

# Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

March 20, 2008

## Meeting Notes

### Drought Management

The meeting began with a panel on drought management. Panel members were Russ Burtner, City of Kennewick; Mike Leita, Yakima County Commission; Darryll Olson, Columbia Snake Rivers Irrigators; Rich Stevens, Grant County Commission; and Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League. The panel addressed two questions: (1) How should the water from a Lake Roosevelt drawdown be allocated during a drought? and (2) How should the region deal with shortfalls in times of drought, in general?

Ecology had prepared a draft of seven options to consider in allocating 33,000 acre-feet of Lake Roosevelt water during drought years.

#### Mike Leita –

- Drought is now a frequent event in Yakima
- Structures built 50 years ago are insufficient for current problems
- We need to address both growth and protection of endangered species which require water.
- There are permanent crops in Yakima (orchards, vineyards, hops) that cannot survive without annual water.
- The Yakima Basin is on the verge of failing. We need more than 5-10 year solutions.

#### Darryll Olson –

- The class of water rights issued from 1980-1997 issued as interruptible water rights was a bad public policy.
- Nonetheless, a combination of (1) the Lake Roosevelt block of water, (2) 73,500 acre-feet of water saved on the demand side by the Voluntary Regional Agreement, and (3) using the Critical Flow Adjustment as a firm planning constraint (via the Ecology director's discretion to apply an Overriding Consideration of Public Interest) is sufficient to deal with interruptible water rights during a drought.
- We have substantial disparity in supply and demand in the region in the mainstem, the Odessa, and the Yakima Basin. We use and need different tools to deal with each of these areas. The amount we are talking about in the mainstem is insignificant and in fact cannot readily be measured.
- CSRIA is attracted to smaller projects, not projects that cost billions of dollars. If it takes billions, they likely won't happen.
- The challenge is to solve the interruptible rights problem, then deal with overall supply and demand. We need different kinds of tools to deal with supply and increasing demand than we do for interruptible rights.

#### Russ Burtner –

- We need to plan for drought in Eastern Washington.
- Typically we see people rely on city water to deal with droughts. However, municipal water is only about 10% of the water, whereas irrigation water is 90% of use.

- In the city, we start with voluntary cutbacks. We have never had to go to mandatory cutbacks, because our citizens have always responded.

**Rich Stevens –**

- Has irrigated in the Columbia Basin for 36 years and never had a drought.
- In 2001 Bonneville Power bought back water for power. In 4-5 weeks, with a willing buyer and willing sellers, the problem was handled. Rarely has seen government work so fast.
- Is very uncomfortable with Ecology or a county commission suggesting that one crop should get preference over another.
- Prefers (1) an even distribution or (2) voluntary reduction or (3) a combination of the two.
- We have constantly upgrading irrigation techniques over time. Mostly farmers don't waste water because pumping costs power and money.
- Agrees with Darryll that the BoR can't even measure the small amounts we are talking about. Sometimes this all seems so political and it is discouraging.

**Mike Schwisow –**

- The Columbia Basin irrigation districts are a highly diverse group of 100 districts, with a great range in the amount of water they use.
- Irrigation Districts' response to drought is as diverse as their districts. For example, the Wenatchee Reclamation District has no storage. In the last drought, instream flows fell below the amount of the District's water right. At that point the District chose not to take more than 50% of the instream flow to reduce the environmental impact.
- In the Yakima Basin there is a mixed bag of rights. Reactions in Sunnyside, Roza, and Kittitas vary due to different crop patterns. In the Kittitas Reclamation District area where it is mostly annual crops, they simply use their reduced amount of water until it is gone and then the irrigation season is over. In the Roza District where it is mostly perennial crop, the District actively seeks to buy water from other water users in the Yakima Basin.
- It's worth considering the context of the Lake Roosevelt drawdown agreement to understand how we might deal with drought. Due to the origin of the water, it is subject to both federal reclamation water and state water law. Those portions of this water that do not serve the Odessa (i.e., off project portions) require a BoR and Ecology service contract to deliver water to Ecology.

Derek Sandison and Dan Haller then probed the CRPAG to further address the seven draft options for allocation of interruptible rights in a drought. Members and the audience offered these comments:

- The county commissioner's group does not favor an option that is based on type of crop use. The voluntary mechanisms are superior.
- The allocation solution is only short term. If we don't find the solution to the larger shortage problem, then we will be causing hardship for future generations. This will cost billions of dollars.
- Does Rosa regard its market approach as successful? [They are probably not happy; they would like firm water rights]
- Annual crops recover more quickly than orchards.

