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Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Workgroup

Meeting Notes

April 28, 2010, Yakima Arboretum in Yakima, Washington

Introductions

Tom Davis with WA Department of Agriculture introduced himself as a new Workgroup member, replacing Brad Avy. Reclamation is also in the process of developing a public information video on the Yakima River Basin Study that is planned to be completed by May 2010.

Yakima River Basin Study Overview

Wendy Christensen, Reclamation and Derek Sandison, Ecology welcomed the group and provide updates on activities since the December 2009 Workgroup meeting. They characterized the two subcommittees that have been organized and meeting in February and March working to develop Out of Stream and Instream needs objectives and approach. The needs analysis is getting underway and will help shape the final package of projects.

Reclamation has been responding to questions from individual Workgroup members on how various topics will be addressed in the study. Communications documents will be posted on the web where information is easily shared with the Workgroup (e.g., letter correspondence).

Yakima River Basin Study – Discussion of Individual Tasks [*NOTE: See meeting Powerpoint file on Reclamation website for slides on presentation content for the following tasks* (<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/meetings/index.html>)]

Task 1 – Yakima and Columbia River Water Availability Characterization

Bob Montgomery, Anchor QEA, presented an overview of the approach for characterizing water availability. The Workgroup members had the following comments and questions:

- What are the source documents that will be used for the Yakima Basin, and will it show what can be skimmed? Interim Operating Plan (2002) and other available documentation will be used and can illustrate this information.
- It will be a challenge balancing water availability among years and regions.
- Discussed period of record for the Columbia River. Does it account for most recent years and potential climate change effects? The period of record in the Reclamation 2008 Storage Study and EIS is 1981 – 2005, and identifies wet, dry and average flow conditions. This should provide adequate range of flow conditions. The graph and table shows water excess to various target flows.



- What scenarios from Columbia River pump/Yakima Basin storage will be considered in the Phase 1 study, and how will this account for instream benefits and fisheries issues? These questions will be addressed in the scope of work to be developed later this summer for the Columbia River. pump/Yakima storage feasibility study included in Phase I of the preliminary Integrated Plan approved by the Workgroup last December. (See Task 4 slides)
- Discussed State flow targets at The Dalles Dam on the Columbia River. If summer cumulative flow is below 60 MAF then state rule has provision for curtailing diversions.
- Why so much emphasis on the Columbia River? This should be focused on water availability in the Yakima.
- Manage what is in your basin to its fullest before looking to the Columbia.

Task 2 – Out of Stream Water Needs and Economic Effects

Andrew Graham, HDR, presented an overview of the Municipal/Domestic water needs assessment approach:

- Wind power generation – is this considered an out of stream need? Yes, but there are no Yakima Basin projects proposed at this time. Ecology is meeting with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) on Columbia River potential power generation projects, including wind and other options.
- Should we consider 100-year instead of 50-year horizon? There is some justification; however, the farther out the forecast goes the less reliable it will be. RCW 90.90 requires State to conduct 5-year rolling average review and update of forecast.
- Do not forget the USGS groundwater model describes water routing, crop coverage, etc.
- Rural residential water use served by irrigation districts should be analyzed.

Bob Montgomery presented Agriculture water needs assessment approach:

- Do not spend much effort trying to more precisely characterize crop duty for different cropping patterns and potential changes in return flows. Water rights and diversion records are probably good enough.
- Do not use term “proratable districts” but rather “proratable rights.”
- Water shortages do not demonstrate the cost and pain to respond to water shortages. Effects production in several ways.
- Some districts, e.g. Benton, may be lumped in with others in characterization.
- Analysis will describe economic effects for different scenarios, including job losses and indirect (multiplier) effects. IMPLAN model can provide this information along with other approaches.
- What is the water supply reliability target that the Workgroup is trying to meet? Seventy percent has been one target identified in the past. The target will come from the needs assessment.
- Range of conservation tools from other regions should be looked at.
- More conservation may affect groundwater returns. Will it be looked at and quantified? It will be characterized. The USGS model can be used to analyze this concern.
- Groundwater infiltration pilot projects are a high priority and should be carried forward.
- Drought coping strategies also include change in row crops; and reducing herd sizes.

