequently, there is variance in the degree of information and the extent of what they would accomplish in an Integrated Plan.

At this point, we advocate moving into calendar 2010, with the focus on compiling the information generally as outlined in the draft Plan of Study. As a part of this effort, a scorecard of evaluative criteria would be mutually developed for a comparative assessment of potential projects and actions in meeting identified water needs for instream and out-of-stream uses. This would also assist in subsequently addressing the timing and sequencing of projects and actions as may be appropriate. The result would be a recommended Integrated Plan. We can strongly support a Work Group report and cast a "2" vote with inclusion of the following as the consensus recommendation.

Water Supply:

1. Additional water supply through a suite of at least some of the following actions: Wymer Dam, Cle Elum Dam (Pool Raise), Kachess Reservoir (Inactive Storage), enlarged Bumping Reservoir and direct pumping from the Columbia River with storage. Explore possibilities for additional power generation and recreation opportunities. Provide for additional analysis of a tributary enhancement project such as the Ahtanum Creek Watershed Restoration Program, including a Pine Hollow Reservoir Project.

2. Programs and policies to reduce water demand through extensive water conservation and efficiency measures for agricultural and municipal water users as well as for residential water users not connected to a municipal delivery system.
3. Groundwater storage including infiltration prior to storage control (or whenever feasible in light of fish and irrigation needs) and municipal aquifer storage and recovery, including transfer of agricultural water to municipalities for aquifer storage and recovery (ASR)
4. Market-based reallocation of water rights through a water market and modification of existing laws and regulations, as necessary.

Modifications of Existing Operations

5. Modifications of existing facilities and operations including completion of the Wapatox canal piping, subordination of some or all of the Roza and Chandler power plants for fish flows during spring (and/or removal of the Roza Diversion Dam and Power Plant) and improvements of the Kittitas Reclamation District Canals through measures, including piping, to improve flow in tributaries.

Fish Passage

6. Adult and juvenile Fish passage at all six Yakima Project reservoirs.

Habitat Enhancements

7. Habitat enhancement program addressing reach-level floodplain restoration priorities and access to key tributaries through restoration of flow, removal of fish barriers and screening of diversions. Will include analysis and identification of a plan to provide tributary passage for fish and key long-term protection for habitat utilizing federal, state and local legal or policy tools and funding sources to protect important river reaches, potentially in coordination with land and water trusts.

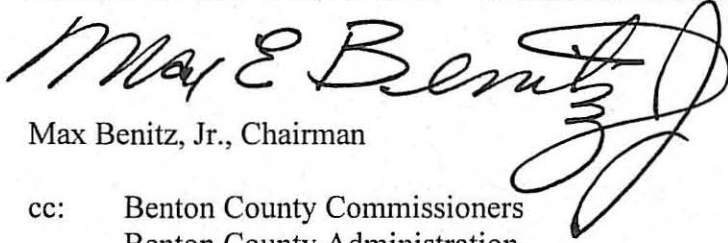
As part of the 2010 analysis and evaluation, we recommend:

- Testing assumptions regarding in and out of stream water needs to be met by an IWRMP. This will be accomplished through a peer-reviewed demand analysis performed by Washington State University in conjunction with a larger analysis they are conducting for the Office of the Columbia River.
- Improving cost estimates for actions receiving further analysis and evaluation. The cost basis for actions should be comparable. Improve understanding of the joint effects of the various projects alone and in combination with potential packages of actions drawn from other elements receiving further study. Utilize a scorecard to display benefits and costs for all elements in the IWRMP, and identifying least-cost means of achieving the various objectives, and estimating capital and operations and maintenance costs allocated to the responsible parties.
- Identify, evaluate and recommend project mitigation strategies for affected habitats, impacts to operating costs (e.g. power subordination) or other project-specific effects requiring mitigation. The Workgroup recommends it continue to meet in 2010 at key milestones to provide input as these further evaluations are carried out.

We appreciate the commitment of Ecology on this project and the continued open level of communication between and among Ecology and the members of the Work Group. We look forward to continuing this dialogue with you in 2010 and finding some real solutions to our issues in the Yakima Basin.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max E Benitz, Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Max Benitz, Jr., Chairman

cc: Benton County Commissioners
Benton County Administration
Ben Floyd, HDR Engineering
Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation
Dan Silver
Adam Fyall, Benton Co. Community Development