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Meeting Notes

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Workgroup

June 1, 2022

In-person and 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 both virtually and in person. The following notes summarize the YRBWEP Workgroup presentations and public comments. For more information, please see the full presentations available on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP) website: [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan](#).

Executive and Implementation Committee Updates

Tom Tebb, Washington State Department of Ecology: The committees are preparing for the next State biennium budget cycle (2023–2025). Due to rising costs and inflation, Ecology is proposing an 8–12 percent increase in budget from the previous biennium request. They are working with YRBWEP subcommittee chairs and members to finalize proposed budget requests ahead of the budget submittal. The Implementation Committee is planning to reach out to the representatives in Washington, DC, to provide an update on YRBWEP and hopes to host tours in Fall 2022.

Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation: The Executive Committee is meeting regularly; there are no updates on their work at the moment. Carolyn Chad, deputy area manager, is retiring in August. Talmadge Oxford is retiring in October. Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) received \$5M from the Continuing Resolution Drought funding to continue lining and piping of KRD South Branch Canal and Yakama Nation received \$2.5M for groundwater projects on the Wapato Irrigation Project. Also \$500k was also provided for the City of Yakima Nelson Dam project to support removal of existing fish ladder.

Yakima Basin Integrated Plan – Technical Projects Update

A large portion of the meeting was dedicated to technical project updates. Below are descriptions of the projects along with their project managers and associated agencies. Questions are presented under each project as they arose during the presentation.

Dave Empel, Reclamation – Cle Elum Pool Raise (CEPR) Project: The main goal of the CEPR project is to raise the reservoir 3 feet, creating an additional 14,600 acre-feet of water. The water will be used for fish, habitat, migration, and instream flows. One of several shoreline protection areas within CEPR is the Wish Poosh Campground and Boat Launch project, completed last week on May 27. Construction occurred September 2020 to May 2022. Project components included raising and paving the Boat Launch Road, allowing for better drainage. The Davis Creek Culvert created improved fish passage. The parking lot incorporated anchored logs for habitat and accessible parking for visitors.

Q: How much of the Lake Cle Elum shoreline will be “hardened” due to the 3-foot raise project?

Dave Empel: Hard to specify, but they will be using soft shoreline whenever possible and using a bioengineered option wherever possible.

Q: What is the overall cost of the project, and has inflation had an impact?

Dave Empel: As with many other projects, we are seeing rising costs of certain items due to inflation. We expect to have a better handle on what these costs could be in the coming months.

Q: How many days do you expect it will take the level to reach this additional 3 feet?

Dave Empel: This will depend on the weather conditions, similar to what we see today. Typically the reservoir is at full pool approximately two weeks. I am not sure how many years on average this would be.

Dave Brown, City of Yakima – Nelson Dam Removal: The City and County of Yakima worked together to remove Nelson Dam, improving passage to 309 miles of habitat and decreasing flood risk by widening the channel up to 400 feet. Phase 1 of the project cost \$18 million. Last week they were able to open the channel, which saved about \$1,500 per day in fuel costs due to the elimination of the need to pump water. Future phases will include installation of pipes leading to the City of Yakima and a levee for flood protection.

Q: What fish are running upriver right now?

Dave Brown: I believe it is Steelhead now and Sockeye later. This will also improve passage for Bull Trout.

Q: What does Phase 2 look like?

Dave Brown: We will be putting new pipelines leading to the City of Yakima, diverting water from Cowiche Creek. We expect Ecology to come up with \$8 million as well as additional funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The overall cost estimate for phase 2 is about \$10.5 million.

Ron Cowin, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District – Dam Fish Passage Improvement Project: The goal is to keep migrating smolts from being entrained in the canal by way of the headgate. The project moved from concept to construction in one year thanks to support from YRBWEP. The fish boom installation occurred in spring 2021. The sluice gate was installed in fall 2021. Going forward, monitoring is ongoing and will be extended one more year to ensure that it is working as designed. So far this year, the U.S. Geological Survey has tagged 265 juvenile spring Chinook and more than 100 Steelhead.

Q: How long did it take from concept to design?

