

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

Meeting Notes

February 17, 2010

Discussion with Ted Sturdevant

Ted Sturdevant, the new director of Ecology, met with the CRPAG. He expressed admiration for the CRPAG and what has it has accomplished to date. The CRPAG has been surprisingly successful in getting parties who have been historical rivals to work cooperatively together, in a fashion reminiscent to how President Lincoln pulled competitors together. Water issues are crucial to the state's well-being, and it is imperative that we continue to work together in a cooperative way to find solutions. Congress will be unlikely to fund projects if different parties are feuding. If different people ask for different things, we won't get them.

CRPAG members had these observations:

- This group is all about relationships. At the outset several years ago, it felt as though the various parties were rivals. But the cooperative attitude and listening has developed and strengthened working relationships.
- The Columbia River is a historical geographic trade route for the Umatillas and other tribes. We have learned that cooperation is essential for our well-being. So we are comfortable and supportive of negotiated solutions to problems.
- Now and in the next few years we will be developing major new water projects. It is essential that Ecology continue to lead and that the CRPAG continue to look for cooperative solutions.
- We like the new relationship in Eastern Washington with Ecology. We have noted that the voluntary approach to metering resulted in a compliance rate of 92%. This would not have occurred unless Ecology was open to a different approach.
- A notable thing about the CRPAG is that it is not statutory. It has in effect been created by the stakeholders, and they stay at the table because of a common benefit: No one can get anything done on his own, but any one person can block the efforts of others.
- The Yakama Nation was not happy with the initial legislation. We still struggle with it, but we like what is occurring among the parties in the Columbia Basin.
- The CRPAG needs two things from Ecology: (1) Leadership and direction. We don't always know where we are going and when we are going to get there. We need timeframes and schedules. (2) Begin fostering cost sharing projects between the state and federal governments.
- Key activities are the forthcoming supply and demand forecast and retiming of water. Investments in infrastructure are key to creating new water supply.
- This effort is like a coin on edge: we have accomplished a number of incremental steps. Now we have to make decisions on bigger projects. Do we have the collective wherewithal to take on the larger tasks and move to the next level?
- The Department of Fish and Wildlife is concerned about a disjointed approach. We need a suite of projects that provide both instream and out-of-stream benefits.

Walla Walla Pump Exchange

Kathryn Brigham and Eric Quaempts of the Umatilla Tribe and Jay Manning of the Governor's Office briefed the CRPAG on the status of the Walla Walla Pump Exchange Project. This project, which has previously been described to the CRPAG, would provide 50,000 af of water to three Walla Walla River irrigation districts. The effect of the change in timing and pumping would help return thousands of endangered fish to the Walla Walla River and its tributaries. The project sponsors are seeking \$292m, including \$40 million from the Columbia River account. \$2 million of this would be for pre-construction engineering in 2011-12 and \$38 million would be for construction costs. This project first came to the attention of the State because people were working together better in the Walla Walla than anywhere else at the time. A significant action for creating support occurred when the Umatillas declared that their treaty rights would be protected if the instream flow was met.

CRPAG members had these observations:

- This project is similar to the very successful Umatilla project in Oregon. The leadership of the Umatillas is very impressive.
- A big thing to the Corps of Engineers is when the Umatillas put their treaty right on the table. This was huge. It will take a lot of work to get the support from Congress. The CoE looks at support from locals when considering projects like this.
- The scope of this project is different from earlier Walla Walla projects. The annual pumping costs from the exchange will be about \$1m each year. It's not clear to me that this project is the best way to deal with climate change. Why not build a reservoir? *[There were four options considered in the feasibility study. Two remain including the Pine Creek Reservoir. It cost more and didn't create enough water.] [The O & M cost will be about \$2.9m. We need to bring that cost down. Congressmen Walden and McMorris support this project but have asked us to look for cost savings.]*
- This project presents us with a clear challenge: we are still crawling and we need to take a first step. This project looks to be that first step. We need to take it to signal reliability and dependability.
- What is the status of the Columbia River budget? *[The account started with \$200m. We have obligated about \$37m to non-storage and \$12m to new storage, leaving us with about \$120m available.]*
- We need to get the legislative support and policy clear on this project before spending the money.
- \$1m annual costs for pump back project is cheap.
- The Columbia River account is a bond account; it competes with other bond projects for funds. There is a question right now as to whether projects will fit under the State's bond debt ceiling.
- We need to get the figures on O & M costs per acre foot, so irrigators can have information about annual costs.
- What kind of energy source is needed to supply electricity to this project? How will climate change figure in?