Andrew Graham presented Uncertainty Analysis, Peer Review and Economic Effects Analysis:

- Will analysis account for quality of life and recreation effects? Economic analysis will, to a certain extent.
- Workgroup would like to see the Out of Stream needs assessment methodology and provide comments at the same time WSU is conducting their peer review.
- Consider tighten credit conditions – account for current commercial loan climate.
- Account for employment effects of construction projects.
- Potential climate change effects should be considered in uncertainty analysis.
- Forest lands are also converting to residential, not just agricultural lands.

Task 3 – Instream Flow Needs

Bob Montgomery presented instream flow needs approach:

- Focus below Keechelus is to improve summer rearing conditions.
- Consider three consecutive year drought effects.
- Balance flow improvements across the basin. Avoid improvements at one area to the detriment of another.

Task 4 – Develop Project and Action Descriptions

- Roza dam removal and alternate supply is identified as possible project for Phase II implementation. A study of this will be included in Phase I. Include in Columbia River Pump/Yakima Storage scope of work.
- Wymer dam site should be located where it has potential to be expanded in the future.
- Pine Hollow was listed only as an example in Preliminary Integrated Plan; it is not a project being assessed or costed in the Yakima River Basin Study.
- March letter from Congressman Doc Hastings on Cle Elum fish passage will be distributed to the Workgroup.
- Wapatox project includes the City of Yakima diversion as one of the options.
- Consider how to further refine habitat program description and basis, along with further characterizing mainstem floodplain restoration projects.
- Habitat and flow improvements need to be linked.
- Why not additional focus on Lower Yakima? Response suggested fixes to the middle and upper Yakima will benefit lower Yakima, e.g., temperature.
- Will relinquishment (use it or lose it) be addressed as a market reallocation barrier? Yes.

Public comment

- Most of the audiences who need to be sold on the Integrated Plan are not at today's meeting or in the Yakima Basin. Need to show the work – how we came to the conclusion that additional supply is needed and clearly articulate why this is such a compelling need to those in the region and nation.

Task 5 – Develop Scenarios, Evaluate Barriers and Develop Cost Opinions

Keith Underwood, HDR, presented approach:

- What is included in “No Action” scenario – known and funded projects. Will this include BPA Salmon and Steelhead Plan?
- Start on scorecard development earlier rather than later.
- Some scenarios may have different operational variations, and it would be useful if the scope allowed some of these also to be modeled.
- Environmental effects and potential mitigation strategies for Bumping and Wymer will be identified.
- Is there opportunity to improve habitat costs – Yes, if updated or more accurate information is provided to consultant team. Updated information will not be generated through the study other than for Mainstem Floodplain (See Task 4 discussion).
- Opportunities for collaboration with USGS on their efforts underway in the Yakima Basin – climate change, groundwater model and other potential areas.
- Address high priority items in study that help lead to approving final Integrated Plan. Workgroup as a whole is not interested in seeing the detailed budget for the study project. Individual workgroup members can get additional detail on study budget allocations from Reclamation.

Tasks 6 and 8 – Evaluate Supply Reliability and Flows and Climate Change Effects

Bob Montgomery presented approach:

- Will projects that best mitigate climate change be identified along with habitat benefits? This will be addressed in the scenario analyses.
- How extreme will the climate change scenario be? Scenario will be selected from work by Levi Brekke, Reclamation Technical Service Center in Denver as part of work on the Columbia River system being coordinated with BPA and US Army Corps of Engineers. Focus on 20-year effects. Phase 2 projects not in scenarios or alternatives. Will use shorter term climate change to describe benefits of Phase 1.
- May need more than one climate change scenario. At this point, analysis of up to six scenarios total, including climate change, have been budgeted. Workgroup will have additional opportunity to provide input on scenarios that are modeled.

Task 7 - Analyze Ecosystem Benefits

Keith Underwood presented approach. Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment is probably not feasible based upon budget and schedule constraints. HDR is developing an alternate approach based on EDT outputs from previous planning efforts and other information HDR will be discussing their proposed approach with basin fish management staff from various agencies and the Yakama Nation, and will share a more detailed approach to the Workgroup at an upcoming meeting.

