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Meeting Notes
Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Workgroup

June 2, 2021
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Overview

Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting, welcomed the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Workgroup members and other attendees. The following notes summarize the YRBWEP Workgroup presentations and public comments. For more information, please see the full presentations available on the Integrated Plan website: Yakima Basin Integrated Plan

Staffing Changes and Integrated Plan Executive Committee Update

Tom Tebb, Washington Department of Ecology, welcomed everyone on behalf of Ecology and the Bureau of Reclamation. Tom stated there are organizational changes coming to the Office of Columbia River (OCR) and the Water Resources Program to better execute contracts and programs. Melissa Downes, Washington Department of Ecology, has accepted the new role of Financial and Program Manager for OCR and the team will work to backfill her position. OCR is also adding a supervisor position to support streamflow restoration programs, which should improve contracting and project execution efficiency.

Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation, stated Janine Empel is now a Bureau of Reclamation employee as a project manager for the YRBWEP program, instead of an Ecology employee as a Liaison for YRBWEP Team effective May 24th. Justin Yeager, NOAA Fisheries, will replace Dale Bambrick on the Workgroup. Justin has been working in the Columbia River basin for over two decades and is excited to join the Workgroup. Jim Craig, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), will no longer serve on the Workgroup. Bill Gale, USFWS, will serve as the USFWS alternate. Kelsey Green has transitioned out of her position with American Rivers. Wendy McDermott, American Rivers, noted a kudos card for Kelsey is out for Workgroup members to sign and comment. Wendy noted American Rivers is considering a restructuring of the position to provide more capacity for outreach. Those interested can contact Wendy McDermott or Steve Malloch, Western Water Futures, LLC, for information about their plans for the position.

The Executive Committee is briefing federal regional leadership executives in advance of an upcoming DC Leadership Group meeting and making other preparations for this meeting including coordinating with the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.

Implementation Committee Update

Basin tours have not occurred since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Implementation Committee hopes to provide legislator basin tours this summer to display project work accomplished over the past year.

The State legislature approved the full Integrated Plan request of $42 million. An additional $4.2 million was allocated in accordance with the YRBWEP Phase 2 Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District settlement agreement. The Executive Committee will meet following the Workgroup meeting to discuss how the budget will be allocated to each element.

Pacific Northwest National Laboratories Research Activities in the Yakima Basin

Marcella Appel, Benton Conservation District, introduced Tim Scheibe and James Stegen, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), who provided a presentation on PNNL research and its applicability in the Yakima River basin.

Tim and James are in the Environmental System Science program, which aims to understand how natural systems react to changes of their environment, particularly human caused. This includes climate change, dam construction and removal, and wildfires. This presentation focused on hydrobiogeochemistry, which represents a complex system of related processes on several scales. The Yakima River basin study focuses on two aspects of watershed function – hydrologic exchange flows (HEFs, exchange between channel and associated environment) and biogeochemical processes of interests.

Biogeochemical processes represent the transformation of key nutrients and contaminants in the watershed landscape. It is part of a holistic view of river and watershed function and is the foundation of primary production in the food web. HEFs facilitate biogeochemical processes, among other benefits. Exchange zones can contribute to 96% of respiration in the ecosystem.

The PNNL is attempting to understand and quantify processes governing the cumulative effects of HEFs, organic matter chemistry, microbial activity, and disturbances on river corridor hydrobiogeochemical functions at the basin scale.

Tim presented several key research findings on topics including:

- HEFs modulate river temperature. The hyporheic zone can store cold water from winter, which acts as a cold zone between surface and groundwater as summer temperatures warm. Salmon spawning may be associated with upwelling zones and river morphology.
- The hyporheic zone can protect against contaminants entering the river.
- Natural organic matter is the energy that drives river corridor ecology.
- Machine learning can help us interpret data and expand its applicability. Computational models are developed through experimental observations. Tim described using “biophysical classes” which can be used to assess areas of similar characteristics, where one may have good data and the other doesn’t.
- River corridor hydrobiogeochemistry processes can help ecosystems recover from disturbances.

The PNNL is conducting three arms of research in the Yakima River basin:

1. Measuring variability of respiration by stream order and season and developing numerical model to estimate in other areas. Perform watershed simulations. Using detailed info to improve numerical models, which in turn guide where best to take measurements next.
2. Understanding hydrobiogeochemical variability
3. Looking at impacts of wildfire disturbances. Measuring organic matter types based on fire intensity, then how it affects biogeochemical processes.

Tim described their goal to develop a Yakima River basin watershed "digital twin," which would more comprehensively model the types of information being studied.

James Stegen, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, described the Worldwide Hydrobiogeochemical Observation Network for Dynamic River Systems (WHONDRS) program, which is meant to be a scientific resource for the community. The program sends standardized sampling kits to citizens for data collection. This is key for developing the watershed digital twin and improves engagement with the local community and stakeholders. More information about the program can be found at https://www.pnnl.gov/projects/WHONDRS.

For more information, see the presentation associated with this agenda topic.

Questions and comments for PNNL Research Activities:

Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting: This research being conducted by PNNL has opportunity for linkages with the work being led by several Integrated Plan Subcommittees. There may be an opportunity for a joint-Subcommittee meeting in the future as more information becomes available. The WHONDRS website is good for updates, and there is also a general project website. Reach out to Tim and James for more information:

- Tim.Scheibe@pnnl.gov
- James.Stegen@pnnl.gov

Jeff Tayer, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: Jeff thanked Tim for the presentation. This is a wide array of geography and subject matter. We should follow up with folks currently working on modeling in the basin and aquifer recharge work. Jeff would like to probe deeper with smaller groups to address these questions more clearly.

Laine Young, Washington Department of Ecology: Can you return to the YRBWEP Workgroup in the fall with your results of this summer?

- ***Tim Scheibe:*** *Yes, we could. Working on deployment right now, but happy to share results as they are available. Information on WHONDRS is uploaded immediately after QA/QC.*

Wapato Dam Improvements

Jeff Olsson is the project manager from Dowl Engineering, the lead engineer on the project. Jeff thanked partners including Tim Sauer, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation, and assistant project manager Christian Mooneyham, Dowl Engineering.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is the lead federal agency for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) actions and the Yakama Nation has assumed several project tasks through a contract with BIA.

Reclamation operates and maintains the fish facilities at the dam. Wapato Dam improvements are the highest priority project in the BIA irrigation inventory, as it is a single point of failure for 140,000 acres of irrigated farmland, representing $500 million dollars of agricultural revenue.

