

**Contact:** Chad Stuart, Columbia-Cascades Area Office, (509) 573-8101  
Larry Mattson, Washington State Department of Ecology, (509) 907-1340

## **Meeting Notes**

### **Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Workgroup**

**June 18, 2025**  
**In-person and Teams Virtual Meeting**

#### **Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Overview**

Anna Marandi with HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR) welcomed the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Workgroup members and other attendees participating virtually and in-person. The following notes summarize the YRBWEP Workgroup presentations and public comments. For more information, please see the full presentations on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP) website: [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan](#).

#### **Executive and Implementation Committee Updates**

**Presenters:** *Chad Stuart*, Reclamation; *Larry Mattson*, OCR/ Ecology; *Joe Blodgett*, Yakama Nation

**Chad Stuart** provided a staffing update for the Workgroup. Reclamation staffing has been reduced by 30% and they are at a 50% level of capacity. As such, the agency has been prioritizing projects that are near completion such as the Cle Elum Pool Raise. Unfortunately, Reclamation has had to pause work on the Clear Creek fish ladder project. Chad also shared that Ecology was awarded \$5 million of drought relief funding.

**Larry Mattson** shared that the state budget was approved in late April and has been working with Melissa Downes and the Governor's Office to allocate the funds. He shared his appreciation for the irrigation districts and offered his thanks to the district leadership for their hard work.

**Joe Blodgett** noted that Yakama Nation continues to support all their partners and appreciates the support and partnership of the Workgroup. The Yakama Nation recently released their annual report [online](#) and it is available in print too.

#### **Groundwater and Hydrology Presentation**

**Presenter:** Jeff Dermond, *Washington State Department of Ecology*

Jeff Dermond created a presentation called "Chasing the Yakima Basin's "sixth reservoir" with groundwater solutions." He shared that as of June 12, the surface storage amount is 67% of total. He used data from Stampede Pass to tell the story about average temperatures, total precipitation, snowpack, and how it affects carryover storage and water availability. Jeff shared options to maximize water storage, and talked about the current water storage options that the group is already utilizing, such

as new surface reservoirs. He then introduced what the Groundwater Subcommittee is working on - aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) and shallow aquifer recharge (SAR). To benefit habitat, the water needs to make its way back to the stream or river. For domestic purposes, the water needs to remain accessible via wells. KRD is currently implementing some SAR projects. Meanwhile, ASR means that they are taking water out of a body of surface water and transporting it to a well and injecting it into a deeper aquifer. Ideally, it remains in the deeper aquifer until it is ready for use. Some ASR projects are being implemented by the City of Yakima and Roza irrigation District.

### Presentation Q&A

**Jeff Tayer** asked, what does energy production during injection look like?

**A:** It means modifying the existing pump to run backwards to turn it into a generator as water runs through it.

**Danielle Squeochs** asked if he has added the potential storage amount from the projects listed?

**A:** No, Jeff stated that he has not added the amount and is still figuring out how to add the amount of water based on water retiming. There is a non-trivial amount of storage.

**Sean Gross** noted that the presentation showed that different permeability of aquifers allows them to hold water for different amounts of time. In more preferred locations where it's better to hold water, how long is the aquifer recharge or storage time?

**A:** For ASR, water should be able to be stored for 2+ years. For shallow aquifers, it depends on the purpose. For domestic use, the water should stay versus habitat use. As a disclaimer, Jeff mentioned that the storage amounts in SARs are not the same as water stored in a surface reservoir or an ASR project.

**Sage Park** shared that for the Roza ASR project it looks like they can store 100K acre-feet of water. So that has potential for the basin over several years and will hopefully put in 20K acre-feet of water per year.

**A: Danielle Squeochs** added that for SAR, most projects have benefits within 2-5 years. The deeper aquifer projects, the permits state benefits within 10 years. The baseflow is changing due to mining in deeper aquifer projects.

