

Summary of Federal Advisory Committee Meeting

Committee Name: Yakima River Basin Conservation Advisory Group (CAG)
Designated Federal Officer: Gwendolyn Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation, YRBWEP Manager
Chair: Gwendolyn Christensen
Meeting Dates: February 25, 2019
Meeting Location: 1917 Marsh Rd., Yakima WA
Summary of Meeting:

All six members and the alternate were present. Gwendolyn Christensen welcomed all in attendance and reviewed the CAG purpose to advise Reclamation and Ecology on conservation projects associated with Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Title XII legislation.

CAG History:

Tom Ring, a longtime employee of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakima Nation), and formerly the CAG alternate for the Yakima Nation, presented an all-inclusive history of the CAG. Tom started with Title XII YRBWEP Public Law 103-434, authorizing the CAG as established under section 1203. Each CAG member is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior and consists of one representative from each of the following: a nonproratable irrigator; a proratable irrigator; a Yakama Nation representative; an environmental-interest representative; a Washington State University Agricultural Extension Service representative; and one representative from Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Legislation defines the duties and qualifications of the advisory committee members as found in section 1203 of Title XII Public Law 103-434. See

<https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/authorization/amended-legislation.pdf>

The Basin Conservation Plan was the first task for CAG and was completed in 1998 with 14 conclusions and recommendations for the Yakima River basin. See <https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/phase2/basinconplan.pdf>

Since the CAG inception, members have been instrumental in many other projects, activities, and publications:

- Establishment of a Permanent Plan for Measuring and Reporting
- CAG and Water Master Function Measuring, Monitoring, Reporting and Enforcement
- CAG and Water and Land Acquisition Program
- CAG Process for Streamlining Water Transfers and Water Transfer Working Group
- Acquisition of right to use Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District 1/3 saved water for instream flow use most years
- Relocation of Benton Irrigation District's diversion downstream (72 miles) with construction of new pumping plant

Conserved Water:

Conserved water to date (as of 2019) is approximately 47,000 acre-feet for instream flows and approximately 16,500 acre-feet for enhanced irrigation supply (total of 69,000 acre-feet when SDBOC Phase II is completed). This is an increase of 3,000 acre-feet over that reported in 2017. When all projects under agreement are completed, realized conserved water is approximately 108,366 acre-feet (includes KRD conserved water).

- 1994 legislation target was not less than 165,000 acre-feet annually.

Tributary Program:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife supports YRBWEP projects including project permitting and authorization processes.
- Monitor pit tagged fish for KRD supplementation program, Toppenish and Wenas Creeks, Rimrock system (North and South Fork Tieton, Indian Creek and Clear Creek Dam), including survival, fish passage and contribute to trap and haul for Rimrock system, Bumping, Kachess and Keechelus.
- Assist partners with survey work for North Fork Tieton Bull Trout subpopulations.

Flood Plain Properties:

Nine properties purchased over 9 years. Approximately 1800 acres and 4000 acre-feet obtained water rights, most converted to instream flow. Actively managing and performing restoration on all properties. Heart K Kiosk signage boards are complete and will be installed this spring. Schaake design phase is complete, construction schedule to begin, spring 2019.

Cle Elum Pool Raise:

14,600 acre-feet for Yakima River instream flows. Radial gates are complete. Work in 2019 will be shoreline protection at Timber Cover and Wish Poosh shoreline protection must be completed prior to reservoir fill, target date is 2025.

Cle Elum Dam Fish Passage:

Secant Pile contract is complete. Fish passage tunnel construction is underway with contract completion 2020. Other components of the fish passage are under construction, (i.e., gate/helix and intakes).

Ecology Projects Update:

Yakima Basin Integrated Plan has seven elements and includes a water conservation element. This element strives to improve water delivery and drought resiliency. 85,000 acre-feet will be conserved in the Initial Development Phase. These projects include canal lining, canal sealing, improved water management and delivery. Expenditures to date approximately \$11.8 million for approximately cost of \$1,025 per acre feet.