- A basic policy (and legal) question is: this project was an alternative to a storage project. Therefore, can it be paid from the storage portion of the account?
- Has an authorization bill been introduced? [*The Water Resource Development Act is the authorizing legislation.*]
- Regarding the \$200m account: For these larger projects, how do we determine who gets it? Will it be who gets to the starting line first?
- Regarding the 1/3-2/3 split: this is a clear definition but the reality is that most projects tend to be hybrid projects. Moreover, this project looks like a supply project even if it isn't storage.
- We shouldn't think of this as a competition for \$200m. We need to think beyond the \$200m.

Derek Sandison noted that there are two imbedded policy issues: (1) Investments in tributaries and their contribution to the Columbia River and (2) Should the 1/3-2/3 ratio be shifted, e.g. to a 50-50 split? Once it receives a formal request from the Umatillas, Ecology will need to conduct a legal analysis on the statutory requirements prior to making a request to the Legislature.

Peshastin Irrigation District Piping Improvement

Keith Goehner, Chelan County Commissioner, and Mike Kaputa, Director of Natural Resources for Chelan County, briefed the CRPAG on the history of water improvements in the Wenatchee Basin and the particular merits of the Peshastin Irrigation District Piping project. A central tenet of infrastructure upgrades and changes in behavior is that as their peers upgrade, other irrigation districts then get more interested in upgrading. There is a synergistic effect from projects in your own backyard. For the Peshastin project, the district is seeking funds to change from 9,900 feet of open canal to a closed pipe. This would lead to conservation of 1.2 cfs in addition to 3.5cfs saved in the fish ladder. These costs are at the high end of investments of this kind, but there are significant ancillary benefits of getting others involved in conservation efforts in the basin. There have been a number of significant projects in the Wenatchee Basin in the last 10 years and it is important to continue the momentum.

CRPAG members had these observations:

- The Lake Wenatchee storage project was way ahead of the curve in watershed planning. It continues to offer great promise, by retiming the release from natural lake rises.
- What is the relationship of the ESA to these water conservation projects? That is, how does this fit in terms of priorities in the basin? [*The projects are not listed by priority. We tend to move forward on the easiest ones first. It takes longer to do instream flow improvement projects.*]
- I am concerned about the per acre foot cost of this project. If we fund it, we need to have a very good message about why that would make sense.
- When there are projects that seem expensive, we need a compelling story. We can't readily compare all projects to each other.
- In order to make significant impacts in the Wenatchee, it is necessary to work with lots of irrigation districts, since these are mostly incremental improvements.

- I am less concerned about the absolute cost than I am about the value of the project. If we are getting ancillary values, then a project can be justified.
- Two cfs in the Peshastin isn't doing enough for fish.

Ecology will make a decision on this project within two weeks.

Other TAG projects

Dan Haller introduced a discussion of two other projects that had previously come before the Technical Advisory Group but not been accepted for funding by Ecology. Ecology was now coming to the CRPAG for additional consultation. The first project is the beaver storage project, a proposal from the Lands Council to use beaver dams as storage facilities. Ecology has received 10 letters commenting on this proposal. In general, commenters endorsed the hydrographic and water quality benefits from beavers, but expressed skepticism about the ability to manage a natural organism and therefore reluctance to base permanent water rights on non-enduring dams.

