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## **Meeting Notes**

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

**September 14, 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. Brandon Parsons, American Rivers, introduced himself as the new representative for American Rivers on the Workgroup and other YRBWEP committees.

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**

**Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation):** YRBWEP and related projects have appeared in several news articles recently, including an article in the *Yakima Herald* about the Cle Elum Fish Passage and Cle Elum Pool Rise projects. Reclamation is near the end of Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22). In FY22, Reclamation provided approximately \$45 million for several YBIP and YRBWEP projects, including \$9.5 million for projects under the Continuing Resolution Drought Funding. The FY2023 budget is on track to be about a \$50 million appropriation, however, it has yet to be approved by Congress.

Wendy also shared photos of the recent site visit with Tom Tebb and Yakima Herald reporter and photographer showing progress being made on the Cle Elum Fish Passage project, including the access shaft, helix, fish ramp, and other elements. The photos are included in the meeting materials.

**Tom Tebb, Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology):** The committees have been working to identify and pursue several funding opportunities, which are being coordinated by Diani Taylor. Several tours of Yakima basin project sites are scheduled in September and October some of which will include state elected representatives. Tom expressed appreciation to the Yakama Nation for hosting a celebration event for Bateman Island, Honoring Chamna. Tom noted continued focus on completing projects currently underway and setting sights on new YBIP projects. Ecology submitted a biennium budget request to support YRBWEP and YBIP efforts for \$49 million, the largest to date. Tom Tebb shared his appreciation for Benton County, in coordination with Ecology, for their contribution to help fund the Funding Coordinator position with YRBWEP.

**Diani Taylor, Funding Coordinator:** Diani Taylor introduced herself and her new role on YRBWEP. She will track upcoming funding opportunities, coordinate with members in advance of the release of those opportunities to identify the right projects and people to pursue them, and then help develop the funding opportunity responses. The Kachess, Teanaway, Satus Creek, and South Fork Tieton Bridge projects were submitted on the America the Beautiful grant. The Bateman Island project was submitted

for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fish Passage and Transformational Habitat grants. In the near-term, the Reclamation Small Storage Grant is expected to be released and will be tracked as an opportunity to pursue.

C: Jeff Tayer, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, noted that each grant takes a lot of work and appreciated the effort to stay coordinated and develop proposals that will be very competitive. He recognized that people are busy with their normal jobs and thanked everyone for their time and effort.

C: Sean Gross, NOAA, affirmed Jeff's comments. He added that the level of effort to reply to the grants has been significant and was concerned that it was not sustainable. He asked if it would be possible to get assistance with writing the grants.

C: Danielle Squeochs, Yakama Nation, affirmed Sean's concern about capacity, since several of the staff developing the grants are the ones asked to implement them and won't be able to do both. She suggested finding a technical editor to assist with review of proposals.

C: Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board, noted that because so much effort is being put into replying to grants, he was concerned that staff are not able to set up projects to be ready for a second round of funding. He wondered if more could be done to simplify or develop templates to help proposers not have to do extra work to rework the same content into different proposals.

C: Brandon Parsons, American Rivers, noted that American Rivers has been advocating at the federal level to streamline the grant requests, as well as developing templates that could be helpful in future years.

## **Yakima Basin Integrated Plan – Technical Projects Update**

Below are descriptions of the projects on which staff provided updates, along with their project managers and associated agencies. Questions are presented under each project as they arose during the presentation.

**Dave Brown, City of Yakima – [Nelson Dam Removal Project](#):** The dam and fish ladder are now gone, and crews have started to work on the roughened channel and finishing up the sluice channel. Once done, the sheet pile and sandbags will be removed. Photos of recent progress are included in the meeting materials. To-date, the project has come in very close to budget.

Q: Regarding the City of Yakima's Aquifer Storage and Recovery project, how many acre feet are you authorized to store? Does that include carryover storage, as well?