Tasks 9, 10 and 11 – Barriers to Implementation, Meetings and Plan Preparation

Ben Floyd presented approach and schedule:

- Discussed timing of completing final Integrated Plan with congressional funding process. A decision document containing essential plan elements needs to be completed in November 2010. Update schedule to reflect this.
- Discussed when Phase 1 implementation starts – now or when funded? Various opinions were expressed.
- Need a plan name? Yakima Basin Implementation plan? Integrated Water Management Plan? Something that can be used in communications with parties outside the basin.

Other

Joe Cook, UW Economics Professor is conducting willing buyer/seller market analysis, as part of a separate but related effort. He is collecting information through interviews and survey, will be conducting a mock auction, and will have findings available in fall 2010.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will focus on: 1) Detailed approach for economic effects analysis (Task 2) and ecosystem benefits (Task 7); 2) Presenting reach benefits from conservation projects; and 3) Needs assessment and other information updates.

Also, Ecology and Reclamation staff are trying to schedule a visit at one of the future Workgroup meetings for Karl Wirkus, the new USBR Pacific NW Regional Director, and Ted Sturdevant, the new Washington State Department of Ecology Director, to address the group.

Workgroup Members in Attendance

Tom Davis, Washington Department of Agriculture
Dale Bambrick, NOAA Fisheries Service
Dave Brown, City of Yakima
Dawn Wiedmeier, Bureau of Reclamation
Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation
Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board
Rick Dieker, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District
Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District
David Fast, Yakama Nation – Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project
Max Benitz, Benton County Commissioner
Michael Garrity, American Rivers
Mike Leita, Yakima County Commissioner
Mark McClain, Kittitas County
Sid Morrison, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation – Natural Resources

Derek Sandison, Washington Department of Ecology
John Easterbrooks, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jeff Thomas, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Jim Trull, Sunny Valley Irrigation District
Ron VanGundy, Roza Irrigation District
Scott Revell, Kennewick Irrigation District

Other Attendees

Melissa Bates, Aqua Permanente
Tom Carpenter, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
David Child, Yakima Basin Joint Board
Joe Cook, University of Washington
Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation
James Davenport
Charlie de la Chappelle, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
Warren Dickman, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
Ben Floyd, Anchor QEA
Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County
Don Gatchalian, Yakima County
Andrew Graham, HDR
Don Gatchalian, Yakima County
Bob Hall, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance/Yakima Auto Dealers
Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District
Ken Hasbrouck, Kittitas Reclamation District
Lynn Holt, Bureau of Reclamation
Joel Hubble, Bureau of Reclamation
Eleanor Hungate
Jerry Kelso, Consultant to Bureau of Reclamation
Chuck Klarich, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
Edwin Lewis, Wapato Irrigation Project
Barb Lisk, Office of Representative Richard Hastings
Steven Malloch, National Wildlife Federation
Mike Marvich, Aqua Permanente
Alec Maule, USGS
Tina Mayo, US Forest Service
Jason McCormick, Washington Water Trust
Jim Milton, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District
Tom Monroe, Roza Irrigation District
Bob Montgomery, QEA
Bryan Myre, Yakama Reservation Irrigation District
Joe Orlins, AECOM

David Reeploeg, Office of Senator Maria Cantwell
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
Ann Root, ESA Adolfson
Mike Schwisow, Schwisow & Associates
Dan Silver, Facilitator
Elaine Smith
Rob Swedo, BPA
Jeff Tayer, WDFW
Bob Tuck, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
Keith Underwood, HDR
William Woods

Next Workgroup Meeting

The next meeting will be held June 23 at the Arboretum. A meeting notice and agenda will be sent out in advance of the meeting.

Where to Find Workgroup Information

Meeting materials, notes, and presentations from the Workgroup's meetings will be posted on the project website (<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/index.html>). A bibliography of information sources, many of which are available online, is posted on the website. If anyone needs help finding an information source, contact those listed at the top of page 1 or Ben Floyd at Anchor QEA, Richland Washington office, (509) 539-3366, or bfloyd@anchorqea.com.