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Meeting Notes

July 13, 2011

Yakima Arboretum, Yakima WA

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Workgroup

Opening Comments

Ben Floyd of Anchor QEA and meeting facilitator, welcomed the Workgroup members and public, led introductions, and provided an overview of the agenda.

Information Updates and Recent Communications *by Wendy Christensen, Reclamation and Derek Sandison, Ecology*

Wendy and Derek updated the Workgroup on recent communications held with several organizations regarding the Integrated Plan including the following presentations:

- Yakima Basin Science & Management Conference
- Northwest Environmental Business Council
- Columbia River County Commissioners Advisory Group

The Integrated Plan was also shared at a recent meeting with Governor Christine Gregoire, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Congressman Doc Hastings.

Wendy discussed the positive exposure Workgroup members and the Integrated Plan has recently been receiving in the news media, highlighting a couple of recent articles in the Yakima Herald-Republic.

Integrated Plan Planning Report/Programmatic EIS Update *by Wendy Christensen, Reclamation and Derek Sandison, Ecology*

Wendy and Derek presented an update and briefing on the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Planning Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PR/PEIS) schedule and next steps. Materials provided to the public at scoping meetings are available at:

<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/2011integratedplan/meetings/scoping/index.html>

The scoping comment period was initially scheduled for April 4 through April 19; however, in response to requests, this period was extended to June 15. Currently, approximately 85 public comments have been received on the Integrated Plan.

The Scoping Summary Report is expected to be available in August 2011. Ben Floyd will send a notice to the YRBWEP Workgroup email distribution list when the document has been posted on Reclamation's website. The Draft PR/PEIS is scheduled for release in the late fall of this year, and the final by spring 2012.



Derek explained the NEPA/SEPA processes would be combined, or “dovetailed,” up to the point where Reclamation issues a record of decision (ROD) on the PEIS. He explained that the NEPA/SEPA processes are essentially the same in content and process. Regarding the budget, there are some federal resources supporting the planning and environmental review but most of the funding will be provided by the state. The schedule is aggressive and in preparing the documents, the consultants will use previous studies and reports for much of the information, supplemented by additional analyses where appropriate.

Reclamation and Ecology developed an “Issues and Goals” handout (available on Reclamation’s website), that outlines water and fisheries management issues in the Yakima River Basin and how the Integrated Plan would address these issues.

Some very specific scoping questions were received on the PR/PEIS. Due to the programmatic nature of the Integrated Plan, answers to some of the more detailed questions posed in scoping will be deferred to the time when site-specific environmental review is conducted.

Workgroup Comment

- The Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board (YBFWRB) has been working to refine some of the habitat components of the Integrated Plan. These refinements will be available soon and it is hoped that these can be incorporated into the PR/PEIS documents. *Reclamation and the consultant team will coordinate with Alex Conley, YBFWRB, on incorporating the latest habitat enhancement available information in the plan, consistent with schedule constraints.*

Implementation Subcommittee Update by Derek Sandison, Ecology

Derek Sandison updated the Workgroup on Implementation Subcommittee activities. The subcommittee is working to keep the momentum going, and has met twice since March 2011. There were requests made to Ecology and Reclamation to expand the number of individuals on the subcommittee, and broaden the diversity of backgrounds represented. Some ideas mentioned included adding a public utility district (PUD) commissioner and state legislator; however, in discussions with the subcommittee, it was eventually decided that the Implementation Subcommittee was sufficient in size and those participating should come solely from the Workgroup membership. The subcommittee will have opportunities to draw on special expertise as needed.

Currently, the subcommittee is focused on how to move the plan forward and pace the funding. Various implementation scenarios are being developed, where phases of the plan are implemented. Each phase would contain a blending of all 7 elements. Some elements may move forward quicker than others, due to funding. A hot topic is deciding which storage project should move forward first. The Integrated Plan schedule starts all projects at the same time; as feasibility and project-level analyses are conducted, this schedule can be reevaluated. The goal is to still keep this plan fully integrated. The Implementation Subcommittee recommendations should be available this fall.

Workgroup Comment

- A broader base of support beyond those interests represented on the Workgroup may be needed to advance the proposed Integrated Plan. Expanding the Implementation Subcommittee to include broader representation may help in advancing the plan. *We recognize the need to work with other interests, and advancing the plan may require bringing in special expertise, but for the near-term it was decided to stay at this size and consider expansion later. The Workgroup is the broader base for now.*
- Who makes the decisions? Is this all under the Implementation Subcommittee? *The Implementation Subcommittee discusses topic and works through to develop options for addressing issues, and recommendations, and then brings recommendations to the Workgroup for discussion and action.*
- The programmatic overview looks good, but at some point are some elements going to get ‘kicked out’? Will the balance stay? *It is hard to predict what the future will bring. If a project looks like it is faltering then the issue would be brought to the Workgroup to discuss. Elements would not necessarily get ‘kicked out.’ If there is increasing resistance or successful implementation is looking less likely, then the Implementation Subcommittee would make recommendations to the Workgroup. The Workgroup would decide on any changes to the Integrated Plan.*
- Is the Implementation Subcommittee looking at pulling pieces out or how to move forward with every element? *We’re not looking to pull pieces out; there has to be a sequencing and bundling of Integrated Plan actions in moving forward due to funding constraints and expectations.*
- It will be an endless fight in how much funding to get year to year. When funding is provided and how much isn’t up to us. We will fight these battles when they come. Getting authorization is the first hurdle.
- If Wymer is not early on in process, as an early action prior to Wymer, it may be a good idea to still construct the Thorp pump with partial pumping capacity to be able to withdraw water to help with tributary flows and provide water supply for groundwater storage.