*Dave Brown: The permit allows us to store up to 14,000 acre-feet each year. This does not include the carryover. Once stored, we can store it up to 10 years, since we lose about 10% each year. Though we could store as much as 14,000 acre-feet, we probably would be averaging closer to storing 4,000–5,000 acre-feet a year.*

**Joel Freudenthal, Yakima County – Naches Cowiche Confluence Park:** The County has acquired several parcels along the Lower Naches River to develop a 163-acre park adjacent to the City of Yakima with pathways connecting to the existing Yakima Greenway Mainline. It would be an open-space park with a potential raft/kayak/boat launch. The removal of Nelson Dam allows public/recreators' access to 9 miles of river. The park is consistent with and enhances existing public purposes and large adjacent public ownerships. It would require little change in existing site conditions, except for restoration actions and improvements such as parking and trails.

Q: What would the long-term maintenance cost be for this park?

*Joel Freudenthal: Do not foresee much cost for ongoing maintenance for park, since a lot of the area will be unimproved and not see high-intensity uses. One option is to create a cooperative organization to do future maintenance.*

Q: Was the \$20 million budget estimate just for the Nelson Dam project or the park, as well?

*Dave Brown: The funds were only for the dam removal project and reconstruction of the channel.*

**Kelsey Harbick, Yakama Nation – Toppenish Creek Passage Barrier Assessment:** The goals of the assessment are to (1) create a comprehensive inventory of instream features in Lower Toppenish Creek, (2) assess features for fish passage, (3) shed light on why juvenile steelhead survival is so low (25%), and (4) prioritize problem features for correction. Most of the spawning occurs at the end of creek, which highlights the importance of clearing passage through the creek. The assessment will focus on the barriers leading up to spawning areas. Survey methods focused mostly on kayak surveys or walking sections not navigable by kayak. The team is developing an online map of the barriers, similar to one that the State of Washington has created for other creeks in Washington. The team has been focused on identifying areas of potential improvement, including screen additions or improvements, as well as culvert improvements. Once complete, they will prioritize which barriers need to be improved first. Presentation including photos taken during kayak surveys are included in the meeting materials.

C: Sean Gross, given all the restoration opportunities out there, passage should be a tier 1 (high priority) opportunity. I appreciate you identifying the things that we can fix or remove.

Q: What are water temperatures like?

*Danielle Squeochs: We've been measuring temperatures for a while now. Tom Elliott's team will collaborate with water users to understand what is going on and address any temperature issues. There are five monitors measuring temperatures year-round.*

Q: Will water quality be a factor in prioritizing projects?

*Kelsey Harbick: Water quality is definitely considered part of the passage issue. We will consider this as we go forward.*

## **General Public Comments**

**David Ortman:** While salmon restoration in the Pacific Northwest remains a high priority, recent news articles have glossed over and ignored fundamental facts and flaws with the Yakima “Plan.”

Modifying the dam gates at Lake Cle Elum and constructing juvenile fish passage was authorized by Congress in 1994 (along with irrigation water conservation targets that have still not been met), nearly 30 years ago, long before there ever was a Yakima “Plan.”

The 2014 State of Washington Water Research Center’s “Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Projects” found that based on moderate climate and market outcomes, the Cle Elum Pool Raise project returns a benefit of only 62 cents for every dollar spent. Furthermore, the additional water from the pool raise was deemed by Congress as not part of the Yakima River Basin Total Water Supply Available, contrary to the 1945 Federal Court Consent Decree, and may be vulnerable to appropriation by Senior Yakima Basin irrigation districts.

Contrary to statements that the Cle Elum project removes fish barriers, the project continues to rely on an adult collection facility at the base of the dam’s spillway and on truck and haul to overcome the

existing Cle Elum Dam, which remains a barrier to returning salmon. In addition, the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars spent on a Rube Goldberg engineering helix will be for naught if salmon are unable to return to Lake Cle Elum due to high temperatures in the Lower Columbia and Lower Yakima Rivers. This is not a model for the Yakima River Basin, much less anywhere else in the country.

Yakima Plan supporters lobbied Congress heavily for a pipeline from Lake Keechelus to Lake Kachess, only to abandon it after Congress authorized the project in 2019. Salmon restoration that relies on engineering to add helixes, pipes, and truck hauling to the Yakima River Basin is moving in the wrong direction, far from the natural system before dams that produced millions of salmon for free, without hatcheries, helixes, pipes, and truck hauling. For free.

