

DISCUSSION DRAFT -- Does Not Represent Task Force Consensus

Columbia River Task Force – Outline of Issues

September 6, 2005

This document was developed by Ross & Associates in an attempt to record the discussion at the August 30, 2005, Columbia River Task Force meeting, with an emphasis on areas of potential Task Force convergence, information needs, and key questions.

In addition, to further Task Force discussion, Ross & Associates has prepared a brief summary of how the areas of potential convergence might be implemented. The summary is included as page three of this document. While this is based on our individual discussions with you and our understanding of Task Force deliberations to date, it is important to emphasize that we do not see this as representing Task Force consensus. It is intended to further and focus the Task Force dialogue.

Areas of Potential Convergence

- Focus on addressing immediate problems of existing water users within the scope of what the State can reasonably deliver and control in the short term, with costs understood and money sufficient to make real commitments.
- State investment in providing water for both in-stream and out-of-stream values and uses; make “new” water available by capturing winter flows and shifting their release to the summer season through additional draw-down of Lake Roosevelt in the summer and water from Canadian water storage, and by acquiring water through systematic conservation investments and the change and transfer process.
- “New” water is acquired and managed in ways that are robust with respect to cooperation with Tribal governments and Endangered Species Act consultation.
- “New” water is divided between in-stream and out-of-stream priorities. Initially, new water is made available to highest-priority basin needs of existing water users (i.e., Odessa, municipalities, and mainstem interruptibles). For in-stream water, the State commits to independent investments in new water for fish, with the fish water held in trust in perpetuity.
- Increased state investment in water administration and accountability, including metering, reporting, monitoring, and compliance consistent with current statutory requirements.
- Storage plays a key role in three ways: (1) potential for future large-scale off-channel storage (if ongoing studies show such storage is warranted); (2) manage differently and/or improve existing storage; and (3) explore the construction of new smaller storage options, including aquifer storage.
- Water users contribute to a Columbia Basin water infrastructure investment fund dedicated to water infrastructure investments and long-term storage—not a fee for the right to use water.
- Acquisition of water through conservation and direct purchase from willing sellers is managed to protect the interests of northern counties.
- The Columbia program is explicitly limited to the mainstem of the review and does not set a precedent for other basins/watersheds, including tributaries.

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- The State also continues to participate in and invest in other aspects of fish recovery, including efforts related to habitat, harvest, hatcheries, predators, and management of the hydropower system.

Information Needs

- Data on monthly Columbia River flows and in and out-of-stream uses.
- To the extent possible, rough (order-of-magnitude) estimates of the total cost of infrastructure investments that might be made in the short, medium, and long terms.
- Information from NOAA Fisheries on what is involved in Endangered Species Act consultation, particularly around providing additional water for current water users, such as in the Odessa aquifer.
- Information on the status of the ongoing storage studies and planning Black Rock studies and the study process.
- Information on the Redden decisions and the potential implications of the Redden decisions for acquisition of water for the Columbia mainstem program.

Some Key Questions for Continued CRTF Deliberation

- How much water should be available for in-stream uses? For out-of-stream uses?
- How should acquisition of water through conservation be managed? Are conservation incentives needed?
- Do BMPs play a useful role in encouraging conservation or efficiency initiatives?
- Where should development of a more detailed 20-year capital infrastructure investment plan be addressed? Is this something that might be addressed in a policy bill in the capital plan?
- How can Columbia River interests be more directly involved in water supply and allocation discussions over the long term?
- What is the role of watershed planning in relation to this effort?
- Other?

Next Steps

- Schedule Task Force meeting for late September or early October.
- Follow up on information needs and prepare information/updates for the Task Force.
- State continues ongoing work on water agreements with the Colville Tribes, Reclamation, BPA, and the Army Corps.
- Confirm schedule for Task Force meeting with Governor Gregoire.

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How the Areas of Convergence Might Be Carried Forward

To further Task Force discussion, Ross & Associates has prepared a brief summary of how the areas of potential convergence might be implemented. While this is based on our individual discussions with you and our understanding of Task Force deliberations to date, it is important to emphasize that we do not see this as representing Task Force consensus. It is intended to advance and focus the Task Force dialogue. It attempts only to describe how the potential areas of convergence might move forward. It does not attempt to address areas of interest that are addressed in the “key questions” section; these have to be addressed as the Task Force determines appropriate.

We emphasize that this is intended only as a starting point for discussion, and we look forward to talking with you about these and other ideas in our individual conversations with you..

In the short term:

1. Policy bill and budget authority in 2006 session to establish the infrastructure investment fund and authorize Ecology to acquire water for two purposes: (1) out-of-stream uses according to priority needs (Odessa, municipalities, and mainstem interruptibles); and (2) improving stream flows for fish.
2. The State would continue ongoing work with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Colville Tribes, Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, and others to move the water agreements forward, particularly those focused on Lake Roosevelt and improvement of existing in-Basin water storage and management.
3. Use water agreements to “acquire” “new” water, primarily by shifting management of winter flows to provide for release of additional water during the summer months (e.g., through additional 1-foot summer drawdown of Lake Roosevelt, which has the potential to provide approximately 100,000 KAF of “new” water in the summer).
4. Water acquired is managed to benefit both in-stream and out-of-stream values consistent with policy bill and budget authority (see paragraph #1).
 - As water becomes available for out-of-stream uses, un-interruptible water rights would be issued. Priorities include the Odessa Subarea, municipalities, and drought-proofing the current interruptible water rights. If water is available after these priorities are addressed, new rights are issued.
 - In-stream water is managed in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and other fish managers to provide greatest benefits to fish, wildlife, and water quality.
5. State invests in improving the administration of the current water resources system—water masters, metering, and reporting.

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In the longer-term:

6. State moves ahead feasible, efficient storage projects to improve water management. This has two components: (1) completion of ongoing studies and, if studies confirm it is feasible, planning and construction of storage options that rely on improving existing in-Basin infrastructure to provide for smaller storage approaches, including revised Potholes Reservoir management and facilities and other proposals; and (2) completion of ongoing studies related to new, large-scale, off-channel, multi-purpose storage (i.e., the Black Rock studies) and, if studies confirm it is feasible/warranted, construction of new off-channel, multi-purpose storage that meets Basin-wide needs.
7. Continued State water acquisition to support both new waters rights and instream values, including reaching to Canada for options that rely on modified management of existing Canadian water storage facilities.