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Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant and Keechelus Reservoir-to-Kachess Reservoir Conveyance Projects

UPDATE – In January 2015, the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, and Washington State Department of Ecology, Office of Columbia River, issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant (KDRPP) and Keechelus Reservoir-to-Kachess Reservoir Conveyance (KKC) Projects. After considering the comments contained in hundreds of letters from the public, Reclamation and Ecology are reopening the comment period for an additional 60 days. During that time, four additional public meetings will be held:

May 4: Hal Holmes Center in Ellensburg, 1:30-3:30 p.m. and 5-7 p.m.

May 5: U.S. Forest Service Ranger District office in Cle Elum, 1:30-3:30 p.m. and 5-7 p.m.

The new comment period will end June 15, 2015. A Final EIS will be prepared after all comments have been addressed. Then, a decision will be made regarding which alternative will be selected. Before any project can be implemented, Congress would still need to provide authorization and funding.

WE HEARD YOUR CONCERNS!

Groundwater – You told us you are concerned that additional drawdowns could affect your wells. Water levels at Kachess already undergo annual fluctuation without any known impacts to existing wells or aquifers. During drought years, the proposed pumping plant would draw the reservoir down further. Reclamation and Ecology are reexamining any potential impacts of the drawdown on wells.

Property Values – Many of you expressed concern over potential decline in long-term property values resulting from the operational changes at Kachess Reservoir. Reclamation and Ecology are reevaluating potential impacts on property.

Cost and Benefits – The proposed projects are components of the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Management Plan (Integrated Plan). The Integrated Plan as a whole has undergone economic analyses. Some of the other analyses focused only on the KDRPP and KKC Projects, without recognizing the value of the synergistic effects of Integrated Plan projects working together. The Integrated Plan—as a whole—meets and surpasses all Federal benefit-cost criteria.

Background – The KDRPP and KKC projects would:

- Help provide up to 70% of proratable water rights—the minimum amount of water needed by agriculture for perennial crops to survive—in drought years.
- Deliver up to an additional 200,000 acre-feet of water from Kachess Reservoir during drought years by tapping into water that is stored below the current outlet.
- Help refill Kachess Reservoir after droughts with water transferred from Keechelus Reservoir that would not otherwise be captured due the storage limitations of Keechelus.
- Normalize flows in the Yakima River for fish, including Chinook and steelhead.
- Implement the bull trout enhancement package of aquatic habitat enhancements and assessments to improve the abundance and resiliency of bull trout populations in the Yakima River basin.

Purpose – For over a century, Kachess and Keechelus reservoirs have supplied irrigation to farmers in the Yakima basin. However, during drought years, demand for irrigation water in the Yakima basin exceeds the current supply. In addition, the expectation of climate change makes increased storage capacity and improved flexibility for managing water supplies vitally important. Agriculture provides \$3.2 billion in annual income into the Washington State economy.



Kachess Reservoir during current low pool