- Klickitat County would not support the hierarchy of use. There is a huge infrastructure of annual crops in Klickitat County.
- Regarding the lottery option: Rosa Irrigation District does this to some degree by sponsoring an auction and putting a price into the market.
- The Lake Roosevelt drought waters might be a mere band aid. The demand and supply situation could change dramatically with climate change or if the federal judge further restricts water in the Columbia River.
- The job of Ecology is to provide water, not to allocate it. Ecology should let the market process work.
- In response to a drought, Ecology should follow the law: first in time, first in right.
- A limiting factor is the market itself. In some districts, 90% of the water is off limits to markets. We have barely scratched the surface on markets. We need to create more opportunity for individuals to participate in markets.
- It is highly problematic for Ecology to get into beneficial uses as a strategy for dealing with drought.

## Project Updates

Dan Haller, Joe Lukas and Derek Sandison provided an update of various water supply projects.

1. Ecology received 42 applications for funding water supply projects. 10 applicants withdrew, were rejected, or were moved to a non-TAG funding path. There is a diverse set of actions in the 32 remaining projects that went to the TAG for review. The TAG will provide its scores to Ecology in June. There is some money available (about \$30 million) that could be used to fast track funding, i.e., not wait for the legislative session.
2. Ecology has set aside \$15 million for the Kennewick Irrigation District pump exchange. This project would potentially move existing withdrawals downstream at two stations.
3. Ecology and the City of Kennewick anticipate signing a MOU for aquifer storage that could provide benefits back to the Columbia River, testing putting water into the aquifer and taking it back out. This will be a difficult and complex permitting exercise. Ecology will return to the CRPAG to discuss these issues in more detail. There is a lot of energy on aquifer storage in the state, as evidenced by the Walla Walla project, five feasibility proposals, a regional ASR study, and interest by CSRIA. Oregon recently passed a bill funding an ASR feasibility study in the Umatilla Basin.
4. The subcommittee exploring enhanced storage at the Wanapum Dam is making progress. The idea is to retime the storage to provide additional water for fish passage in June and July as well as new water rights. The project could potentially provide 70,000 acre feet of additional water. The subcommittee wants to reach a preliminary conclusion (are there fatal flaws?) by the fall of 2008.
5. Part of the Potholes Supplemental EIS is to get federal water further south in the Columbia Basin Project. The first piece of the puzzle is to complete Phase I of the Frenchman's Hill project and assess what the increased flow looks like while also assessing invasive species.
6. One way of addressing the issues associated with the declining aquifer in the Odessa Subarea is to replace groundwater with surface water from the Columbia Basin Project; currently there are 140,000 groundwater-irrigated acres located within Columbia Basin Project boundaries. Reclamation's planning process has explored where the water could come from and how to get it where it is needed. They just completed an appraisal-level investigation. This investigation identified constructing a new East High Canal system and expanding the

capacity of the existing East Low Canal for further study as a means to delivery water to Odessa Subarea lands. The investigation also has recommended further study of additional draw down of Banks Lake, changing the timing of storage at Potholes Reservoir, and construction of a new dam and reservoir in Rocky Coulee as options for providing the replacement water supply. The next Study phase involves completing a feasibility-level investigation and complying with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental requirements. This will result in preparation of a joint planning report and appropriate NEPA document (either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement) projected for completion in 2011. A complete replacement of groundwater may not be possible. Due to the costs it may be necessary to optimize a solution.

7. Comment on the draft planning report for the Yakima Basin Storage Feasibility Study ends on March 31. In addition to joint BoR/Ecology project alternatives, the State also is seeking comment on a market driven reallocation, enhanced conservation and aquifer storage. The EIS is expected in January 2009.

## **Municipal Water Conservation**

Representatives from the Department of Health and three municipal water purveyors talked about municipal water conservation in Eastern Washington. The representatives were Mike Dexel, Department of Health; Bruce Beauchene, City of Kennewick; Greg Brizendene, East Wenatchee Water District; and BiJay Adams, Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District.

The Department of Health recently adopted a rule to implement the municipal conservation requirements of the Municipal Water Law of 2003. Among other things, the new rule changes the way municipalities describe leakage. Leakage now must be explicitly identified; it can no longer be reported as “unaccounted for” water. Municipalities must set efficiency goals and use public a process to establish these goals. All use must be metered.

Kennewick has gotten a much better handle on measuring its water use over time and this has helped it to establish efficiency goals. It used to be that water came into and out of the system without anyone knowing how it was being used. Now Kennewick has a much better handle on how much leakage there is in the system and it has taken a number of actions to reduce that leakage. The annual average per capita demand has dropped over time. The 2007 per capita demand was 152 gpcd. Kennewick has an efficiency goal of keeping per capita demand below 170 gpd.