**Jason McShane** asked about cost for 20K acre-feet and power generation.

**A: Danielle Squeochs** answered that Roza has submitted a proposal to the Groundwater Subcommittee including a full economic analysis. This subcommittee has received a full stack of proposals that exceed their budget. They don't know if the economic analysis will be funded in the next biennium, but it is proposed. The focus of groundwater storage is to get the feasibility projects and water in the ground to begin onsite testing. The typical lifecycle of water in storage is 10 years. And deeper water is colder water. We also want to address municipal needs, and this holds a lot of promise for the city of Yakima and others.

**Shane Leonard** asked about data regarding actual infiltration versus what is permitted. He talked about different geographies (coming from Arizona/ Southwest).

**A: Jeff Dermond** shared that the city of Yakima's storage has been limited by treatment versus other physical parameters. Disinfection byproducts have been an issue and once they exceed a threshold, the injection operation is shut down. We don't have data yet on limiting injections besides this.

**Danielle Squeochs** also added that the city of Yakima's well is an Ellensburg aquifer that is a sedimentary aquifer. Other aquifers have different structures. Southwest aquifers are sedimentary. The basalt aquifers are more beneficial than what you'd expect from sedimentary aquifers.

## Public Comments

### **Jean Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek:**

Jean shared that the average dairy cow consumes up to 85 gallons of water each day, and even more during periods of heat stress. If we are talking about groundwater, does the Department of Ecology know whether the Yakima River is gaining or losing water in different parts of the valley? We should look at this when talking about groundwater recharge.

**David Ortman:** asked three questions:

1. Do you want to store spring Yakima water in the aquifers to give to the irrigators because their entitlements without mentioning salmon runs? Is it because of few too many reservoirs or far too many entitlements?
2. Why wasn't the feasibility and cost benefit analysis prepared before going to legislature for over \$200 million to purchase the Springwood Ranch property?
3. Is the Integrated Plan's failure to meet Washington legislature's 235K acre-feet of new water by June 30th of this year worth the celebration?

### **John Reeves, Friends of Lake Kachess:**

Expressed that he hoped he could see plenty of salmon in the river again in his lifetime.

## YBIP Project Update: Nelson Dam Phase II

**Presenter:** Mike Shane, *City of Yakima*

Mike shared that some folks in the room might not realize that there was a Phase II to the Nelson Dam project, so this would be a great opportunity to learn more. Mike provided additional background on the project and added that Phase I was completed in the Spring of 2023. Yakima County created a [video](#) to share about the multi-agency coordination of this project which will help reduce the flood risk to the city of Yakima, Highway 12, Powerhouse Road, adjacent agricultural lands, and restore fish passage and ecological floodplain functions on Lower Cowlitz Creek.

## Springwood Celebration and Cle Elum Tour Recaps

**Presenters:** Lottie Sam, Michael-David Bushman, Joe Blodgett, *Yakama Nation Fisheries*; Mike Livingston, Jennifer Johnson *Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife*

Mike Livingston talked to the Workgroup about how many members had wondered about the Springwood Ranch for many years, but it wasn't until Urban Eberhart was working to find more water storage and found out that Springwood was for sale. Mike shared the location of the ranch and that the

purchase was made possible with the partnership of Kittitas County, Kittitas Reclamation District, the Yakama Nation, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and support from the Trust for Public Land. This purchase and collaboration reflect the commitment to instream flow needs for fish.

Lottie Sam talked about the significance behind the May 2<sup>nd</sup> celebration and shared about the morning service to thank the land. Michael-David Bushman thanked all the volunteers for their help at the event and shared a photo slideshow. Jennifer Johnson gave thanks for all the work by Michael-David, Lottie Sam, Yakama Nation, Sara Vickers, Merritt Mitchell, Mike Livingston, and several staff from WDFW.

Joe Blodgett recounted to the group about the juvenile fish passage helix tour and how members of the Syilx First Nations, Okanagan National Alliance representatives, and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission attended. They left with an understanding of the YBIP partnership's dedication and commitment to restoring fish populations.

