

## ODESSA SUBAREA SPECIAL STUDY

Columbia Basin Project

## STUDY UPDATE

December 2009

### Background of the Odessa Subarea Special Study

The Odessa Subarea Special Study is investigating the possibility of continuing phased development of the Columbia Basin Project to deliver surface water from the project to lands currently using groundwater in the Odessa Subarea. The Odessa Subarea Special Study will not address the full development of the Columbia Basin Project at this time. The aquifer in the Odessa Subarea is declining to such an extent that the ability of farmers to irrigate their crops is at risk. Domestic, commercial, municipal, and industrial uses and water quality are also being affected.

In response to the public's concern about the declining aquifer and associated economic and other effects, Congress has authorized funding for Reclamation to investigate the problem. The State of Washington, represented by the Department of Ecology (Ecology), and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) are the co-leads in the Odessa Special Study. Reclamation and Ecology will jointly prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which complies with both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements. Reclamation and Ecology are also cost-share partners for the Study.

### What alternatives will Reclamation investigate?

Reclamation and Ecology have identified alternatives through a public scoping and appraisal study process. Alternatives consist of combinations of two water delivery options and three water supply options. The EIS will address impacts of these alternatives on environmental, economic, and social resources in the Odessa Subarea. Resources likely to be impacted from the alternatives include agriculture, power production, fisheries, municipal water supply, industrial water supply, water quality, wildlife, and transportation.

Water delivery options include an expanded East Low Canal with a 2.5-mile extension that would provide surface water to 57,069 acres south of Interstate-90 (I-90) and east of the East Low Canal by a system of pipe laterals and pumping plants.

The second option would provide surface water to 45,545 acres currently irrigated with groundwater north of I-90 and east of the East Low Canal. This alternative includes construction of the East High Canal from above Billy Clapp Lake to a point about 15 miles east of Moses Lake, construction of the Black Rock reregulation reservoir, and construction of the Black Rock Branch Canal from the proposed Black Rock reregulating reservoir to about 21 miles east of Moses Lake, Washington. Water will be delivered

via a system of pumping plants and pipe laterals to irrigate land from Billy Clapp Lake to I-90.

Water supply options include an additional drawdown of Banks Lake (up to 18 feet), construction of a reservoir in Rocky Coulee (117,900 acre-feet active storage), use of additional water from Lake Roosevelt, or combinations of all three.

The alternatives have been selected to:

- Reduce irrigation use from the Odessa Subarea aquifer,
- Maximize the use of existing infrastructure capabilities, and
- Retain the possibility of full Columbia Basin Project development in the future.

### **What is the study area?**

The study will focus on lands currently irrigated with groundwater in Adams and Grant Counties and small portions of Lincoln and Franklin Counties. The study area is within the Columbia Basin Project boundary and is generally defined by the area bounded on the west by the Project's East Low Canal, on the east by the City of Lind, extending north to Wilson Creek and south to the Connell area. Previous Reclamation studies have determined that these lands have irrigation development potential. The study area is located within the Odessa groundwater subarea as designated by the Washington Department of Ecology.

### **What documents will be prepared?**

Reclamation will publish several technical reports and other documents describing the decisionmaking process. Reclamation and Ecology have hired a contractor to prepare a joint EIS and a biological assessment. Reclamation is preparing a special report that

will describe the alternatives considered and display a feasibility-level cost estimate and economic analyses required by Federal law and policy. The economic portion of the report will consist of a benefit-cost analysis and a regional economic impacts analysis. The special report will also contain the selection of an agency preferred alternative. A Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report and Biological Assessment will also be available with the Draft and Final EIS.

### **How long will this study take?**

The Draft EIS is anticipated to be released to the public in the summer of 2010. After receiving and responding to the comments on the Draft EIS, Reclamation and Ecology expect to release the Final EIS in the summer of 2011. In addition to the EIS, the Special Report and pertinent technical reports, will be prepared and made available to the public.

### **An overview of the Reclamation's Columbia Basin Project**

The Columbia Basin Project, located in central Washington, was authorized for the irrigation of 1,029,000 acres. Currently, the Project serves about 671,000 acres in Grant, Adams, and Franklin and Walla Walla Counties. The multipurpose project provides irrigation, power production, flood control, municipal water supply, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Irrigated acreage was developed primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, with some acreage added sporadically until 1985.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

We will continue to provide updates about study progress and the availability of reports and other study documents. If you have any comments or questions, please contact:

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You may also sign up with Ecology's list serve at  
<http://listserv.wa.gov/archives/cwp.html> to receive updates and information.