Jeff described the physical characteristics of the project site and noted hydraulic impacts of the dam crest and spillways, such as sediment accumulation. Jeff described how several dam issues are interrelated; Sediment accumulation affects spillway capacity, spillway capacity is related to flood risk, debris buildup causes operational issues and safety impacts. These elements must be addressed concurrently to successfully rehabilitate the dam for an 80- to 100-year design life.

The team is in project phase 1 – concept development. Alternatives analysis and NEPA will commence near the end of 2021 and continue through 2022, when a preferred alternative will be selected. Final Design will commence in 2023 and permitting will commence in 2024. Construction is expected to begin in 2025.

The team is conducting a short-term construction project in fall 2021 for short-term rehabilitation. The project will rehabilitate the headgate, provide electrical improvements, and include geotechnical site investigations. This is a joint effort between the BIA and Yakama Nation.

For more project details, view the associated PowerPoint or reach out to the project email at WIPdam@dowl.com.

Questions and comments for PNNL Research Activities:

Sean Gross, NOAA Fisheries: The importance of fisheries and fish passage was brought up several times. At Roza and Sunnyside dams, the districts are moving in the direction of attempting to keep fish out of the canal. Are the specific fisheries goals/objectives like that in this project? If not, how will fish goals be developed?

- ***Jeff Olsson****: The team is working with experts to identify those goals. Entrainment of out-migrating juveniles causes high mortality. We will evaluate potential for various options, including placing a screen at the headworks.*

General Public Comments

Chris Maykut, Friends of Bumping Lake, David Ortman, and John Reeves provided public comments. Their comments and agency responses are in attachments 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

Water Marketing Research and Development

Lisa Pelly, Trout Unlimited, introduced Richael Young, CEO for Mammoth Water and Justin Bezold, Trout Unlimited. The project partners are working with Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) to evaluate using a smart market in the Yakima River basin to remove barriers for water market participation. The project has received support from the Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Ecology.

Key objectives of the smart market strategy include research to develop mechanisms that increase market access to all stakeholders and to develop a framework that will advance market-based transactions by reducing systemic inefficiencies. The team will also provide recommendations for increased stakeholder participation in market transactions for surface water rights in the Yakima River

basin. Justin described water marketing as a system in which water rights are traded. Water banks exist within the greater water market framework.

Justin described the approach to developing the smart market strategy. Outreach is a critical component because stakeholder confidence is important for a successful market. The project team is interested in two types of feedback from stakeholders: 1) what it might take in terms of smart market strategy for participation, and 2) expertise on past market experiences.

The project team identified 900 transfers proposed through the Yakima River basin Water Transfer Working Group between 2005 and 2020. Water budget neutral transfers (indicating a domestic market) were 40% of those proposals.

The team is using a GIS database to determine which water rights are most suitable for transfer. This step has been a bottleneck in the past. The amount available to transfer is a range based on market conditions, climate, and other factors. Over 2,000 surface water rights were identified. The model is not currently considering groundwater rights.

Richael Young described the process of a smart market. The framework simplifies transactions by matching orders between buyers and sellers. For first simulations, the market only allows downstream trades and not across reaches. This type of trade provides instream benefits.

For more information, see the presentation associated with this agenda topic.

Questions and comments for Water Marketing Research and Development:

David Ortman: What version of the Agricultural Irrigation Guide was used for your calculations?

- ***Richael Young:*** *The 1997 Washington Irrigation Guide*

John Reeves: The two proratable districts are all upstream. John would like to see how this effort helps proratable districts deal with issues in drought years.

- ***Justin Bezold:*** *We're looking at the storage supply element and what this does for transferrable water rights in terms of helping the proratable districts.*

Jay Schwartz: If you exclude stacked rights, we're essentially only looking at upstream senior rights. That seems modest. Approximately how much water is available in this market?

- ***Justin Bezold:*** *We don't have a fixed number at this point. The rights we're excluding are only those within irrigation district boundaries.*
- ***Richael Young:*** *The technical workgroup suggested we start with the easiest transfers, build confidence, then move into more complexity. The market framework may include these more complex dynamics in the future.*

Technical Projects Update

Wendy Christensen introduced the technical projects update, which focused on surface water storage, Bull Trout rearing and introduction, and Cle Elum Fish Passage. Though updates for all seven Integrated Plan elements don't occur at all Workgroup meetings, the Workgroup is approaching everything in an integrated manner.

Melissa Downes described the surface storage element. Surface storage will help the Yakima River basin adapt to a changing climate, improve water reliability, and enhance instream flows for ecological restoration goals. The Workgroup is looking at groundwater and surface water together and how flows can be optimized for habitat. Potential surface storage projects include Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant (KDRPP), Wymer Dam and Reservoir, Bumping Reservoir Enlargement, Upper Yakima System Storage, and Tieton River Fisheries Enhancement. Reclamation's technical team is working on RiverWare modeling of the basin to inform Yakima Project operations and how new projects would play into operations. Outcomes of that modeling will be available in the future.

KDRPP is the first project going through project-level review. Roza Irrigation District is working on designs, and Reclamation and Ecology are working with Roza on pre-EIS work for the Tier 2 EIS.

Danielle Squeochs, Yakama Nation, described potential configurations of a future Wymer Dam and Reservoir. The reservoir could be sized at either 165,000 acre-feet or 110,000 acre-feet depending on saddle dike location. In addition, there are two potential options to fill the reservoir: pumped storage from the Yakima River, or gravity-fed through the KRD system. Danielle showed potential tunnel configurations for the KRD gravity-fed alternative.

Danielle described the potential Bumping Reservoir Enlargement project and noted the region was referred to as Taneum for those who lived on the land before the dam was built. The new water supply in both Wymer and Bumping would be for agriculture use and instream flows.

Wendy Christensen noted that the KRD Upper System Storage and Tieton River Fisheries Enhancement water storage projects were not included in the Programmatic EIS and are not yet part of the Integrated Plan. The Workgroup previously approved an adaptive management process (as described in the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, 2012) for incorporating projects into the Integrated Plan if deemed appropriate.

KRD is considering five sites for small reservoirs within the service area. KRD is conducting a more in-depth analysis, including geotechnical, to evaluate a potential Springwood Reservoir.