**John Reeves:** Shared a copy of a letter to the editor that he submitted to the *Seattle Times* in response to the reprinted *New York Times* article. He is concerned that the article did not mention Kachess, K2 pipeline and that water conservation targets have not been met. He wondered why the Plauche Carr law firm was hired to work on YRBWEP since the firm hired an attorney who used to represent the opposition. He wondered if it is fair that the “Integrated Plan” took credit for funding projects when the funds come from agencies or other sources. He asked for a Kachess Tier 2 environmental review status and update.

*Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District Manager: The Kachess Tier 2 environmental review is still in process. The District continues to coordinate with the Yakama Nation and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on all steps involved in this review.*

**Scott Nicolai:** Whole-heartedly agrees with the *New York Times* article. He requested a streamlined process for getting projects approved on federal land. He wonders if the State of Washington could take over watershed stewardship in coordination with local tribes. He noted that a World War II level of effort is needed to mobilize and streamline efforts to make improvements in the area.

## **Yakama Nation Fisheries Strategy and Recent Community Events**

David Blodgett, Yakama Nation, shared the Yakama Nation strategies for the Nation’s Comprehensive Salmon Recovery Strategy, a long-term strategy to promote and implement real actions that lead to the protection and enhancement of healthy and harvestable salmon populations in the Columbia River basin. To achieve this, there are several major elements that must be accomplished: (1) get Yakama Nation fish co-managers back in the driver’s seat for fish management, (2) obtain funding and make progress on the billion-dollar backlog of projects and management efforts that can be implemented, (3) dam breaching, and (4) develop an energy future that doesn’t lay the burden solely on tribes and natural resources.

Elements of the billion-dollar backlog include:

- Outstanding production obligations/mitigation
- Deferred maintenance for hatchery infrastructure
- Increased habitat restoration efforts
- Fish passage and barrier removal
- Predation management
- Sediment dredging and management caused by the dams

Recently, the Yakama Nation has held several events to celebrate successes and do community outreach. David shared his appreciation for those who helped put on the Honoring Chamna event held on September 1 in Richland, WA.

### **Municipal Water Supply Update and Next Steps**

Arden Thomas, Kittitas County, provided an update on behalf of the Municipal Use Subgroup. Arden started by thanking David Brown, City of Yakima, on his leadership with this effort. She then reminded the Workgroup on the Integrated Water Resource Management Plan Purpose and Need: the current water resources infrastructure, programs, and policies in the Yakima River basin have not been capable of consistently meeting aquatic resource demands for fish and wildlife habitat, dry-year irrigation demands, and municipal water supply demands. Initially, the assumption was that domestic wells were groundwater-sourced and constituted a small overall usage. As studies were completed, it was shown that domestic wells in Benton and Kittitas County had a proportionally large use of available water supply. Kittitas, Yakima, and Benton counties have all worked to purchase senior water rights and require domestic groundwater wells to have meters. With new housing developments, Kittitas County is currently working with the private developers to transport, mitigate, and monitor water use to ensure long-term water availability. Currently there are grant opportunities from the State of Washington to purchase senior water rights and expand water banking services.

To date, municipal water supply progress includes City of Yakima Aquifer Storage and Recovery, the Ellensburg groundwater proposal, the Heritage Garden Program, and a public-private partnership consumptive use study. The current subgroup draft workplan: (1) identify and quantify vulnerabilities and need, (2) leverage existing review processes at cities and counties, and (3) conduct outreach to local municipalities.

### **Senator Jim Honeyford Recognition**

Tom Tebb, on behalf of the YRBWEP Workgroup, thanked Senator Honeyford for his 28 years of elected public service. He has been instrumental in passing key legislation that has advanced and improved water resources in the Yakima Basin for the future, including the passing of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan state authorizing legislation and several funding bills. Wendy Christensen, on behalf of the Bureau of Reclamation, expressed thanks for his support of efforts in the basin. Workgroup members then shared their appreciation individually for the Senator's elected service and support for the YBIP.

Senator Jim Honeyford expressed his gratitude for the recognition and the effort the Workgroup has made in the Yakima Basin to accomplish all that has been done.

### **Roundtable Discussion**

Cory Wright, Kittitas County, noted that the municipal water supply topic is an important one for the county. He encouraged the Workgroup to continue to support efforts to resolve the municipal water problem.