Watershed Land Conservation Subcommittee Work Plan by Andrew Graham, HDR

Andrew introduced the newly formed Watershed Land Conservation Subcommittee (formed in June 2011) by reviewing the purpose and mission of the subcommittee. Membership includes representatives from The Wilderness Society, Kittitas Reclamation District, Kittitas County, National Wildlife Federation, Yakama Nation, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service, and Washington State Department of Natural Resources. This subcommittee is looking at different tools, techniques, and options for financing ways of conserving habitat and land in areas of the Yakima Basin. They are also addressing local government concerns such as Kittitas County’s concerns regarding shared benefits and burdens, and tax issues. More meetings are planned throughout the summer with recommendations on refinements for this part of the Integrated Plan coming to the Workgroup in the fall.

Workgroup Comment

- The US Forest Service (USFS) is updating the Wenatchee Forest Management Plan with some proposed land designation changes. Reclamation may want to review what USFS is

recommending for changes in wilderness areas to see if we can tie those elements into the PEIS for the Yakima Basin. *We have been coordinating with USFS and will look into those new designations. (Scoping comments for the USFS plan are due in August).*

- In the Integrated Plan, how are more fish produced with reduced flows in the lower Yakima River? *Derivation of the salmon and steelhead numbers are fully explained in the Fish Benefits Analysis Technical Memorandum (available at <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/reports/tm/index.html>).*

The increase in overall fish production is largely a result of the introduction of sockeye into the five storage reservoirs. The methodology used to estimate sockeye production was based on reservoir surface area that resulted in an estimate in the number of smolts produced for each reservoir. Smolt production for each reservoir was multiplied by a range of 1- to 4-percent smolt-to-adult survival to estimate the number of sockeye adults produced prior to any harvest or adult migration losses. Flow effects on sockeye were taken into account as they were for the other salmonid species. The Ecosystem Diagnosis and Treatment (EDT) and the All H Analyzers (AHA) models were used to estimate fish production for Chinook, coho, and steelhead, providing a more direct to account for flow-survival effects. The EDT model is not currently programmed to model sockeye populations. Reintroduced sockeye are from stocks in Central Washington that experience temperature conditions similar to those found in the Lower Yakima River, which should help them adapt to Yakima River conditions.

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Adjourn

Workgroup Members in Attendance

Bill Lover, City of Yakima

Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board

Kirk Cook, Washington Department of Agriculture

Rick Dieker, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District

John Easterbrooks, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District

David Fast, Yakama Nation – Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project

Michael Garrity, American Rivers

Sean Gross, NOAA Fisheries Service

Mike Leita, Yakima County

Sid Morrison, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance

Scott Revell, Kennewick Irrigation District

Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation – Natural Resources

Derek Sandison, Washington Department of Ecology

Jeff Thomas, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Ron VanGundy, Roza Irrigation District

Dawn Wiedmeier, Bureau of Reclamation

Other Attendees

David Bowen, American Forest Land Co.

Dave Brown, City of Yakima

David Child, Yakima Basin Joint Board

Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation

Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation

Warren Dickman, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance

Beneitta Eaton

Jack Eaton

Ben Floyd, Anchor QEA

Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County

Don Gatchalian, Yakima County

Kristi Geris, Anchor QEA

Andrew Graham, HDR Engineering, Inc.

Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District

Ken Hasbrouck, Kittitas Reclamation District

Joel Hubble, Bureau of Reclamation

Eleanor Hungate

Terry Keenhan, Yakima County

Chuck Klarich, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance

Paul La Riviere, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

David Lester, Yakima Herald

Edwin Lewis, Wapato Irrigation Project

Barb Lisk, Office of Representative Richard Hastings

Dave Brown, City of Yakima

Chris Lynch, Bureau of Reclamation

Daniel Martinez, S. Martinez Livestock

Tom Monroe, Roza Irrigation District

Bob Montgomery, Anchor QEA

Brian Myre, Yakama Reservation Irrigation District

Tom Myrum, Washington State Water Resources Association

David Reeploeg, Office of Senator Maria Cantwell

Landon Schilperoort, South Yakima Conservation District

Mike Schwisow, Schwisow & Associates

Dan Silver, Independent Consultant

Elaine Smith, League of Women Voters

Rob Swedo, Bonneville Power Administration

Bob Tuck, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance

Tom Ring

Stuart Crane

Next Workgroup Meeting

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, October 12, 2011 at 9:30AM at the Arboretum. A meeting notice and agenda will be distributed in advance of the meeting.

Where to Find Workgroup Information

Meeting materials, notes, and presentations from the Workgroup 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 also 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 office, (509) 392-4548, or bfloyd@anchoragea.com.