The Tieton River Fisheries Enhancement project includes an alternative to move the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District (YTID) diversion downstream to the Wapatox site, rewatering the reach of the Tieton River between the current diversion and Wapatox. Water would be pumped into a new North Fork Cowiche Creek reservoir from the Wapatox site. Another project alternative is main canal replacement. YTID is currently focused on geotechnical investigations of the area and RiverWare modeling as part of a WaterSMART Pilot Study.

Todd Newsome, Yakama Nation, gave the update for the Bull Trout Rearing and Reintroduction efforts. The project continues to focus on Kachess Reservoir and Gold Creek populations. The Yakama Nation employed adaptive management strategies from last year's study including lower rearing tank densities and increased frequency and rations of feeding. These adaptations greatly improved survival and growth during the rearing period. Fish were PIT-tagged and released several days before this Workgroup meeting. Jason Romine, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, gave kudos to the Yakama Nation and project operation led by Todd and Russ Byington, Yakama Nation. Jason is excited to see what the fish do this year. Jason noted USFWS has serious concerns related to Bull Trout population effects from the Bumping reservoir enlargement. The Integrated Plan will need creative solutions to ensure persistence of the Deep Creek Bull Trout population if Bumping enlargement happens.

Richard Visser gave the Cle Elum Fish Passage update. The primary benefactor of the project will be sockeye salmon. This year will be the third year of tagging and tracking adult sockeye passage up the Yakima to the Cle Elum reservoir. This year's focus will be from Union Gap to Roza dam and the lower river.

Richard showed images of intake and conduit system construction. This is part of the Intake, Gate, and Helix contract, which is the fourth of five contracts for the full facility. A full mockup of the helical flume has been constructed in Spokane. Inspectors have approved the design and construction of the helix will begin in the fall. Secant vault work continued through the past winter and spring.

Richard displayed the tunneling sequence and construction for the downstream passage tunnel. Construction was completed in March 2021. The final outfall will be constructed as part of the adult collection facility. Richard recognized the people and programs within Reclamation that helped make this happen including contracting and construction, design, technical service center, and the local team at the Columbia-Cascades Area Office and Yakima Field Office. The team developed a poster to commemorate completion of the tunnel contract that has been sent to Workgroup members. If anyone would like a hard copy of the tunnel poster, please contact Dan Graves.

Workgroup Roundtable

Rick Dieker, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District: Updates at Workgroup meetings are encouraging. We need to remember a long-time advocate for the Yakima River basin, Onni Perala, who recently passed away. Rick also recognized Dale Bambrick for his work for NOAA Fisheries, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Yakama Nation. Several irrigation districts have spent money over the years outside of YRBWEP working on water conservation. YTID diverts 20k – 30k less acre feet than before with conservation modifications. Rick recognized other districts who do similar work as well and stated many conservation projects have been funded by water users.

Jason Romine, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Jason thanked YTID and Roza for support on work in Kachess and Keechelus related to Bull Trout. Jason thanked Urban Eberhart, KRD, for going above and beyond in pursuing opportunities for increasing capacity for bull trout conservation in the upper basin.

Dave Brown, City of Yakima: Bids were opened for Nelson Dam. The proposals came in $4 million greater than expected, so the team is evaluating bids and determining next steps. Looking for money even harder than before.

Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District: Recognized passing of Onni Perala. He worked for Reclamation for many years and worked for Roza. He was one of the last living links to the 1977 drought and was a tireless advocate for irrigation and water conservation. Sharp as a razor until the very end – he was keeping his eyes on basin water storage even after retirement. Had a lasting impact on Roza and everyone else around the table. We're losing connections to the 1977 drought which is a huge event that continues to cast a shadow on Yakima basin irrigation.

Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board: Second the recognition of Onni Perala. He was the only person who spent 20 years on the Salmon Recovery Fund Board citizens committee. He always brought a wealth of knowledge. Great question asker, good at working through disagreements in the SRF Board process. This year, SRF Board received good funding levels from the legislature for projects related to the Integrated Plan. Thanks everyone who put work into that. It's great to go from aspirations of next biennium's funding to working out the details of contracts.

Arden Thomas, Kittitas County: Arden appreciates recollections of Onni Perala. Arden is struck by the amount of work that has happened. She recognized staff responsible for each individual task needed to get this mountain of work done. Also struck by people advocating beyond their own interest for a larger collective interest. She enjoyed the water marketing update. Kittitas County spends a lot of time answering questions about water rights and requirements for mitigation. The role counties have taken to require mitigation for new domestic uses is in alignment with the water marketing element. It's important to have the staffing available to field those questions.

Charlie de la Chappelle, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance: Charlie worked with Onni Perala for many years on the storage committee in the 1990s. He was always looking for better solutions for everyone. Pleased to hear about PNNL's work. Charlie would like to be included in the more detailed briefing.

Erick Walker, U.S. Forest Service (USFS): Most important USFS element related to the Integrated Plan is hiring a new district ranger in the Cle Elum district. Tentative offer selected, just some paperwork to go before announcing candidate.

Tom Tebb, Washington Department of Ecology: Congratulates everyone, especially speakers today. Tom extends appreciation to bull trout team. This is fantastic work this year saving those fish. Hats off to Yakama Nation, WDFW, USFWS and many others.

Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation: Tom and Ecology deserve a lot of credit related to funding received. Without support from Ecology, many of these programs wouldn't be happening. Reclamation provides support as well. It's great to hear people share their thoughts of Onni Perala. It was an honor to know him.

Jeff Tayer, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: Jeff took the opportunity to advocate for shrub-steppe. Most shrub-steppe habitat in private ownership in the Yakima River basin is completely unprotected. Over 7,000 acres of at-risk shrub-steppe has been protected by the Integrated Plan, and we're working towards another 7,000 acres of protected land before we're done.

Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County: Good news on the river. The lower Naches and gap-to-gap reaches have really changed in the last several years. Joel is seeing cottonwoods and riverine functions come back, especially in the lower Naches. We're likely to see much better habitat conditions in the mainstem, which is good for fall and summer chinook.

Justin Yeager, NOAA Fisheries: Great to see the work being done and all the collaboration. Justin is excited to learn more and provide help where possible.

Melissa Downes, Washington Department of Ecology: Hats off to bull trout information and successes that have come forward. Melissa thanked Marcella Appel for pulling the PNNL folks into the presentation. Looking forward to hearing more information from them.

Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation: The amount of work going on is amazing. Phil recognizes the excitement we see with Cle Elum fish passage. We're more than halfway done. Can't wait to see this project complete. Phil recognized Reclamation and other folks involved in moving that project forward. The bull trout work that Todd and team do is great. Next week is Treaty Days for the Tribe. We've had a difficult year and it's important that we carry the voices and spirit of those no longer with us. This is what makes the Yakima River basin great.

Sean Gross, NOAA Fisheries: Thanked those folks in the Implementation Committee and others who were involved ensuring a successful legislative session. It's really something that we received the full request from the State. The outlook was uncertain at the start of the Covid pandemic, so this is a real

accomplishment. As we move into the next biennium and implementation, we're probably facing higher construction costs.

Upcoming Meetings

The next Workgroup meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 16, 2021. Meeting format will be WebEx virtual.

Attendance

Workgroup Members:
Dave Brown, City of Yakima
Charlie de la Chappelle, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance (alternate for Sid Morrison)
Wendy Christensen, Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board
Ron Cowin, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District
Rick Dieker, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District
Peter Dykstra, Plauche & Carr and Chair of Watershed Lands Conservation Subcommittee
Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District
Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County (Alternate for Ron Anderson)
Jaclyn Hancock, Washington Department of Agriculture
Larry Leach, Washington Department of Natural Resources
Mike Livingston, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Wendy McDermott, American Rivers
Jason McShane, Kennewick Irrigation District
Talmadge Oxford, Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Lisa Pelly, Trout Unlimited
Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District and Chair of Water Use Subcommittee
Phil Rigdon, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Jason Romine, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jeff Tayer, WDFW and Chair of Habitat Subcommittee
Tom Tebb, Ecology
Erick Walker, U.S. Forest Service
Bret Walters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Arden Thomas, Kittitas County (Alternate for Cory Wright)
Justin Yeager, NOAA Fisheries

Other Attendees:
Marcella Appel, Benton Conservation District
Tom Appler, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Matthew Berglund, Kennewick Irrigation District
Justin Bezold, Trout Unlimited

Lori Brady, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District
Russ Byington, Yakama Nation Fisheries
Michael Callahan, Washington State Department of Ecology
Debbie Carlson, Bonneville Power Administration
Cynthia Carlstad, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants
Carolyn Chad, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Raechel Chandler, Washington Department of Ecology
Alan Chapman
Stuart Crane, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Seth Defoe, Kennewick Irrigation District
Jeanne Demorest, Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Atul Deshmane, Whatcom County PUD
Melissa Downes, Washington State Department of Ecology
David Empel, Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Janine Empel, Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Kevin Eslinger, Kittitas Reclamation District
Rick Evans, Office of Senator Maria Cantwell
Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting
Clancy Flynn, Columbia Irrigation District
Chuck Freeman, Kennewick Irrigation District
Kathryn Furr, U.S. Forest Service
Chuck Garner, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Dan Graves, HDR Engineering, Inc.
Sean Gross, NOAA Fisheries
Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District
Perry Harvester, WDFW
Craig Haskell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rodney Heit, South Yakima Conservation District
Joel Hubble, Kittitas Reclamation District
Chuck Klarich, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance
John Kohr, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Amy Lewis, EMPSi
Ed Lisowski
Chris Lynch, Bureau of Reclamation, Yakima Field Office
Steve Malloch, Western Water Futures LLC (alternate for American Rivers)
Larry Martin, Velikanje Halvorson
John Marvin, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Larry Mattson, Jacobs Engineering
Chris Maykut, Friends of Bumping Lake
David McKenzie, Kennewick Irrigation District
Jean Mendoza

Christian Mooneyham, Dowl Engineering
Maddie Moore, Washington Department of Agriculture
Tom Myrum, Washington State Water Resources Association
Todd Newsome, Yakama-Klickitat Fisheries Program
Jeff Olsson, Dowl Engineering
David Ortman
Chris P, Coho Water Resources
Sage Park, Washington State Department of Ecology
Tim Poppleton, Washington State Department of Ecology
Cole Provence, Washington State Department of Ecology
Cindy Raekes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
Joye Redfield-Wilder, Washington State Department of Ecology
John Reeves
Kristina Ribellia, Western Water Market
Timothy Sauer, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Tim Scheibe, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
Jeanne Sheldon
Jenna Scholz, HDR Engineering, Inc.
Jay Schwartz
Danielle Squeochs, Confederated Tribes and Band of the Yakama Nation
James Stegen, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
Bruce Sully, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Andrew Verhasselt, Dowl Engineering
Sara Vickers, Kittitas Reclamation District
Richard Visser, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Tim Wilson, Rubicon Water
Georgine Yorgey, Washington State University
Adam Young, EMPSi
Laine Young, Washington Department of Ecology
Richael Young, Mammoth Water

Where to Find Workgroup Information

Meeting materials, notes, presentations, and materials submitted during public comment for each Workgroup meeting will be posted on Reclamation's project website: (http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/2011integratedplan/index.html). A list of information sources, many available online, is also posted on the website.

If you need help finding an information source, contact those listed at the top of page 1 of these notes or Ben Floyd at White Bluffs Consulting, (509) 539-3366 or ben@whitebluffsconsulting.com.

Attachment 1 – Chris Maykut Public Comments

The documents included for public comment are appended at the end of this attachment.

A summary of the questions and responses are as follows:

1. What is the total current acre-feet of water savings that has been achieved as a result of the 1994 Basin Conservation Program over the past 26 years?

   343,194 acre-feet (AF) of water savings has been achieved as a result of the 1994 Basin Conservation Program. Please refer to Table 1 'YRBWEP Phase II – Basin Conservation Program Completed Projects' in the "Enhanced Water Conservation Element Framework Technical Memorandum" dated April 2021.

2. What is the total current acre-feet of water savings that has been achieved as a result of the 1994 Basin Conservation Program over the past 26 years for each of the following irrigation districts: Rosa, Kittitas, Tieton, Wapato, Sunnyside, Union Gap, and Yakima Valley Canal?

