

Recommended Project Selection Guidelines (as of November 6, 2006)

1. Is this a Conservation and Water Management, Small Surface Storage¹ or Aquifer storage project?
2. If a Conservation and Water Management project, does it return water to the Columbia River?
3. Does the project keep water within the WRIA of origin²?
4. Is the project within a WRIA where a substantial number of applications for water are backlogged or interruptible rights are located? For the purposes of selecting projects the Columbia River Mainstem is considered to be a single WRIA³.
5. Is the project at or upstream of a documented need for additional water?
6. Has the project been determined by the Technical Advisory Group to be effective, efficient and technically sound?
7. Does the project involve conserved water from a permit or certificate⁴ that is senior enough to be protectable?
8. Does the project provide long term⁵ or permanent benefits?
9. Does the project provide multiple⁶ benefits?
10. Does the project help to build a balance of water rights and biologic benefits⁷ for projects in the WRIA?
11. Does the project avoid negative biological effects?
12. Is the local community, watershed planning group or similar group supportive of the project, or is the project identified in a local watershed, subbasin or recovery plan?
13. Is this an Implementation (on the ground or 'real') or an Assessment (planning or research study) project?
14. Is there a hydrologic study that demonstrates the water realized from this project can be reshaped to be available in the July - August Columbia River Mainstem timeframe, or to the April to August Snake River Mainstem timeframe?

¹ The term 'Small Surface Storage' needs definition.

² There is debate about how rigorously the legislature intended the restriction on movement of water between WRIsAs to be. The PAG can help resolve this question by making a specific advisory recommendation after discussion.

³ Not certain if this criteria can be applied in a manner consistent with the Hillis rule.

⁴ Claims are not protectable.

⁵ Need to define 'long term'. Long term or permanent projects can be considered as capital improvements and may be better described in those terms.

⁶ The PAG needs to define what is meant by 'multiple benefits'.

⁷ The term Biological Benefits needs definition by the PAG or examples to clarify the meaning of the term.

15. Does this project return consumed water to the stream?
16. Does the project have partial funding from other sources?

The Project Application Process:

- Should be transparent to all interested parties,
- Scaled to fit a prior legislative appropriation. (project selection follows the appropriation),
- Be an annual solicitation with mixed funding encouraged but not required,
- Have Technical Advisory Group review and their recommendation to Ecology,
- Ecology makes the final determination on which projects will be funded,
- Have a public notice & 30 day comment period before decisions are implemented, and
- Ecology makes final funding decisions but any changes to the TAG recommendations will be documented in a report to the legislature.

Issues:

1. Should there be a streamlined “small project” (under ~\$25k) review process?
2. How much more effort should be invested now to develop these criteria before the EIS is done? Policy alternatives in the draft PEIS may have an affect on how much money there is for the program and may have an affect on the criteria.
3. How much effort should Ecology devote to acquisition projects relative to other conservation and small storage projects?