

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

Meeting Notes

July 9, 2009

Columbia Basin Conservation Projects

Craig Simpson of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District and Shannon McDaniel of the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District reviewed the history and operation of the East Columbia, South Columbia, and Quincy Irrigation Districts. Conservation efforts began in earnest in the 1980s. Conservation projects have been significantly influenced by the requirements of available funding. Major funding mechanisms have been Referendum 38, Reclamation's Water Conservation Field Services, and BPA's Energy incentives. In the 20+ years of conservation programs, 70-93% of the three districts have gone from gravity feed to sprinkler systems. Other conservation projects include SCADA (an automatic operating tool for gates), closed pipelines, linings, weirs, and the sealing of cracks.

In 2005 the East Basin District, Ecology, and Reclamation conducted tests to track conserved water savings. Due to the interconnectedness of the East and South Districts, the full value of conservation was not being achieved because conservation in the East District was taking water away from the South District. A corollary was that the full amount of conserved water could not be applied to Odessa groundwater.

Ecology recently provided \$30,000 from the Columbia River account to develop a Coordinated Conservation Program. A goal of this program is to assess candidate conservation projects and determine which ones are independent and which are dependent on each other. This information will help determine which projects create benefits for other purposes, in addition to the initial conservation. There are lots of opportunities for conservation. Ecology has set aside up to \$1 m to fund projects in 2009. The first priority of the Columbia Basin Bill is to find alternatives to groundwater users in the Odessa aquifer.

CRPAG members had these questions and comments:

- Were historic independent savings all utilized within the district? [*They simply didn't get pumped at Grand Coulee.*]
- What about on-farm efficiencies, versus operating efficiencies? [*In gravity systems, on-farm efficiency doesn't necessarily equate to system efficiency. On-farm efficiencies are driven by the farmer's economics.*]
- Are there policy incentives for districts to conserve? [*All of the districts have tiered rates wherein those who use more than the base allotment pay a premium rate for additional water.*]
- Is the issue of instantaneous flow a limiting factor? [*Yes. We seek to select projects on the low side of the East Low canal to open more capacity.*]
- Will completing the Weber project change priorities? [*No.*]
- Are you trying to increase the capacity of the canals to act as reservoirs? [*Not really; we really are after more continuous flow.*]

- Are there any concerns about additional investment? [*None. We believe there is adequate legal authority under several statutes.*]
- Would these investments become permanent new investments each year? [*No, they are one-year projects. After the completion of the Coordinated Conservation Plan at the end of 2009, Ecology and the Districts will discuss how to move forward.*]

Similkameen River Appraisal

Dan Boettger of the Okanogan PUD, Jeremy Pratt of Entrix and Dave Cummings of Ecology reviewed the results of a \$325,000 study that was a pre-feasibility appraisal of the Shanker’s Bend project. This was a broad scale appraisal screening for a fatal flaw. A dam at Shanker’s Bend would have multiple benefits: water storage, hydroelectric generation, and flood control. The three options studied were a High Dam, a Medium Dam, and a Low Dam. The Okanogan PUD has received a three-year Preliminary Permit from FERC and must show due diligence during this period. If the PUD decides to go forward with the project, then FERC will determine which process it must use. The study has just recently been completed and the PUD Board has not yet made any decision about next steps.

Some of the findings of the pre-feasibility appraisal are:

High Dam	Medium Dam	Low Dam
1.3 m af of useable water	130,000 af of useable water	20,000 af of useable water
100% flood attenuation	99.9% flood attenuation	99.9% flood attenuation
487,000 potential acres irrigated	51,700 potential acres irrigated	7,500 potential acres irrigated
238,000 mwh produced	84,000 mwh produced	70,000 mwh produced
74 MW	23 Mw	20 MW
Electricity for 15,200 homes	Electricity for 5,500 homes	Electricity for 4,600 homes
350 jobs in 48 mos.	170 jobs in 36 mos.	150 jobs in 36 mos.
In-stream flow met 100%	In-stream flow met 96%	In-stream flow met 92%
2 degrees cool water	2 degrees cool water possible	1-2 degrees cool water possible
Increase kokanee spawning 63%	Increase kokanee spawning 24%	Increase kokanee spawning 13%
Cost \$1.2 billion	Cost \$329 million	Cost \$289 million
\$/ acre ft. = \$855	\$/ acre ft. = \$2,850	\$/ acre ft. = \$16,200

Among the challenges of the project is the extent of inundated lands. With the High Dam option, inundation would extend up into Canada, potentially affecting the Upper and Lower Similkameen Bands. In the Medium Dam, inundation would go up to the U.S./Canada border. With the Low Dam, inundation would primarily affect land around Palmer Lake. All three options would flood Colville Tribal land.