Ron Cowin: It was fast! The concept was initially to modify the radial gate and then decide an alternate route. The Bureau of Reclamation took on the permitting, which helped quite a bit. It was a fun project for us.

Todd Newsome, Yakama Nation Fisheries – Bull Trout Recovery Projects: In 2015, many agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Ecology, and Reclamation, came together to rescue Bull Trout from the Upper Kachess by capturing them and raising them in a facility before releasing them back to where they came from. The goal is healthy and harvestable stock of Bull Trout throughout the Yakima Basin, trying to save them from extinction. The focus of the effort has been the Gold Creek Watershed and Kachess Watershed. Initially, there was low

survival due to too many fish in a single tank. Through adaptive management, each year has seen lower mortality rates and larger fish when they are ready for release.

Q: What is the trap and haul at Deep Creek? (Christ Maykut, Friends of Bumping Lake)

Jason Romine: It involves snorkeling below the dam to conduct a census of the fish found, trap them to collect a genetic sample, measure them, and tag them. If they are Deep Creek fish, they are moved above the dam.

The intent of the Easton Research and Rearing Facility is to build on what we have learned to capture, rear, and then reintroduce even more fish into two tributaries they used to be found in. This project includes three phases: capture and rear 3,500 Bull Trout, include Big Creek and Waptus Lake Watershed for reintroduction, and then begin adult brood holding. This will be one of the bigger, if not the biggest, Bull Trout facilities in the west.

Q: How big are the fish when they are released?

Todd Newsome: The Gold Creek fish tend to be larger, near 250 millimeters. The Kachess River side fish are a little smaller, near 200 millimeters.

Q: Where will the 3,500 fish come from?

Todd Newsome: The proposal is to take the fish from South Fork Tieton, as that's the largest population of Bull Trout in the Yakima Basin.

Q: Is this being done anywhere else in the nation?

Todd Newsome: The Kalispel Tribe have been doing this, but potentially not to the same extent.

Q: What is the timeline for completion of the Easton Facility?

Todd Newsome: We hope that fish will come in summer 2025 and be released in fall 2025, with some being held for adult brood.

Q: What data suggests that Taneum Creek will support Bull Trout?

Todd Newsome: We have measured several areas within the creek at multiple times of the year. Anecdotally, we have heard that snow didn't come out of the creek until late April, which suggests that they used to be in there.

Jeff Tayer: Bull Trout have benefitted most from the YBIP. These efforts are supported by habitat conservation efforts and will hopefully lead to successful fish procreation.

Ryan Roberts, Reclamation – Cle Elum Dam Fish Passage: Construction on the Cle Elum Dam Fish Passage Project has been ongoing since 2015. It is a multiphase project and is currently in the middle of Phase 4. Phase 5 will be the adult collection facility, which will hopefully be awarded later this year. We anticipate that the facility will be fully operational in 2026. There will be 195 precast box culverts between intake structure and secant pile shaft. Construction on the helix structure will begin in summer 2022. The leaf gates help keep the water going around the helix.

Moving forward, the team will resume work on the intake structures as reservoir levels drop and begin construction of helix structure inside of the secant structure.

Q: Have you tracked the economic impact of this project, given its large scale?

Wendy Christensen: We have not tracked the impact but did make some initial assessment before the start of the project.

Brian Saluskin, Yakama Nation Fisheries – Kalux/Sockeye: In 2004, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation started the Sockeye Reintroduction project. This is an important project for the Yakama Nation for many reasons. Since 2009, the number of fish returning has been gradually increasing. The Yakama Nation has used various efforts to reintroduce Sockeye into Lake Cle Elum. Brian noted that there are some years where the fish do not reach the spillway and they cannot get fish out, but the most recent numbers have been encouraging. The fish are reintroduced in mid-June to mid-July. Completion of the Cle Elum Dam Fish Passage project will benefit this program. This program does not currently include a hatchery.

In 1920 Mackinaw were introduced in the area; they are apex predators from Wisconsin Lake that out-competed Bull Trout. In 2013 the Yakama Nation started gill netting Mackinaw in Cle Elum in order to remove that population from Lake Cle Elum.

Q: Do you know the current numbers of Mackinaw in Lake Cle Elum?

Brian Saluskin: No, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working to try and count them.

