

Meeting Summary

We had about 25 people attend the water buying meeting on 5/28/08 at the Yakima Ecology office. I began the meeting by giving a brief background on where we've been and what Ecology has done thus far to acquire water. I passed out drafts of a letter addressed to senior water right holders, a press release, and newspaper ads. These drafts are attached here; feel free to send along your comments. They will be finalized and sent out in the next few weeks. We had a lot of great questions during the presentation and I will go through them here:

1. **Should we contact water right attorneys to see if they can identify water for sale?** It never hurts to put the word out to more groups of people. I'll try to find an appropriate contact through the Washington Bar Association. Let me know if you have other suggestions.
2. **How many eligible senior irrigation water right holders are there (not including irrigation districts and companies)?** There are roughly 1000 senior water rights above Parker Dam. Some individuals own multiple water rights.
3. **Has Yakima Superior Court indicated they will order exempt wells to shut off in drought years?** There has been talk about the impact of exempt wells outside of the adjudication, but the court has not made any rulings on this issue.
4. **Can we work with irrigation districts to buy water that they save through conservation projects?** In most cases, conveyance improvements are being made that save non-consumptive water. Instead we are looking for consumptive water in which lands are taken out of production or converted to lower duty crops/uses. We are currently discussing ways we can work with irrigation districts.
5. **How many acres worth of irrigation do we need to fix the problem?** In the Legislative report we estimated that 200 ac-ft per year is needed to mitigate for all out of priority domestic surface water use. This total includes bigger water users like the town of South Cle Elum. Also, the total is based on assumptions that recreational cabins are occupied half of the time and using 100 gallons per day. These assumptions may overestimate water use, but we wanted to err on the high side. As far as how many acres that equates to...it depends. For example, in some places, the court confirmed as much as 15 ac-ft per acre for alfalfa, and in others only 4 ac-ft per acre is used. At 4 ac-ft per acre, we would need 50 acres of irrigation to cover the 200 ac-ft per year needed.

Thank you for attending the meeting and asking thoughtful questions. We will be moving forward with our new ad campaign in the next few weeks. I will keep sending updates periodically.

Feel free to call or e-mail if you have any questions.

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