   As part of the Basin Conservation Program (BCP) the specified districts have conserved the following amounts:

   i. *Roza Irrigation District saved 8,284 AF of water.*
   ii. *Kittitas Reclamation District was not involved in the BCP, however, they participated in the enhancement of water supplies for Yakima Basin Tributaries as outlined in section 1207.*
   iii. *Wapato Irrigation Project was not involved in the BCP, however they participated in study, design, and improvements to their infrastructure as outlined in section 1204 'Yakama Indian Nation.'*
   iv. *Sunnyside saved 41,995 AF of water.*
   v. *Union Gap Irrigation district did not participate in the BCP.*
   vi. *Yakima Valley Canal did not participate in the BCP.*

3. What is the status of each of the Water Conservation Plans developed under the Basin Conservation Program?

   Several districts completed Water Conservation Plans as described in the BCP. These districts include Kittitas Reclamation District, Roza Irrigation District, Benton Irrigation District, Selah-Moxee Irrigation District, Union Gap Irrigation District, and Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District. Under the BCP, KRD, Roza, BID, and SVID were able to secure funding for projects. SMID and UGID completed feasibility studies of water conservation measures and WIP completed a comprehensive water conservation plan that helps inform current operation decisions.

4. Why and when was the Congressionally established Yakima River Basin Conservation Advisory Group disbanded?

   In accordance with the Executive Order 13875 criteria, the Department terminated the CAG effective November 1, 2019.

5. Did the Secretary of Interior have authority to terminate this Advisory Group without the consent of Congress?

   Executive Order (EO) 13875 "Evaluating and Improving the Utility of Federal Advisory Committees" directed all Federal Agencies including the Department of the Interior (Department) to evaluate the need for each of its current advisory committees established under section 9(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The EO also instructed agencies to terminate at least one-third of their discretionary advisory committees by September 30, 2019. Advisory Committees were evaluated for termination based on the criteria in the EO.

6. Of the 104 conservation projects implemented, how many were part of the Title XII, Section 1203 Basin Conservation Plan?

   The 104 projects listed are part of the enhanced water conservation (EWC) element of the Integrated Plan and are not a part of the BCP. As discussed at the YRBWEP Workgroup meeting in June 2020, criteria for EWC include:

   i. *Conservation project began in 2013[1] or later*
   ii. *Is an agricultural or municipal improvement projected resulting in conserved water.*
   iii. *Not part of the Title XII Section 1203 BCP.*

7. Of the $89 million invested, how much was funded by the BuRec, Ecology, individual irrigation districts?

   The Bureau of Reclamation funded 27%. Ecology funded 18%. The irrigation districts funded 39%. Funding for the remaining 16% came from Conservation Districts, the Washington State Conservation Commission, the City of Yakima, NRCS, and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

8. Of the $89 million invested, how much was funded by Roza, Kittitas, Tieton, Wapato, Sunnyside, Union Gap, Yakima Valley Canal?

   Roza funded 18%. Kittitas Reclamation District funded 0.3%. WIP and Yakama Nation Engineering funded 1%. Yakima Tieton Irrigation, Sunnyside Division Board of Control, Union Gap Irrigation District, and Yakima Valley Canal did not have enhanced water conservation projects.

9. Of the 50,000 acre-feet conserved, how much was made available to protect and enhance fish and wildlife resources?

   18,122 AF has been made available for enhancing instream flows.

10. Of the 50,000 acre-feet conserved, how much was made available for irrigation?

    20,939 AF has been made available for drought resiliency.

11. Who prepared this "technical memorandum"?

    Anchor QEA prepared the technical memorandum in cooperation with Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Ecology, the Yakama Nation, and partners.

12. Where can it be found on the Bureau of Reclamation or Ecology webpages?

    Please click the following link to access the technical memorandum.

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[1] 2013 was the year that Washington State authorized the Integrated Plan.

13. Provide clarification as to the number of acre-feet of water savings accomplished on the WIP between the 1994 Phase II Yakima Plan legislation (P.L. 103-434) and the 2019 Dingell Act.

    The 1994 legislation appropriated funding that assisted the Yakama Nation to survey, plan, and design for future modernization and conservation. Under the enhanced water conservation element of the Integrated Plan, WIP has saved 11,315 AF of water.

14. Provide clarification as to how much of these water savings have been applied to irrigation and how much to fish and water resources.

    It is up to the discretion of the Tribe how the water savings is applied.

15. Provide the number of acre-feet of water savings accomplished on the WIP specifically due to the 2019 Dingell Act.

    WIP's estimated water savings are 11,315 AF of water as part of the enhanced water conservation element of the Integrated Plan.

16. Provide clarification as to how much of these water savings have been applied to irrigation and how much to fish and water resources.

    It is up to the discretion of the Tribe how the water savings is applied per section 1204(a)(3) of the legislation.

17. Is the geotechnical work complete at Bumping and have you finalized the dam alignment?

    The geotechnical work at Bumping is preliminary, and there will need to be more geotechnical investigations and analysis to finalize a dam alignment.

18. We have been told that fish passage at Bumping is possible to construct on the current dam – is that something that is being captured in the analysis of this project?

    Yes – fish passage at the existing dam has been analyzed and a draft planning report was prepared in 2008. It has not been finalized, because Cle Elum Fish Passage was chosen to move forward first.

    Please refer to the following link: Cle Elum and Bumping Lake Dams Fish Passage Facilities Planning Report - Draft (usbr.gov)

Comments of
Katherine Ransel, American Rivers
regarding
Water Storage versus Water Conservation in the Yakima Basin
(2001)

Between 40-60% of the crops in the Yakima valley are still grown with rill, furrow and other inefficient on-farm water application technologies, according to the statistics I have seen. There has never been a sophisticated analysis of what water could be made available from upgrading irrigation delivery and on farm-systems in the Yakima valley to best available technologies, to my knowledge, although this kind of analysis is performed quite regularly in other water scarce areas, such as in the Central Valley of California (irrigation districts there have upgraded their systems and sold the water yielded to cities). Moreover, no analysis has been done of the potential for water transfers and other market based incentives to address the legitimate water needs of the Yakima basin, yet as much as 40% of the basin is in forage and other relatively low value crops. Water was leased last summer in the Yakima basin for from $50 to almost $500/acre foot for only one irrigation season or part of the irrigation season, which shows that there is a strong market incentive for the transfer of water from lower value crops to high value crops and other uses. Until such legitimate analyses are done, it is simply not fiscally responsible, let alone environmentally responsible, to advocate new supplies.

Moreover, conservation and water transfers have other benefits, which are never taken into account. Besides avoiding the astronomical costs of new supplies, they also avoid the external costs of new supplies, that is, damage to the environment. This proposal would take water from Hanford Reach water supplies, where other programs are working to restore habitat conditions. It is trying to rob Peter to pay Paul instead of just paying the piper, which is to deal with the problem in the basin itself.