Sunnyside Division Board of Control:

Water conservation projects began 2003 including SCADA, lateral piping, and to date 39,000 acre-feet of water conservation has been realized. Showed construction photos of on-going conservation projects including blasting sections of pipeline alignment.

Wapato Irrigation Project:

Original diversion was constructed in 1897, one of the oldest irrigation systems in the basin. WIP is the largest Indian Irrigation Project in the United States and the largest Irrigation Project in the Yakima Basin. Conservation projects are being implemented throughout the reservation with assistance from Ecology, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Reclamation. Currently working on canal lining and piping projects with installation of flow meters and groundwater recharge.

Kittitas Reclamation District:

Stream supplementation began in 2015 with 23,108 acre-feet diverted during irrigation season to supplement important fish bearing tributaries to the Yakima River.

Piping and canal lining projects have conserved approximately 4,638 acre-feet of water, with a projected 12,635-acre feet conserved upon project completion.

Kennewick Irrigation District:

Has been working through WaterSmart funding for water conservation and is on their fourth grant doing canal lining and sealing.

Recommendations:**Member Discussion:**

Troy Peters - Important to continue looking for ways to conserve water through groundwater storage, water marketing and taking advantage of the large spring runoffs.

Lisa Pelly - The new Farm Bill has new language for projects with irrigation districts for future conserved water.

Elizabeth Torrey – great to have an overview of CAG history and the conservation efforts in the basin.

Phil Rigdon – we need to emphasize more the work that has been accomplished, we don't spend enough time talking about that. The key to success is the ability to continue to work together and find solutions cooperatively. You see this in the work that KRD is doing with supplementation, we want to continue to push for other conservation, as we do not want to leave anyone behind.

Ecology, Yakama Nation Input:

Tom Tebb – appreciates everyone coming and presenting. It gave a good sense of the various components and seeing it was very informative. There is a lot more work to do. Thanks to all the folks that have dedicated their time and careers to this effort.

Tom Ring – mentioned Stuart Crane as someone else who has put a lot of time and effort into the CAG over the years.

Melissa – Ecology has found funding for two irrigation districts that presented at the last CAG meeting in October 2017. Although their projects did not fit under Title XII YRBWEP, exposure to other funding opportunities were highlighted and Ecology was able to assist both Union Gap Irrigation District and Selah-Moxee Irrigation district for improvements and water conservation efforts.

Wendy – Hope we have shown everyone how we are maximizing conservation that can be accomplished using YRBWEP Title XII legislation.

Public Comments:

Ann, Friend of Bumping Lake – thanks the CAG members, stating that any water conserved can work toward saving the lakes.

David Ortman, Seattle Washington has the following comments –

1. The CAG was established to provide recommendations to the Secretary and the State of Washington (State) on the structure and implementation of the Yakima River Basin Water Conservation Program. The basin conservation program is structured to provide economic incentives with cooperative Federal, State, and local funding to stimulate the identification and implementation of structural and nonstructural cost-effective water conservation measures in the Yakima River basin. Improvements in the efficiency of water delivery and use will result in improved stream flows for fish and wildlife and improve the reliability of water supplies for irrigation. Given the limited amount of time (three hours) for what appears to be an annual CAG meeting, please do not take up time with non-CAG related presentation such as Lake Cle Elum fish passage or floodplain reports.

Response: Thank you for your feedback, however, Reclamation and Ecology think it is valuable to provide a summary of all work that is authorized by Title XII to provide context to the group of all the work being accomplished in relationship to the Basin Conservation Plan.

2. The 1994 authorized water conservation targets are found in Sec. 1201(4): to realize sufficient water savings from the Yakima River Basin Water Conservation Program so that 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;

According to the Bureau's letter of September 4, 2015, under the 1994 authorized Basin Conservation Plan, they have achieved **only** 40,000-acre feet of water savings for instream flows and 13,000-acre feet for irrigation. In addition, two districts have not installed water measuring devices.