The East Wenatchee Water District is one of three water entities in the Wenatchee Valley. It gets water from four wells. East Wenatchee believes that it will exceed its current water capacity in 2010 and will grow out of its water right by 2017. By taking a variety of actions, it has reduced its per connection/day use from 497 gallons in 1994 to 288 gallons in 2004 (about 2 ½ % per year reduction). The system goal is to reduce leakage to 1-2% and reduce customer use by 2-3%

Liberty Lake is experiencing a shift in water use from primarily agricultural to primarily residential. The per capita use in Liberty Lake is 240 gpd. There are ample examples of wastage. The water district is focusing on reducing outdoor irrigation through demonstration gardens, new technology (e.g. soil wetness testing devices) and reuse.

In discussion with the CRPAG, these points were made:

- It makes sense to have best management practices in place regarding what is a reasonable demand. Ecology should condition its grants to give incentives for the incorporation of

BMPs, including rate structures. Ecology should consider such a condition for granting new agricultural water rights under the CRWMP as well.

- It is useful to look at rates as a potential tool for changing per capita use.
- The two targets are leakage and outdoor irrigation. We should develop a better sense of the best bang for the buck. Outdoor irrigation is largely a lifestyle choice.
- We are currently underperforming in reducing per capita demand.

## **Ecology Updates**

Ecology has sent a letter to the Executive Committee seeking comment on how to improve its knowledge of anticipated demand. This feedback would be reflected in development of the 2011 Water Supply and Demand Forecast. Ecology would like written comment from the Executive Committee and it also would like to further engage the CRPAG membership on a set of questions about demand. Among these questions is how far up the tributaries it should be gathering and reporting information.

Ecology is seeking face-to-face follow-up conversations with those parties who commented on the Voluntary Regional Agreement. It seeks to resolve confusion and uncertainty.

## **Roundtable**

Jon Culp informed the CRPAG that the Conservation Commission would like to propose dedicating a portion of Columbia River monies to conservation in the tributaries, for subsequent flow enhancement. The topic of projects in the tributaries will be an agenda item at a future CRPAG meeting.

There is interest in a presentation to the CRPAG on how the Columbia River is run for fish.

In terms of the meeting schedule, there is a sense that the meeting hiatus from December to March was too long; it is helpful to have more frequent meetings.

Dan Silver will work with the Executive Committee to set a schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2008.

## **Attendees:**

### ***CRPAG members and alternates***

Daniel Brudevold, Confederated Tribes of the Colville  
Brenda Bateman, Oregon Department of Water Resources  
Jon Culp, Washington State Conservation Commission  
Christina Davis, Bureau of Reclamation  
Russ Burtner, City of Kennewick  
Michael Garrity, American Rivers  
Mike Leita, Yakima County Commission  
Joe Lukas, Grant County PUD  
Darryll Olsen, Columbia Snake River Irrigators  
Merrill Ott, Stevens County Commission  
Rudy Plager, Adams County Commission  
Dave Sauter, Klickitat County Commission  
Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League, Irrigation Districts  
Teresa Scott, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Craig Simpson, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District  
Rich Stevens, Grant County Commission  
John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau  
Rob Swedo, Bonneville Power Administration

***Others in attendance:***

Neil Aaland, Washington State Association of Counties  
BiJay Adams, Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District  
Nancy Aldrich, City of Richland  
Bruce Beauchene, City of Kennewick  
Greg Brizendine, East Wenatchee Water District  
Mark Bransom, CH2MHill  
Carolyn Comeau, Department of Ecology  
Stuart Crane, Yakama Indian Nation  
Mike Dixel, Department of Health  
Bill Eller, Washington State Conservation Commission  
Andrew Grassell, Chelan County PUD  
Dan Haller, Department of Ecology  
Ken Hammond, retired  
Lisa Hatley, Washington Rivers Conservancy  
Wally Hickerson, CH2MHill  
Scott Hunter, Star News  
Perry Huston, Okanogan County Planning  
Matthew Kagle, self  
Chuck Klarich, YBSA  
Paul LaRiviere, Washing Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Dave McClure, Klickitat County WRIAs 30 and 31  
Peggy Miller, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Jack Myrick, Washington State Conservation Commission  
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation  
Derek Sandison, Department of Ecology  
Dan Silver, facilitator  
Paul Stoker, Groundwater Management Area  
Bridgette Valdez, self  
Mimi Wainwright, Department of Ecology  
Patrick Williams, Center for Law and Environmental Policy