Conservation not only means stretching current supplies farther. The same technologies that increase efficiency also decrease the water *quality* impacts of irrigation water use. Drip irrigation, for instance, results in very little sediment runoff to the river compared to rill, furrow, and flood irrigation methods. Reports from the Department of Ecology a few years ago showed that at least 24 dump truck loads of soil - 355 tons - were washing off farms and into the Yakima river on a daily basis. The sediment chokes aquatic life and is laden with farm chemicals, some of which are toxic to fish and dangerous to people. It fills up pores in river gravel and destroys the homes and habitat of aquatic insects and salmon nests. It also increases water temperature, sometimes drastically, because it soaks up light and heat. And a 1993 study showed Yakima river fish had one of the highest concentrations of the carcinogenic pesticide DDT in the country, prompting the state Health Department to warn people not to eat many bottom fish from the lower river. The culprit is 19th century irrigation practices,

such as rill, furrow and flood irrigation, that cause the soil, laden with fertilizers and pesticides, including the persistent pesticide DDT, to run off into the river. Twenty-first Century practices can be an important part of the solution. Moreover, modern application systems such as drip produce better crops. In other words, conservation and demand-side management can result in a win-win-win situation.

Instead of building new dams and diversions at exorbitant prices, both to our pocketbooks and to our river systems, we must ask how we can provide more benefit from each gallon of water we remove from nature. Experts suggest we need to double water productivity over the next 30 years if we are to successfully meet the needs of 8 billion people while protecting the health of the aquatic environmental. Highly efficient drip irrigation only accounts for approximately 1% of global irrigated area today. Farmers need to become comfortable with information technologies that tell them precisely how much water to apply to their crops and when to apply it. Industries must move to nearly complete internal water recycling, which will cut pollution and water use dramatically. And homes and communities must move from thirsty green laws to native landscaping, conserving water and enhancing biological diversity.

Conservation, often viewed as just an emergency response to drought, must be transformed into a suite of measures resulting in cost-effective and environmentally sound ways of balancing water budgets. Just as energy planners have discovered that it is often cheaper to save energy (e.g., home insulation, compact fluorescent lights) than to build more power plants, water planners must realize that an assortment of water efficiency measures can result in *permanent* water savings which can delay or obviate altogether the need for expensive new dams and reservoirs, groundwater wells, and treatment plants. Managing water demand rather than continuously seeking to meet it can also result in tremendous costs savings and protect the environment at the same time.

Pricing incentives may be one of the most important steps we can take in a comprehensive conservation strategy. Proper pricing gives consumers an accurate signal about just how costly water is, and allows them to respond accordingly. More than 100 demand studies have determined that water pricing, in the form of increasing block rates, is a powerful conservation tool at the disposal of water utilities.

Conservation-based pricing structures have been successful not only in urban settings, but in agricultural settings as well, and have been endorsed (but not often implemented) by the Bureau of Reclamation. Moreover, as I noted above, changes in irrigation practices in response to conservation measures, motivated by inclining water rate structures and decreased deliveries, have been rewarded with yield improvements. Surface irrigation methods that result in non-uniform infiltration of water can reduce yields for crops that are susceptible to

overwatering.

Not only do many current pricing structures not reflect the true cost of the resource, some utilities actually reward waste by charging less the more that is consumed (declining block rates). Moreover, many water users are not even metered, which precludes even the possibility of charging people appropriately for their water use. Metering is not only a prerequisite to the success of most conservation measures, it encourages savings in and of itself simply by making people aware of the link between their water bill and their water use.

The 1994 Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project legislation has only begun to be implemented. The purpose of that legislation was to finance conservation and other system improvements in the Yakima basin to increase the stability of irrigation water and to transfer water to instream flows for salmon and steelhead recovery. An illustration of what technology improvements can do is the Yakima-Tieton irrigation district, which was able to decrease its diversions dramatically after installing a pressurized conveyance system in the mid-1980s. It is difficult at best to know the extent to which we may need additional storage in the basin and where it would make most sense without implementing the YRWEP legislation, and without fully implementing water trading programs, conservation-based pricing, and other conservation technologies suggested by Congress in that legislation.

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has"

Margaret Mead

Comments and questions for the June 2, 2021 Yakima Workgroup meeting

The Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Ecology issued an "IP Project Activity Update," dated May 2021 on the Yakima Plan, which included an update on the "Enhanced Water Conservation Element" and appear to be misleading and inaccurate. Please include these comments in the Yakima Workgroup meeting minutes for June 2, 2021, and provide a response to the following questions. Thank you.

"Upon passage of the Dingell Act in March 2019, the Reclamation, Ecology, Yakama Nation and YRBWEP Workgroup Partners have a goal to conserve 85,000 acre-feet of water by 2029."

COMMENT: This is misleading and inaccurate. The Dingell Act amended the 1994 Phase II Yakima Plan legislation (P.L. 103-434) reads follows:

> SEC. 8202. MODIFICATION OF PURPOSES AND DEFINITIONS.
>
> (a) Purposes.--Section 1201 of Public Law 103-434 (108 Stat. 4550) is amended--
>
> . . .
>
> (7) by inserting after paragraph (4) (as redesignated by paragraph (4)) the following:
>
> "(5) to realize sufficient water savings from implementing the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan, so that not less than 85,000 acre feet of water savings are achieved by implementing the initial development phase of the Integrated Plan pursuant to section 8201(b)(1) of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, **in addition** to the 165,000 acre-feet of water savings targeted through the Basin Conservation Program, as authorized on October 31, 1994;";

The Yakima Basin Conservation Program, authorized by Congress in 1994, established targets of not less than **40,000 acre-feet** of water savings per year are achieved by the end of the fourth year of the Basin Conservation Program, and not less than **110,000 acre-feet** of water savings per year are achieved by the end of the eighth year of the program, to protect and enhance fish and wildlife resources; and not less than **55,000 acre feet** of water savings per year are achieved by the end of the eighth year of the program for availability for irrigation. P.L. 103-434 *Sec. 1201(4).*

According to a Bureau of Reclamation letter of September 4, 2015, under the 1994 authorized Basin Conservation Plan, **only 40,000 acre- feet** of water savings for instream flows and **13,000** acre-feet for irrigation had been achieved out of the 165,000 acre-feet of water savings by the end of the eighth year of the program. In addition, two districts had not installed water measuring devices.

