

**Columbia River Policy Advisory Group**  
Ellensburg, Washington  
August 18, 2006

The following people attended the first meeting of the Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (“the Group”):

*Participants:*

Dale Bambrick, National Marine Fisheries Service  
Jon Culp, Washington State Conservation Commission  
Cindy Custer, Bonneville Power Administration  
Steve Dauma, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Dick Erickson, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District  
Jim Fredericks, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Rick George, Umatilla Tribes  
Bill Gray, Bureau of Reclamation  
Tony Grover, NW Power Council  
Bob Hammond, City of Kennewick  
Joe Lukas, Grant County PUD  
Rob Masonis, American Rivers  
Gerry O’Keefe, Department of Ecology  
Darryl Olsen, Columbia-Snake Rivers Irrigators Association  
Merrill Ott, Stevens County Commission  
Gary Passmore, Colville Tribes  
Lisa Pelly, Washington Rivers Conservancy  
Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation  
Derek Sandison, Department of Ecology  
Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League  
John Stuhlmiller, Washington State Farm Bureau

*Others in attendance:*

Myra Clark, Colville Tribes  
Debbie Colbert, Oregon Water Resources Department  
Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation  
Amanda Cronin, Washington Water Trust  
Andrew Grassell, Chelan County PUD  
Representative Bill Hinkle, 13<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
Ron Hull, Grant Conservation District  
David Johnson, Chelan County PUD  
Milt Johnston, Department of Natural Resources  
Dan McDonald, MWH Global  
David McClure, Klickitat County  
Elizabeth McManus, facilitator  
Joye Redfield-Wilder, Department of Ecology

Tom Ring, Yakama Nation  
Dan Silver, facilitator  
Paul Stoker, Ground Water Management Area  
Mike Watson, consultant to Colville Tribes

Dan Silver welcomed the Group and asked each participant to share his or her initial thoughts and perspectives about the group. The most common response was that people thought the Group was a good opportunity for a collaborative approach to regional water issues.

Rob Masonis, Mike Schwisow, and John Stuhlmiller presented perspectives on the passage of ESSHB 2860 which established the Columbia River basin water supply development program and directed Ecology to aggressively pursue development of water supplies to benefit both in-stream and out-of-stream uses. A small set of people negotiated the terms of the final bill. One key to the agreement is that the negotiating parties agreed to set aside the debate over science associated with in-stream flow. Instead, they all recognized a need to provide for both in-stream flow interests and for the out-of-stream water needs of the communities in the basin. The bill establishes a formula that provides that 2/3 of new water storage shall be made available for out-of-stream needs and 1/3 will be kept for in-stream needs.

The bill emphasizes that progress developing new water supplies should be made on both through water storage and conservation. In addition to funding, the bill created several new tools including voluntary regional agreements, a water supply and demand forecast, and a new water resources information system.

The Legislature also created an expanded role for Ecology. In addition to being a regulator of water supply, Ecology is also a catalyst and advocate for new water supplies necessary to meet in-stream and out-of-stream needs.

Elizabeth McManus led a discussion of the draft charter for the Group. The purpose of the Group is to create a forum for Ecology to talk with parties about key Columbia River water resource management issues and for parties to build understanding of one another's perspectives and identify areas of common interest. Consensus will be sought but is not required. An Executive Committee of John Stuhlmiller, Merrill Ott, Phil Rigdon, and Rob Masonis will help coordinate the meetings and assist with setting meeting agendas. Membership on the Executive Committee may rotate over time.

The Group discussed the potential role of watershed planning groups as well as the need to provide for communicate to and from to watershed planning groups. Two additional county commissioners will be named to the Group. The county commissioners will discuss various means of involving watershed and salmon recovery groups at their next meeting.

Derek Sandison, regional director of Ecology for central Washington, briefed the Group on the programmatic EIS now underway. Ecology has hosted four scoping meetings and

received numerous comments. It anticipates issuing a draft EIS in October and a final EIS in early 2007. The EIS is an umbrella document that will cover a wide number of programmatic issues and address several ongoing projects. In the programmatic area, Derek articulated five key policy issues being addressed in the EIS:

- 1) Funding criteria for storage and conservation projects
- 2) Options for determining net water savings from conservation
- 3) Mechanisms for processing Voluntary Regional Agreements
- 4) Defining “no negative impact” to flows of the Columbia and Snake Rivers
- 5) Methods for delineating the one-mile zone around the Columbia and Snake River mainstems.

Derek sought members’ perspectives on whether Ecology should initiate rulemaking on changes in the issuance of water rights, particularly for people covered by voluntary regional agreements, and/or project funding. The Group offered a number of perspectives and requested a briefing on the legal considerations from the Attorney General’s Office. The Group also agreed that it would be a useful enterprise to seek a consensus on preferred alternatives in the EIS.

Dick Erickson, Phil Ridgon, and Jon Culp offered some initial perspectives on project funding criteria. Dick recounted efforts to get additional water to the Odessa sub-area of the Columbia Basin development project. He identified 49 conservation projects that generated water for the Odessa project, for fish, and for municipal and industrial uses. A great deal of work has been done already to prepare to provide significant new water to Odessa via the infrastructure of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District.

Phil Ridgon described several of the paramount conditions of the Treaty of 1855, including the reserved rights the Tribe has for fish in the Columbia system. Restoring salmon is an imperative. The Yakama Nation did not support the bill creating this new program and was offended at how the final bill language was negotiated by a small group of people that did not include tribes. The Nation is, however, now at the table seeking a collaborative approach to implementation and to responsible development of new water supplies. Good project criteria would include a good return on the money (bang for the buck), an appropriate use of funds for conservation, leveraging monies from other parties and should provide multiple uses including conserved water for fish.

Jon Culp recounted his work with the Conservation Commission on project funding. His initial sense is that small off-channel storage projects would provide the best bang for the buck. The funding should be spent on true conservation, for both on farm and environmental benefit. Projects should emphasize multiple benefits. They should involve local input. The best way to implement project funding is to clearly define expectations up front about the criteria and discourage projects from being submitted that don’t meet the criteria. The best way to implement the program would be to work through local conservation districts, providing a buffer from direct interactions with Ecology.

The Group then identified additional aspects and issues that might be addressed in future meetings. These included:

- A briefing on legal considerations of rule making by the Attorney General's Office.
- The relationship of this Group to other processes and interests in the region.
- The need to be flexible in responding to changes as they occur.
- The need to build in feedback loops.
- Coordination of bill implementation with other federal processes (e.g. Columbia hydro system biological opinion, salmon recovery plans) governing river management.
- The potential for a detailed review of several particular unmet needs, to move from the abstract to a particular case.
- Ecology's schedule and timeframe of other pieces it has in motion and when it will have a process in place to evaluate projects.
- A small subcommittee of the Group could draft project criteria.
- A briefing on the storage projects group.
- A visit to the Walla Walla basin to get a first hand look at progress they are making.
- The universe of projects that Ecology is working on and the process for approval, the timelines, and the category of review
- Voluntary regional agreements

### **Future Meetings**

The Group set October 11, November 9 and December 14 for future meetings. The facilitators will solicit available dates in September and select a date that is conducive to the most participants.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.