Sid Morrison, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance, highlighted that storage is a part of the Integrated Plan and encouraged the Workgroup to continue pursuing solutions and next steps to accomplish storage goals.

Lisa Pelly expressed her gratitude for being invited to the (Yakama Nation – Honoring) Chamna celebration event. She noted that additional informational signage about Yakima Delta restoration’s significance could be used in the nearby area.

Sean Gross shared his appreciation for Michael Porter, Chris Perra, and Kelly Clayton, and their efforts supporting the grant writing to secure funds for Yakima Delta Restoration.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

The next Workgroup meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 14, 2022. The meeting is currently scheduled to be at the Yakima Valley Community College Conference Center from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

## **Attendance**

### **Workgroup Members:**

Adam Fyall, Benton County

Arden Thomas, Kittitas County (alternate for Cory Wright)

Alex Conley, Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board

Bill Gale, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Brandon Parson, American Rivers

Cory Wright, Kittitas County

Danielle Squeochs, Confederated Tribes and Band of the Yakama Nation

Dave Brown, City of Yakima

Jaclyn 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)

Kathryn Furr, U.S. Forest Service

Larry Leach, Washington Department of Natural Resources

Lisa Pelly, Trout Unlimited

Lori Brady, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District

Mike Livingston, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Peter Dykstra, Chair of Watershed Lands Conservation Subcommittee

Rick Dieker, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District

Ron Anderson, Yakima County

Sean Gross, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District and Chair of Water Use Subcommittee

Sid Morrison, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance

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

**Other Attendees:**

Alan Chapman  
Andy Hart, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Annie Byerley  
Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting  
Candy McKinley, Bureau of Reclamation  
Charles Klarich  
Charlie de la Chapelle, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance  
Chris Maykut, Friends of Bumping Lake  
Chris Perra, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Christina Frantz, Washington Department of Natural Resources  
Chuck Freeman, Kennewick Irrigation District  
Cynthia Carlstad, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants  
Dave Blodgett, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation  
Dave Empel, Bureau of Reclamation  
Dave Fisher, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
David Ortman  
David Reeploeg, Tri-City Development Council  
Dennis Sandstrom, HDR, Inc.  
Derek Sandison, Washington Department of Agriculture  
Devin Stoker, Jacobs Engineering  
Diani Taylor, YBIP Funding Coordinator, Plauche & Carr LLP  
Ed Lisowski  
Elaine Packard  
Emily Tasaka, Washington Department of Ecology  
Janine Empel, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office  
Jean Mendoza  
Jeanne Sheldon  
Jenna Scholz, HDR, Inc.  
Jerrod MacPherson, Benton County  
Jim Milton, Yakima Tieton Irrigation District  
Joe Blodgett, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation  
Joel Hubble, Kittitas Reclamation District  
John Marvin, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
John Reeves, Lake Kachess HOA  
John Stuhlmiller, Washington State Water Resources Association  
Justin Bezold, Trout Unlimited  
Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District  
Kerri Matthews, Bureau of Reclamation  
Kelsey Martin Harbick, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Kevin Hayden, Washington State Department of Ecology

Laine Young, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Larry Martin, Velikanje Halvorson  
Madi Roy, Washington State Department of Agriculture  
Melissa Downes, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Michael Porter, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation  
Mike Schwisow  
Mitch Long, Kittitas Conservation Trust  
Patricia Byers, City of Yakima  
Peter McEnderfer, Benton County  
Raelene Gold, League of Women Voters of Washington  
Richard Visser, Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office  
Rick Evans, Office of Senator Maria Cantwell  
Robert Montgomery, Anchor QEA  
Rodney Heit, South Yakima Conservation District  
Ron Cowin, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District  
Ryan Roberts, Bureau of Reclamation  
Sara Vickers, Kittitas Reclamation District  
Scott Nicolai  
Sonja Kokos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Steve Malloch, Western Water Futures, LLC (alternate for American Rivers)  
Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation Water Resources  
Tim Poppleton, Washington State Department of Ecology  
Todd Newsome, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Tom Appler, Bureau of Reclamation  
Tom Elliott, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation  
Troy Havens, Yakima County  
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](mailto:ben@whitebluffsconsulting.com).