A clear reading of the Dingell Act says that not less than 85,000 acre feet of water savings are to be achieved by the initial development phase IN ADDITION to the 165,000 acre-feet of water savings targeted through the Basin Conservation Program authorized in 1994.

Please provide responses to the following questions:

- **What is the total current acre-feet of water savings that has been achieved as a result of the 1994 Basin Conservation Program over the past 26 years?**
- **What is the total current acre-feet of water savings that has been achieved as a result of the 1994 Basin Conservation Program over the past 26 years for each of the following irrigation districts: Roza, Kittitas, Tieton, Wapato, Sunnyside, Union Gap, Yakima Valley Canal?**

- **What is the status of each of the Water Conservation Plans developed under the Basin Conservation Program?**
- **Why and when was the Congressionally established Yakima River Basin Conservation Advisory Group disbanded?**
- **Did the Secretary of Interior have authority to terminate this Advisory Group without the consent of Congress?**

"The overall conservation savings goal upon full Integrated Plan implementation is 170,000 acre-feet. Reclamation and Ecology are conducting an inventory of water conservation accomplishments associated with the Integrated Plan."

COMMENT:
As noted above, this statement is also inaccurate and misleading as the Dingell Act says that not less than 85,000 acre feet of water savings are achieved by the initial development phase IN ADDITION to the 165,000 acre-feet of water savings targeted through the Basin Conservation Program authorized in 1994.

"Projects that count towards this goal must adhere to three parameters:
- Begin in 2013 or later
- Be an agricultural or municipal improvement project resulting in conserved water, and
- Not be part of the Title XII, Section 1203 Basin Conservation Plan"

COMMENT:

This is also inaccurate and misleading. There is NO indication that the Dingell Act contemplated counting water conservation projects that "begin in 2013 or later." If anything, only water saving projects begun after the passage of the Dingell Act, and not part of the 1994 Basin Conservation Plan, should be counted.

"To date, there have been 104 conservation projects implemented. Approximately $89 million invested has resulted in approximately 50,000 acre-feet conserved ($1,800 per acre-foot)."

COMMENT:

Again, this is also inaccurate and misleading. There is no specific time frame given.

Please provide responses to the following questions:
- **Of the 104 conservation projects implemented, how many were part of the Title XII, Section 1203 Basin Conservation Plan?**
- **Of the $89 million invested, how much was funded by the BuRec, Ecology, individual irrigation districts?**
- **Of the $89 million invested, how much was funded by Roza, Kittitas, Tieton, Wapato, Sunnyside, Union Gap, Yakima Valley Canal?**
- **Of the 50,000 acre-feet conserved, how much was made available to protect and enhance fish and wildlife resources?**
- **Of the 50,000 acre-feet conserved, how much was made available for irrigation?**

"A technical memorandum explaining the history, accounting, and future framework planning for the Enhanced Water Conservation element projects was released to the Water Use Subcommittee in April 2020. Within this memorandum, Reclamation and Ecology have developed a project prioritization proposal for achieving the remaining portion of the initial development phase goal."

Please provide responses to the following questions:
- **Who prepared this "technical memorandum"?**
- **Where can it be found on the Bureau of Reclamation or Ecology webpages?**

"Among the work within the basin in 2020, the Yakama Nation and WIP made notable steps forward on their water conservation projects. This progress includes continuing to develop specifications and contract documents for the construction of 10 long crested weir check/grade control structure on the Satus 3 Pump Canal, canal lining within Satus Unit 2, replacement of leaking concrete pipeline, and the piping of laterals. The work completed in 2020 was estimated to conserve approximately 6,808 ac-ft.

Additionally, the Yakama Nation and WIP requested $1.76M to acquire the right-of-way and to construct a 120 ac-ft regulating reservoir in the Unit 2 West Branch Canal. This reservoir will stabilize and provide operational flexibility to the overall delivery system. It will allow WIP to enclose the remaining laterals on the Unit 2 West and East canals. The reservoir is projected to save 7,700 ac-ft. "

COMMENT

We are supportive of improving water conservation and water efficiency on the Wapato Irrigation Project (WIP).

Please provide responses to the following questions:

- **Provide clarification as to the number of acre-feet of water savings accomplished on the WIP between the 1994 Phase II Yakima Plan legislation (P.L. 103-434) and the 2019 Dingell Act.**
- **Provide clarification as to how much of these water savings have been applied to irrigation and how much to fish and water resources.**
- **Provide the number of acre-feet of water savings accomplished on the WIP specifically due to the 2019 Dingell Act.**
- **Provide clarification as to how much of these water savings have been applied to irrigation and how much to fish and water resources.**

It is clear that Yakima Basin irrigation districts have NOT achieved the water savings targets established by Congress in 1994, nearly **THREE DECADES AGO**. Please include the attached 2001 Comments of Katherine Ransel, American Rivers regarding Water Storage versus Water Conservation in the Yakima Basin, as her extremely perceptive comments of 20 years ago remain true today:

> "It is difficult at best to know the extent to which we may need additional storage in the basin and where it would make most sense without implementing the YRWEP legislation, and without fully implementing water trading programs, conservation-based pricing, and other conservation technologies suggested by Congress in that legislation."

Thank you, please let me know if you have any questions or need clarifications, We look forward to your insights on these issues.

Chris Maykut, President
Friends of Bumping Lake

Attachment 2 – John Reeves Public Comments

- Please note, and contrary to past Workgroup meeting minutes, I am NOT a member of Kachess HOA nor have I ever identified myself as such. I have been at Lake Kachess long before the HOA and I say this with all due respect to the indigenous people of the Wenatchi who have been here since time immemorial.
- I work tirelessly to find solutions. Unfortunately, in three minutes I only have time to voice my frustrations. I join you all in hopes of furthering a sustainable Yakima Basin for fish, farms, and communities.
- At the last Workgroup meeting Clear Lake Fish Passage was discussed as well as the public outcry for recreation to save rather than remove the existing dam. PLEASE NOTE: Over 7,000 signatures and hundreds of comments opposing the Lake Kachess pumping plant project were submitted in response to the Kachess Pumping Plant SDEIS. While I received email confirmation of delivery, these signatures and comments were NOT included in the March 2019 FEIS. An ERRATA was ultimately added to the Bureau's website**. PLEASE provide this link in the meeting minutes:** https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/eis/kdrpp/feis2019/feiserrata2.pdf
- Congratulations to Kelsey Greene on her new position. As we search for a new outreach coordinator, my question is:
    - How is this outreach coordinator position funded?