See: http://ucrsierraclub.org/pdf/Yakima_BuRec_accomplishments_YRBWEP_letter_9-4-2015.pdf

Why has the CAG not been able to reach even these modest water conservation goals after a quarter of a century?

Which irrigation districts have still not installed water measuring devices?

Why are there still not water marketing programs for the Wapato, Sunnyside, Yakima – Tieton, and Kennewick Irrigation Districts, which have a mix of proratable and non-proratable water rights and could provide an in-district water market?

Response: Total conservation is approximately 69,000 acre-feet for YRBWEP. The ultimate amount conserved is anticipated to be approximately 108,000 acre-feet. The Title XII has constraints of adding to flows at Parker, thus, not all the conservation plans developed meet that objective, so they have not been funded by Title XII; however, they may be funded under the

Yakima Basin Integrated Plan or Public Law 116-9 which was enacted March 12, 2019. More information to follow.

3. Have the adopted irrigation district water conservation plans been updated? If so, when? Why does the Bureau's website on the CAG have nothing posted more recent than 2005? <https://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/phase2/cag.html>

Response – Reclamation is in the process of updating our website. We appreciate your patience.

4. How has the CAG addressed the following two studies?

- First, the *Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast 2016 Legislative Report*:^[1]

“...agricultural water demand—which accounts for approximately 79.4 percent of total out-of-stream demand (agricultural plus municipal)—is forecast to **decrease** by approximately 4.96 percent (± 0.81 percent) by 2035, across the entire Columbia River Basin. This decrease is somewhat greater within Washington, where it is forecast to reach 6.87 percent (± 0.98 percent) (Table ES-2).” (emphasis added) *Ex. Summary, page x*. See: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1612001.pdf>

- Second, is the *Evaluation with Recommendations by the Washington State Academy of Sciences of Interim Report: 2015 Drought and Agriculture, Washington State Department of Agriculture, December 2016*:

“The economic effects of the 2015 drought described in this interim report are based on gross rather than net revenue lost. This can account for an incongruity between the estimated gross revenue lost stated in this report and the fact that **net farm income for Washington in 2015 was higher than in any of the previous four years by a significant amount.**” (emphasis added), page 2.

See: <https://agr.wa.gov/FP/Pubs/docs/495-2015DroughtReport.pdf>

These reports demonstrate that a number of critical assumptions that have been built into the Yakima Plan are inaccurate and these assumptions underpin the conclusions that currently drive the Yakima Plan approach. Continued pursuit of very expansive and damaging proposals such as a new Bumping Lake or Wymer dam, or the Lake Kachess Pumping plant are taking us in the wrong direction.

5. The Yakima Plan FPEIS at page 1-6 states that a water supply of 70 percent of proratable water rights during a drought year would provide a minimally acceptable supply to prevent severe economic losses to farmers. If this same 70 percent principle were supplied to the non-proratable acre-feet of water provided to the Sunnyside, Yakima-Tieton, Kennewick, and Wapato irrigation districts, this would result in nearly 200,000 acre-feet less of water demand. Why isn't this alternative being considered before embarking on structural alternatives?

^[1] Submitted to Washington State Department of Ecology pursuant to RCW 90.90.040 by: WSU, State of Washington Water Research Center, Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, Biological Systems Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, School of Economic Science, PO Box 643002, Pullman, A 99164-3002.

- Short meeting it would be helpful if you would not spend time on things not related to conservation. Spend more time on things like what Rosa is doing
- 165,000 acre-feet of water savings?
- Water marketing – would have liked to hear more about that
- Have the irrigation plans that were approved ever been updated
- CAG website has not had anything posted to since 19?
- Columbia basin water basin supply forecast – decrease by 5 percent in the next 15 years
- Look at the final programmatic EIS from 2012. Proratable districts said they could get by with 75 percent of their water in a year. 115,000 acre-feet of water could be generated by this?

Decisions: No subcommittees needed at this time.

Comments: No Comments

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