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Attempts at Drought Relief in the Yakima Basin

from the Roza Irrigation District history page:

1977. This year was one of the most eventful in history of the Roza Irrigation District. Early predictions by the Bureau of Reclamation of only 6% of normal water supply for the district prompted many immediate actions by both the district and individual farmers. Many farmers with permanent crops faced total ruin if adequate water supplies could not be obtained. Expensive, deep wells were drilled, pumps were installed on drains, and lands were leased speculating on the water they might receive. Subsequent reallocations by Reclamation eventually brought the district to 70% of normal water supply, but for most farmers, it came too late. Investment in other water sources had already been made. The State and Federal governments made grants and low interest loans to many landowners to help defray some of the overwhelming costs of these emergency projects. The district, to help utilize some of the available funding, also established local improvement districts (LID's). The district explored the possibility of acquiring Columbia River water. However, the financing of such a monumental project to provide a system for pumplift involved, the long conveyance system required, and the time to accomplish the task led to the plan's demise.

Floating Pumps at Cle Elum Lake for Emergency Water Supply:

Constructed and briefly operated (tested) in 1977; suffered fire damage, sunk, and then disassembled in September, 1988.

Bumping Lake Enlargement:

In 1987, a Policy Group was structured to provide a forum for oversight of the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project. Comprehensive legislation was introduced in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives providing for the development of a 400,000 acre-foot capacity Bumping Lake Enlargement and associated actions such as water conservation and improved fishery habitat. However, this effort was terminated in September, 1988, and Yakima River Basin Adjudicated proceeded.

Yakima River Storage Study:

In 2004, the Yakima River Storage Study was authorized and funded. The storage study evaluated the options of enlarging Bumping Lake, creating a Wymer Reservoir and pumping water from the Columbia River during winter months. Bumping Lake Enlargement and creating Wymer Reservoir were not considered viable and were eliminated. The stored water in the proposed reservoir would be used to irrigate Roza and Sunnyside Irrigation Districts. The water removed annually from the Yakima River would remain to be managed and used to benefit

the Yakima Basin. In 2008 the Bureau of Reclamation chose the no-action alternative which eliminated the Columbia River pump-storage project which terminated the possibility of bringing Columbia River water to the Yakima Basin.

Work Group:

In 2009, the Department of Ecology and the Bureau of Reclamation formed a Work Group to develop the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan. The plan was developed to provide benefits to all water related programs in the Yakima Basin, a surface water storage plan that included expansion of Bumping Lake, building a Wymer reservoir, pumping water from lake Kachess, raising the level of Lake Cle Elum 3 feet, and beginning an appraisal of transferring water from the Columbia River. The storage plan is to be completed in 30 years.

Study Continues:

As of 2015, studies are continuing on the storage projects to evaluate the feasibility of Bumping, Wymer, and Kachess. The extension of a permit to access water from the Columbia River as part of the Integrated Plan has been extended. Even if all proposed storage projects are completed the Yakima Basin will continue to have insufficient water needed for fish, agriculture, and economic growth.