      The outreach position is jointly funded by American Rivers and YBIP partners including Department of Ecology, county government and irrigation districts.
- At past Workgroup meetings, Peter Dykstra is listed as a member representing **Plauché & Carr,** a Seattle, WA law firm.
    - Why is a law firm a Workgroup member when the cities of Ellensburg and Cle Elum are not Workgroup members?

      The legal firm of Plauche and Carr is not a Workgroup Member, and Mr. Peter Dykstra does not represent the firm as a participant in the YRBWEP Workgroup. Mr. Dykstra role is not as a lawyer, but rather Mr. Dykstra contributes to the YRBWEP Workgroup, as the Watershed Lands Conservation Subcommittee Chair.

- Mr. Dykstra is now listed on the Department of Ecology Yakima Plan website as a Workgroup member representing "Other Stakeholders."
    - **Who are these stakeholders**?

      Thank you for pointing out the error in describing Mr. Dykstra's role on in the YRBWEP Workgroup on our website, he does not represent "Other Stakeholders" as listed. Ecology, Reclamation and Yakama Nation working with our Communication and Outreach Work Group to review, update and refresh the Integrated Plan website(s) later this year and correctly list all YRBWEP Workgroup member participation.
    - Have any other Workgroup members been represented as a client in any legal matters by Plauché & Carr related to the Yakima Plan?

      Mr. Dykstra has represented Trout Unlimited, Kittitas County, Roza Irrigation District, and Benton County in a legal capacity, but not related to the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan.

- If so, was this disclosed to the Workgroup?

  Not applicable.

- Finally. At our last in person meeting in Ellensburg, long time Kachess resident Sam Baker asked, "Who has seen Lake Kachess at its lowest?"
  - Many hands went up.

    Unless you are 105 years old you have never seen Lake Kachess at its lowest. September 27, 1915, is the lowest Lake Kachess has ever been and there was still 13,700 acre-feet of Active Storage available.

    Never, since 1915, has the bottom 19,000 Acre Feet of Kachess Active Storage ever been accessed.

    That bottom 19,000 is expensive to pump.

  - If the need is 200,000 acre-feet, why would the Roza Irrigation District pay to access 219 KAF?

    The 19,000 acre-feet is from the active storage and serves as a buffer to make sure water can get through the outlet works and that there is enough flow to meet minimum flows in the Kachess River downstream of the dam and is still needed and part of the active storage reservoir. The Kachess Drought Relief Project proposes to drawdown up to 200,000 acre-feet from the inactive storage pool.

Attachment 3 – David Ortman Public Comments

This session, the Washington State Legislature passed the Capital budget, including Sec. 3032, Ecology's request of $3.25 million to purchase the Eaton Ranch, a shrub-steppe sage-grouse habitat area for an uneconomical Wymer Dam for Yakima irrigators. This information was not disclosed in the May 2021 Yakima Plan Project Activity Update, which only says that "Consideration of site requirements is ongoing."

Past studies have documented:

- **The shrub-steppe habitat in the project area is within the Umtanum Ridge Management Unit identified by the State as a potential expansion and reintroduction area for greater sage-grouse.**
- **Loss of this habitat at the Wymer site would exacerbate ongoing losses in the area resulting in potentially substantial impacts to this species.**
- **Construction of the [Wymer] reservoir would cause potentially significant impacts to shrub-steppe habitat in the Yakima River basin and would reduce habitat for the greater sage-grouse.**

The Water Research Center's 2014 Benefit/Cost Analysis Report on the Yakima Plan determined that a new Wymer Dam would have a B/C ratio of 0.09 (nine cents of benefits for every dollar spent) (page iv). Dropping the new Wymer Dam project and on-going studies would save desperately needed greater sage-grouse habitat in Eastern Washington.
https://wrc.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/ybip_bca_swwrc_dec2014.pdf/

In addition, Sec. 3032 of the Capital Budget states:
"It is the intent of the legislature that the state hold the property until a transfer to the United States bureau of reclamation for the purposes of construction of a water supply reservoir in accordance with the Yakima Basin integrated plan, or until such purpose is declared by the bureau no longer feasible."

The State Environmental Policy Act RCW 43.21C.031(1) requires: "An environmental impact statement shall be prepared on proposals for legislation and other major actions having a probable significant, adverse environmental impact. WAC 197-11-070 sets limitations on actions during SEPA process including that until a final determination of nonsignificance or final environmental impact statement, no action concerning the proposal shall be taken by a governmental agency that would:
(a) Have an adverse environmental impact; or
(b) Limit the choice of reasonable alternatives.

Please provide a written response to the following questions as part of the Workgroup meeting minutes for June 2, 2021:

1. Did the Department of Ecology prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to present to the legislature for the purchase of the Eaton Ranch for the purpose of constructing the Wymer project?

   Answer: No. The potential purchase of the property by state agencies, including Ecology, is categorically exempt from SEPA under Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11-800(5).

2. Does Sec. 3032 of the Capital Budget mean that state taxpayers have just paid $3.25 million to purchase property that is to be turned over to the Bureau of Reclamation?

   Answer: The 2021-23 Enacted Capital Budget (SHB 1080 Sections 3031 and 3072) directs Ecology to use re-appropriated dollars, totaling $6.5 million, from two previous biennia of Yakima River Basin Water Supply capital funds for this purpose. Financial arrangements for a Wymer project have yet to be determined.

3. When it finally becomes apparent that the Wymer project is uneconomical and environmental damaging, what does Ecology intend to do with the property?

   Answer: Details of the Wymer dam and reservoir project are in a preliminary stage, and consideration of if, and when, to proceed with the proposed project is likely a decade away. If Ecology is successful in acquiring the property, Ecology plans to continue to lease the property for ongoing ranching until the decision on the Wymer dam and reservoir is reached and will have the lease overseen by the local county Conservation District.

   After feasibility, environmental and economic review, the decision on whether to move forward with design and construction of the Wymer dam and reservoir will be made by the Ecology, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Yakama Nation and other stakeholders who participate in the development and implementation of the Integrated Plan, with authorization from Congress and the State Legislature as needed.

   If a decision is made to not move forward with the Wymer dam and reservoir, Ecology, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Yakama Nation and the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Workgroup would consider other land use actions, including preserving the property for environmental value.