Q: Who pays for the fishing gear you use to catch Mackinaw, and how much does it cost on an annual basis?

Brian Saluskin: The nets are owned and maintained by individuals and families. I would guess about \$5,000 a year is spent on equipment, gas, and other items.

General Public Comments

Ann Lewis: When will Tier 2 of the Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant come out? And is Alternative 1 still viable?

Scott Revell: There will always be a no build alternative. Roza is comparing the final documents for submittal to the Bureau of Reclamation. Scott is anticipating submission of the material in June, followed by a public comment process as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Wendy Christensen: Once the information from Roza comes in, Reclamation will go through a NEPA and SEPA process. As part of that process, there will be a public comment period as it relates to scoping and the draft environmental impact statement, which is ahead of us.

John Reeves, Lake Kachess HOA, presented commentary that the YBIP uses narratives and semantics to give names to water bodies in order to benefit the Workgroup. For example, Lake Mead and Lake Powell are not lakes; they are reservoirs. He supports the Nelson Dam removal, but is discouraged that another one is going in. He asked that Workgroup members ask additional questions of proposed projects.

Yakima Basin Water Market Strategy Draft

Justin Bezold, Trout Unlimited, and Richael Young, ERA Economics, presented on a Water Market Strategy. Note that the strategy did not incorporate Yakama Nation water rights.

For background, they shared the existing market reallocation. Right now “buyers” and “sellers” are just word of mouth. They propose a “smart market”—an electronic clearinghouse that matches buyers and sellers of water by price point and regulatory constraints. The group defined a water right transfer as a change to an attribute of a water right, which requires filing a change application requesting Ecology’s review under Revised Code of Washington 90.03.380.

The goal of the project is to develop a market strategy and leverage multi-benefit water transactions, which would benefit drought resilience and advance streamflow restoration. This would also advance market reallocation of the YBIP.

The key recommendations include having an outside administrator that is a neutral third party—not an agency. This would minimize conflicts of interest. Additionally, for the market reallocation to work, buyers/sellers must have confidence that the water will be there.

The team utilized smart market simulations that allowed them to test smart markets in a virtual setting, taking the risk out of the equation. It includes private water rights and intra-district trading, and was a temporary (1-year) project duration.

The results showed that the majority of the agriculture benefits are realized in the intra-district market, but instream flow benefits accrue only through the private water rights market. The participation of a funded environmental flow buyer can drive more instream flows, particularly in high- and medium-priority reaches. When the trading rules are restrictive/conservative, they are easily adapted.

Ultimately, the group recommended adopting and implementing a smart market tailored to the Yakima Basin, defined as a pilot program focused on water-short years. The technical report is expected to be nearly finalized in June 2022. They will then seek public comment through the summer and will finalize the document in September.

Q: The mission was focused on irrigation water right transfers, right? Ground water is subject to curtailment for communities up and down the river and will be seeking a market.

Justin Bezold: The intent is to have the market as open as possible. At the moment, the focus has been on agricultural irrigation. However, as additional water comes online, then additional buyers could be added as well.

Q: What is the date of the Washington Irrigation Guide and why hasn't it been updated? (David E. Ortman, Seattle, WA)

Thank you for your comment. Our team has passed your comment on to Ecology's Water Resources Program who is responsible for policies that reference the use of the WIG and its applications to water right transactions.

Arden Thomas: The smart market is a good opportunity, but it will be one part of a broader water market strategy for the basin.

Scott Revell: This would be very helpful for the Roza Irrigation District. It would be great to have an expedited process, instead of waiting the typical 45 days. We have also spent a lot of time on potential sellers that end up not working out, and this could help resolve that.

Upcoming Meetings

Ben Floyd introduced and welcomed David Farmer, U.S. Forest Service, the new deputy forest supervisor for Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

David Ortman noted that public comment opportunities were not provided for each agenda item (i.e., 2022 Water Supply Forecast) as promised in footnote 1 on the Agenda.

The next Workgroup meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 14, 2022. We hope the meeting format will be in person at the Yakima County Fairgrounds, depending upon in-person meeting restrictions. The deep dive will be into all things lower river.