Mike Peterson of the Lands Council articulated the benefits of the proposal. Beaver dams are not permanent, but beavers tend to stay within their watersheds. Dams can make significant contributions to groundwater recharge. The water is cooler and readily available at the right times of year. The Lands Council proposes to assess five sites for their predictability. There are 10,000 riparian miles suitable for beavers and 50% of that acreage is on public lands. Cumulatively, there are up to 1 maf of water for storage from the work of beavers.

Lisa Pelly of Trout Unlimited spoke to the second of the two projects, the Pioneer Water Users proposal for additional fish benefits in side channels of the Wenatchee River. The proposal seeks \$100,000 to help fund an irrigation diversion pump from a well adjacent to the Columbia to irrigation users. This pump back would help to maintain 15cfs in the Wenatchee River.

CRPAG members had these questions and observations:

- How many acres does Pioneer serve? [*1,000*]
- I support both projects. The beaver project is a highly innovative way to find natural ways to store water. The Pioneer project provides good fish values.
- Has anyone done a beaver storage project like this before? [*Not to this extent.*]
- How would the beaver project resonate with the Legislature? [*Ecology has gotten some negative feedback from the Legislature re use of state funds.*]
- Could the beaver project be sold as a mitigation, not necessarily water supply?

Yakima River Basin Study

Wendy Christensen of the Bureau of Reclamation described a major undertaking in the Yakima River Basin. The Bureau of Reclamation and Ecology have been seeking a consensus around a set of strategies to address water supply and instream flow imbalances that will also enable the basin to adapt to the future

effects of climate change. A group of interested parties has endorsed a process that would integrate seven elements: fish passage at existing reservoirs, structural and operational changes at reservoirs, new or expanded water storage, groundwater storage, fish habitat enhancement, enhanced conservation and market-based reallocation of water resources. This group met every two weeks the latter half of 2009 to sketch out an integrated approach to these elements. In 2010, they will meet again to hone the package.

Participants from the process offered these observations:

Phil Rigdon:

- There is a contentious history in the Yakima Basin.
- We have made substantial, incremental progress over time.
- The Integrated Package contains what the Yakama Nation favors.
- We are concerned about the prospect of pumping water from the Columbia River into another basin.
- We have been through litigation. We get further coming together as a community. We want to develop the legislation and move forward.
- It is historic for us to have gotten this far.
- This is similar to other big projects such as the Everglades or Central California. We need to have a big picture vision.

Mike Schwisow (attending as an alternate for Ron Van Gundy):

- Irrigation districts in the Yakima Basin serve 328K acres. The five largest irrigation districts are at the table.
- There are more water rights issued in the basin than are available.
- This effort is historic, given the controversy in the basin.
- It is notable that the strongest endorsement for continuing forward came from the proratable districts, but senior districts also were supportive.
- The strength of this effort is that there are seven sets of actions represented.
- This will take a long time. Over the next year, we need to develop detail, with specific projects.

Dale Bambrick:

- NOAA has been working hard to get steelhead into tributaries, especially in the Kittitas Valley. We have made major progress getting the irrigation districts to understand that it is better to get fish higher into the tributaries, above the regulatory areas.
- We need to decide which the best actions are. We have created a Christmas list; now we need to prioritize that list and determine what is most compelling.
- This process has had much better dialogue than we have had in two decades. It is a refreshing improvement.
- We need to be disciplined. Pick a few winners and get behind them.

Michael Garrity:

- American Rivers has been critical of some previous efforts in this basin which put all the eggs in one basket and didn't address all needs, notably the Black Rock project.
- We like the integrated approach and especially support conservation, water marketing, better groundwater management, rural residential conservation, and conservation for senior water users.
- The controversial part for us is the major supply projects. Storage has been more prominent than American Rivers feels comfortable with.
- We like the emphasis on improvements in the tributaries.
- We will be looking closely at the work done by an independent third party on water demands in the basin.
- The Yakima is a potential model of a western basin under pressure of climate change. We need to be realistic about what an ecosystem project looks like in this era.