## **Celebrating Tom Tebb's YBIP Leadership and Career**

Urban Eberhart kicked off the speeches and share-outs, followed by several other Workgroup members including Danielle Squeochs, Sage Park, Melissa Downes, Scott Revell, Mike Livingston, Joe Blodgett, Chad Stuart, Larry Mattson, Sean Gross, Jason McShane, Jeff Tayer, Cory Wright, Brandon Parsons, Adam Fyall, and others. Tom received a framed photo from the group, presented by Cynthia Carlstad.

## **Attendance (Online and In-Person)**

### **Workgroup Members and Alternates:**

Adam Fyall, Benton County  
Arden Thomas, Kittitas County  
Bill Gale, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Brandon Parsons, American Rivers  
Chad Stuart, Bureau of Reclamation  
Cindy Boen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Charlie de la Chapelle, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance  
Craig Haskell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Danielle Squeochs, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
David Blodgett, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
David Felman, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District  
David Haws, Yakima County  
Jaelyn Hancock, Washington State Department of Agriculture  
Jason McShane, Lower River Subgroup Chair, Kennewick Irrigation District  
Jeff Tayer, Habitat Subcommittee Chair, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Jim Milton, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District  
Joe Blodgett, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Larry Leach, Washington State Department of Natural Resources  
Larry Mattson, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Melissa Downes, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Michael Porter, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Michelle Mercer, Benton County  
Mike Livingston, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife

Mike Shane, City of Yakima  
Sage Park, Water Use Subcommittee Chair, Roza Irrigation District  
Sanjay Barik, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District  
Sean Gross, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service  
Seth Defoe, Kennewick Irrigation District  
Shane Leonard, Kennewick Irrigation District  
Travis Okelberry, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District  
Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District  
Vanessa Pepi, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Other Attendees:**

Alison Pieper, HDR Engineering Inc.  
Anna Marandi, HDR Engineering Inc.  
Bailey Draper, South Yakima Conservation District  
Bob (affiliation unknown)  
Ben Woodard, Kennewick Irrigation District  
Brian Iller, Rettig Law  
Brian Sayrs, Washington State Department of Health  
Brian Schmidt, Bureau of Reclamation  
Bruce Sully, Bureau of Reclamation  
Chris Maykut, Friend of Bumping Lake  
Chris Pitre, Coho Water Resources  
Curt Strifert, Columbia Irrigation District  
Cynthia Carlstad, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants  
David Fisher, Consultant, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
David E. Ortman  
Diani Taylor, Plauche & Carr  
Glenn Grette, Grette Associates  
Heather Baxter, HDR Engineering, Inc.  
Jean Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek  
Jeanne Cushman (affiliation unknown)  
Jeff Burham, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Jeff Dermond, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Jennifer Johnson, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
John Crotty, Western Legal PLLC  
John Reeves, Save Lake Kachess  
John Stuhlmiller, Washington State Water Resources Association  
Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District  
Katie Pruitt, Governor's Salmon Recovery Office  
Kelly Clayton, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Kelsey Green, Consultant, Yakima Basin Joint Board of Irrigators  
Kevin Eslinger, Kittitas Reclamation District  
Kevin Haydon, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Leif Krapas, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Lily Sadataki, HDR Engineering, Inc.  
Lottie Sam, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Matthew Punke, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Merritt Mitchell, Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group  
Michael Coffey, Bureau of Reclamation  
Michael-David Bushman, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Michael Horner, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Nathan Draper, Selah-Moxee Irrigation District  
Norman Semanko, Parsons Behle & Latimer  
Rebecca Robinson, (affiliation unknown)  
Richard Evans, Office of U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell  
Scott Turner, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Steve Malloch, Western Water Futures LLC  
Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation Water Resources  
Susan Woodward, American Rivers  
Tim Poppleton, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Tom Tebb, Retired  
Vincent Shawver, Columbia Irrigation District

## **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 Anna Marandi at HDR Engineering, Inc. [anna.marandi@hdrinc.com](mailto:anna.marandi@hdrinc.com).