Attendance

Workgroup Members:

Arden Thomas, Kittitas County (alternate for Cory Wright)
Dave Brown, City of Yakima
Jaelyn Hancock, Washington Department of Agriculture
Jason McShane, Kennewick Irrigation District
Jason Romine, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jeff Tayer, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Chair of Habitat Subcommittee
Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County (alternate for Ron Anderson)
Justin Yeager, National Marine Fisheries Service
Kathryn Furr, U.S. Forest Service
Larry Leach, Washington Department of Natural Resources
Lisa Pelly, Trout Unlimited
Mike Livingston, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Peter Dykstra, Chair of Watershed Lands Conservation Subcommittee
Phil Rigdon, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Rick Dieker, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District
Ron Anderson, Yakima County
Ron Cowin, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District
Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District and Chair of Water Use Subcommittee
Talmadge Oxford, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Tom Tebb, Washington State Department of Ecology
Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District
Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Wendy McDermott, American Rivers

Other Attendees:

Alan Chapman
Ann Lewis
Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting
Brian Saluskin, Yakama Nation Fisheries
Brooks Ronspies, ERA Economics
Bryan Myre
Carolyn Chad, Bureau of Reclamation
Charles Klarich
Chen Xu, Washington State University
Chris Maykut, Friends of Bumping Lake
Chris Perra, Yakama Nation Fisheries
Chris Pitre, Coho Water Resources

Christine Schuldheisz, Bureau of Reclamation
Chuck Freeman, Kennewick Irrigation District
Cindy Preston, Washington Department of Natural Resources
Cole Provence, Washington State Department of Ecology
Connor Cunningham, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Craig Haskell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Cynthia Carlstad, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants
Danielle Squeochs, Confederated Tribes and Band of the Yakama Nation
Darcy Batura, The Nature Conservancy
Dave Blodgett, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Dave Empel, Bureau of Reclamation
Dave Fisher, Bureau of Indian Affairs
David Farmer, U.S. Department of Agriculture
David Ortman
Debbie Carlson, Bonneville Power Administration
Dennis Sandstrom, HDR, Inc.
Devin Stoker, Jacobs Engineering
Elaine Packard
Erin Eaton, Trout Unlimited
Ethan Lockwood, Washington Water Trust
Georgine Yorgey, Washington State University
Jamie Mooney, HDR, Inc.
Janine Empel, Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Jeanne Sheldon
Jenna Scholz, HDR, Inc.
Jim Milton, Yakima Tieton Irrigation District
Joe Blodgett, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Joe Cook, Washington State University
Joel Hubble, Kittitas Reclamation District
John Reeves, Lake Kachess HOA
Johnathan Yoder, Washington State University
Joye Redfield-Wilder, Washington State Department of Ecology
Julia Long, Jacobs Engineering
Justin Bader, North Yakima Conservation District
Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District
Justin Bezold, Trout Unlimited
Karie (last name unknown)
Kate Smith, Yakima Herald-Republic
Kerri Matthews, Bureau of Reclamation
Larry Martin, Velikanje Halvorson
Larry Mattson, Jacobs Engineering

Lori Brady, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District
Melissa Downes, Washington State Department of Ecology
Mike Brady, Washington State University
Mike Schwisow
Mingliang Liu, Washington State University
Mitch Long, Kittitas Conservation Trust
Nathan Draper, Selah-Moxee Irrigation District
Pat Merriam
Pat Monk, Bureau of Reclamation
Paul Tabayoyon
Perry Harvester, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Richael Young, ERA Economics
Richard Visser, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office
Rick Evans, Office of Senator Maria Cantwell
Riley Berry
Ryan Everett
Ryan Robers, Bureau of Reclamation
Sara Vickers, Kittitas Reclamation District
Sarah (last name unknown)
Sean Gross, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries
Seth Defoe, Kennewick Irrigation District
Sonja Kokos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve Malloch, Western Water Futures LLC (alternate for American Rivers)
Suhina Deol, Washington State University
Tim Poppleton, Washington State Department of Ecology
Todd Newsome, Yakama Nation Fisheries
Tom Elliott, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Tom McDowell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Walt Larrick, Yakima Basin Joint Board
William Gale, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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.