Mike Leita:

- There are three counties represented on this process. Commissioners were not fully engaged in earlier processes. Now they are. We are committed.
- The key word for us is Integrated.
- Commissioners do not represent any special interest; they represent all interests. We look for partnerships and are particularly appreciative of the work of the Bureau of Reclamation, Ecology, and the Yakama Nation.
- We cannot accept generalities. We need to see accomplishments. We need to bring this to fruition.
- The Yakima Basin is a critical geographic area for salmon recovery.
- This is the start not only of a Washington State success story, but a United States success story as well.
- Climate change will place a greater strain on our system.

CRPAG members had these questions and observations:

➤ **What does “Integrated” mean?**

- It is due to the construction of the package; everyone sees something of their values in it.
- It has fish, flow, habitat and passage working together; to get as far as possible with the water supply before new storage. Then include new storage to maximize the impact.
- Mutually acceptable is a more accurate term than integrated.
- All the elements are totally integrated.

- Is there any real estimate of how much municipal conservation we can get in Eastern Washington? [*Data will be forthcoming from DOH and from the Demand Study.*]
- It is important to get the infrastructure in place to reconfigure the management systems. Can you identify the project and outcome? [*The major components are there in terms of fish passage, storage, habitat, groundwater storage.*]
- Can we take this process and move it to another basin? Is this a role for Ecology? [*This is part of Ecology's strategy. Ecology likes to go where people are working together, across interests.*]

Updates:

Odessa: The draft EIS will be out about April/May and the final EIS in April 2011. The EIS will evaluate two alternatives. We are struggling to define the No Action Alternative.

Wanapum: We are working to get our RFP out for a feasibility study. Scoping comments to date have focused on the Crescent Bar, aquatic and terrestrial resources, cultural concerns, and Rock Island encroachment. The odds of a FERC license at this point are slim to none. Ecology appears to be the only supporter and that won't be enough for FERC.

Lake Roosevelt: Still working to get water rights issued. A subcommittee on fish will convene in March to help govern releases of water. A lawsuit targeting Ecology, the Bureau, and the East Columbia Irrigation District will have its first hearing on April 14.

Crab Creek feed route: Stimulus monies have enabled construction to move forward.

Chelan Contract: The pump storage contract will be out in a few weeks. The ESA study is on target.

O & M conservation: Ecology and CSRIA are still at odds. Ecology thinks a "reach back" of rights requires statutory authority; CSRIA does not. 40 legislators have written to Ecology asking it to move forward administratively. WEC, Trout Unlimited, and American Rivers wrote to the Governor expressing support for a compromise offered by Ecology.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates

Dale Bambrick, National Marine Fisheries Service

Jon Culp, Washington State Conservation Commission

Jim Fredericks, Corps of Engineers

Michael Garrity, American Rivers

Christi Davis-Moore, Bureau of Reclamation

Mike Leita, Yakima County Commission

Joe Lukas, Grant County PUD

Rueben Ochoa, Oregon Water Resources Dept.

Merrill Ott, Stevens County Commission

Lisa Pelly, Washington Water Trust
Bill Quaempts, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla
Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation
Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League
Teresa Scott, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Craig Simpson, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District
John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau
Rob Swedo, Bonneville Power Administration

Others in attendance:

Neil Aaland, Washington State Association of Counties
Dennis Beich, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mark Bransom, CH2MHill
Kathryn Brigham, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla
Dave Burdick, Department of Ecology
Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation
Charity Davidson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mike Dixel, Department of Health
Andy Dunn, RH2 Engineering
Bill Eller, Washington State Conservation Commission
Joel Fruedenthal, Yakima County
Rick George, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation
Dan Haller, Department of Ecology
Eric Johnson, Washington State Association of Counties
Al Josephy, Department of Ecology
Paul LaRiviere, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Shannon McDaniel, South Columbia Basin Irrigation District
Dan McDonald, MWH Americas
Jay Manning, Office of the Governor
Peggy Miller, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mike Peterson, The Lands Council
Eric Quaempts, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
Rick Roeder, Department of Ecology
Derek Sandison, Department of Ecology
Dan Silver, facilitator
Rich Stevens, Grant County Commissioner
Paul Stoker, Groundwater Management
Ted Sturdevant, Department of Ecology