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Yakima River Basin Study– Instream Needs (Task 3) Subcommittee

**Meeting Notes, June 10, 2010, Water Fall Conference Room at the Ecology office in
Yakima, Washington**

Basin Study Goals, Task 3 Objectives and Reach Priorities Matrix

Ben Floyd (Anchor QEA) reminded the subcommittee that the instream flow objectives, priorities matrix and flow enhancement operational schemes are rooted in the 7 elements of the Preliminary Integrated Plan approved by the YRBWEP Workgroup in December 2009. This effort is not trying to solve every instream or out of stream water supply issue in the Basin. The instream flow and other goals were developed in the context of the Integrated Plan, leading to a funding request for implementation.

Review Previously Published Instream Flow Studies and Operational Targets

Bob Montgomery (Anchor QEA) presented a table identifying flow objectives and targets from previous studies, and requested additional clarification from subcommittee members on the flow objectives matrix that identifies priorities by reach, and the Integrated Plan projects that could potentially help meet objectives.

The subcommittee members offered the following comments:

- Provide additional context for flow enhancements identified for the specific reaches, by identifying in the flow objectives matrix the targeted species and lifestages to improve.
- Consider existing and future distribution of species based upon reintroduction efforts.
- For the Wapato reach, do not identify a priority at this time because resource managers can't say based upon empirical information what the goal is or should be. Note that this is an area where additional understanding is needed through research, monitoring and evaluation (RM&E) efforts.
- Joint Board is beginning efforts to conduct a study below Roza to identify smolt survival at different flow levels. Results should be available in the next 1 – 2 years.
- Hydrograph baseline includes YRBWEP funded conservation projects currently being implemented by Sunnyside, Benton and other irrigation districts.
- What is the meaning of high, medium and low priorities? They represent a tiered priority system for implementing flow enhancements.
- Do not forget that in addition to the flow enhancements identified by reach, there are additional opportunities to optimize current operations to improve habitat conditions.
- Tributary priorities were shared, with Manastash, Taneum, Cowiche and Ahtanum described as being higher priority than Big and Little Creeks. Wenas Creek was described as being a lower priority. North side tribs need to be figured out.



Review Potential Operational Flows/Changes in Operations Based on Preliminary Integrated Plan

- Try to highlight on the hydrographs the targeted species and lifestages to improve for each reach, including both existing and future expected fish distributions, based upon reintroduction efforts.
- In written documentation accompanying the hydrographs, provide an overview of historical flow distribution and what distinguishes a flow as high, average or low; and how frequently these flow conditions occur.
- Look at specific attributes of different dry, average and high flow water years, and patterns within these types of water years to see if a relationship exists that can be correlated to outmigration and fish return results. This could help explain expected fish production benefits from flow conditions, and the associated preferred operations within a type of flow year that can maximize fish benefits.
- Would be helpful to include reservoir levels as part of operating condition descriptions
- Cle Elum River – are spring pulses beneficial in drought year? How would pulses time with peaks below Cle Elum River and Parker? Joel and Chris to look at data on freshets and benefit of pulses in Cle Elum River. In wet year, spill earlier. Bridge the gap between spring and summer high flows.
- Aquifer recharge benefits not developed or included at this time but may help improve flows to meet targets when other potential water supply projects fall short.
- Does winter release have to match with summer water held back? Not necessarily.
- Ellensburg reach flow improvements benefit juvenile coho and steelhead releases, and should be noted along with potential other benefits.
- For Roza, add Umtanum flows to show how subordination would occur.
- Modify lower Naches flow target/characterization because effects from Wapatox power facilities don't show up in years selected for hydrographs. Joel F. agreed that 550 cfs should be flow target for June-Oct.
- Changing the scale on the hydrographs may better illustrate the magnitude of changes in flow.
- Need to define the minimum flow above which flows would be skimmed for filling enlarged Bumping.
- For Toppenish reach, is the amount of water available for pulse for dry years only? No – represents a block of water that could be available for upstream Chinook migration and all species outmigration. Show flows ramping down more gradually from end of June through August. Comment was pulse flow needed only in drought year but need more than the 15 kaf shown.

Discuss Draft Ecosystem Benefits Analysis Approach (Task 7)

Ben Floyd provided an overview of the Task 7 scope of work, which included Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) analysis to be performed by Reclamation and Yakama Nation staff, and a series of meetings with basin biologists to review results. This scope is still being refined. Alex Conley shared what he hopes to receive from the process, which is to further recovery planning implementation and identify projects for specific geographic areas, and more detailed prioritization of projects based upon expected benefits.

A question was asked on how the Riverware modeling reaches match up with the EDT reaches? They generally correlate but may not exactly match. Still, they should correlate adequately to demonstrate the expected fish benefits from the Integrated Plan.

Attendance

Jeff Thomas, USFWS
Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County
Joel Hubble, Bureau of Reclamation
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation – Natural Resources
Alex Conley, YBFWRB
David Fast, Yakama Nation
Jonathon Kohr, WDFW
John Easterbrooks, WDFW

Jim Milton, Yakima Basin Water Resources Agency
Charlie de La Chapelle, YBSA
Jim Milton, YBWRA
Theresa Scott, WDFW
Jim Davenport
Ben Floyd, Anchor QEA
Steve Thurin, HDR
Bob Montgomery, Anchor QEA

Next Subcommittee Meeting

Not scheduled at this time.

- Attachment 1 – April 19 Flow Improvement Matrix
- Attachment 2 – Reach Priorities Matrix
- Attachment 3 – High Priority Reach Potential Operational Changes