

## Voluntary Regional Agreement Between Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association and Ecology

Ecology and the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association (CSRIA) have entered into a Voluntary Regional Agreement (VRA) as provided for in RCW 90.90.030. The purpose of this VRA is to provide new water for the issuance of drought permits to existing interruptible water rights holders and new water rights on the Columbia. This VRA also provides that the issuance of these new permits and water rights cannot reduce or negatively impact stream flows in the months of July and August (April through August for the Snake River). To meet this standard of protection, Ecology and CSRIA will pursue conservation, storage, acquisition, and other opportunities to provide new water to offset new withdrawals during the summer months.

### Issuing Drought Permits Under the VRA

Under this VRA, applicants would receive drought permits in exchange for:

- Certifying their use of best management practices.
- Recalibrating their water rights to identify water savings (recalibrating means determining actual water use and modifying the water right accordingly).
- Enrolling any saved water into the state's trust water program.

CSRIA Water users may apply for drought permits during one of two enrollment periods. The first enrollment period ends on July 16, 2008. The second period ends on December 31, 2008. Please see the Ecology/CSRIA VRA web page for application instructions:

[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/cr\\_vra.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/cr_vra.html).

#### Program Vision

Preserve and enhance the standard of living for the people of Washington by strengthening the state's economy, and restoring and protecting the Columbia Basin's unique natural environment.

#### Program Mission

Aggressively pursue development of water supplies to benefit both instream and out-of-stream water uses.

#### Contact Information:

Tim Hill  
Columbia River Outreach  
(509) 454-4241  
tishi461@ecy.wa.gov

#### Special Accommodations:

If you need this publication in an alternate format, call the Columbia River Basin Water Management Program at 509- 575-2490. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

# Focus on the CSRIA VRA

Ecology will begin issuing drought permits as soon as mitigation water becomes available.

## Issuing New Water Rights Under the VRA

Issuing new water rights under the agreement will occur in two phases. In the first phase, CSRIA and Ecology will fund three conservation projects as a pilot to measure water savings. If enough water is saved, new water rights will be issued in the second phase based on the savings and on any other mitigation water that is acquired.

Applicants would receive water rights in exchange for:

- Meeting the same qualifications required for drought permits.
- Paying an annual fee.

## Mitigation Water

Ecology will make a good faith effort to provide the mitigation water needed to issue drought permits and new water rights. CSRIA will support this effort. The mitigation water must be secured either before or at the same time water use occurs.

## VRA Implementation Plan

When water is secured, Ecology will prepare a VRA Implementation Plan describing the sources and quantities of mitigation water. Before issuing permits, Ecology will conduct a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review of the Implementation Plan to determine what impact mitigation water use will have on the environment.