CRPAG members had the following questions and comments:

- Would inundation affect former mine areas? [*Not likely that adits would be flooded; however, this cannot be determined with certainty with current information.*]

- Are there fish there now? [*Anadromous fish passage does not go beyond Similkameen Falls. There are resident fish in the river.*]
- How far would flood control extend? [*Down to Oroville for sure. Likely down to Omak and Okanogan.*]
- American Rivers and Washington Environmental Council have significant concerns about this project. At the least it should be parked along with other dam studies pending results of the 2011 supply/demand study. Other dams are off-channel, but this one is damming a free flowing river, so we are less open about this project. Note in particular that the benefits of the small dam are minor.
- How does the estimated electrical service to residences fit with the growth in demand in this area? [*The power benefits from the high dam are greater than the anticipated growth in the area, and may be for the low and medium dams.*]
- Our experience and studies show that one of the best things to do for fish is to keep them within their banks where water is coolest; keep them out of the flood plain.
- We need to get an independent review by Colville Tribe biologists on the design and benefits of cool water from this project.
- Does the cost per acre foot have power revenue subtracted? [*No, this is a simple, rough, first-look analysis.*]
- I have grave concerns about all three options and your Board should know that there is significant opposition to it.
- There is some potential for this project since it is so high in the system. Because the potential is so great, I would like to know more.
- I am interested in the pump storage part of the project. There is an opportunity to make storage off stream.
- This looks like a classic project: it has significant benefits and significant down sides. The final question is: do the benefits outweigh the costs.
- We should bring this along with other studies in this region so that we can look at a suite of 4-5 projects and do a comparative analysis to see which one best fits the need.
- It is clear that we aren't really talking about local benefits of this project, but a state benefit. We need to continue to study it as we look at our need.
- I have serious concerns about this project.
- Are we waiting for the supply and demand study to be completed before acting? [*Ecology sees this as another project in the gap analysis. We have tried to fashion the scope to get an apples-to-apples comparison. We have said in relation to the off-channel storage projects that we wouldn't seek Congressional authorization until we know more about demand. This project fits in that same category.*]
- The Colvilles have heard about this project for years. We would like to know once and for all if it is feasible.
- I don't have grave concerns about this project. Let's not be premature in our decision. We need to look at it to see if it is feasible. Let's look at the comparisons. One of the greatest hurdles is international.

- We need to have an economic analysis to see if it makes sense; then see if you can pay for it; then look at the impacts. It is easy to confuse intangible analysis with economic analysis. We need to do the cold, hard, dispassionate work and weigh this against other options.

CRPAG membership and process

Derek Sandison led a discussion of how the CRPAG is doing. County Commissioners had sent a letter to Jay Manning requesting an additional position on the CRPAG for a watershed representative. In addition, several state agencies had indicated an interest in being represented on the CRPAG. Upon discussion, the group decided that the membership should not be expanded.

Derek sought feedback on how Ecology could improve the work of the group. To this point, Ecology has sought to have a balance at the meetings of providing information, getting advice on projects, getting policy guidance, and providing feedback on spending.

CRPAG members offered these suggestions:

- We should be strategic when we meet. We should not have set meetings but only meet when it is necessary.
- This is a valuable place to learn about what people are doing. For example, we don't have a direct role in the Columbia River Treaty negotiations, but I would benefit from knowing what is going on with them.
- Cities are unique; there is not a collective view of cities. It would be useful to indicate on the agenda what sort of things you will ask of us, so I can give heads up to people.
- It would be useful to know within the next year what is coming. It was clearer to us in the beginning. Where is Ecology going?
- Ecology should be driving the agenda. What do you see for the next year, for example, in the grant cycle?
- When it comes to water and legislation, there is a stalemate. We need to use dialogue at this group to break down barriers on this issue. It would be useful to know Ecology's agenda for the next session.
- We know that natural resource agencies are under fire as the Governor looks at additional budget cuts. Can we build a coalition to protect activities we value while also eliminating duplication?
- A value of this group is to guide Ecology on big contentious issues like supply and demand, which is a pivotal test for the program.

Updates

Joe Lukas reported that FERC was cool to a cooperative PUD/Ecology SEPA/NEPA review. FERC prefers a standard license amendment. Tom Tebb reported that Ecology will begin a scoping process this fall for the state environmental review associated with the pool raise concept. The scoping will attempt to identify all important issues that would affect the natural and built environment that a 3 foot pool raise in the reservoir would create. Ecology is working with staff

from our Eastern Regional Office to review the shoreline management plan that Grant PUD is seeking comments on. Ecology is also reviewing the life cycle stage of existing infrastructure such as the waste water treatment plant on Crescent Bar. Grant PUD is also finalizing a draft shoreline management plan as part of the utilities new license to operate the Priest Rapids project. The FERC-issued license stipulates that the plan must manage the many resources and uses of the Priest Rapids Project shorelines consistently with license requirements and project purposes. It must also address the needs of the recreating public. The diverse mix of popular recreation sites on the Priest Rapids Project includes Crescent Bar Island, Sunland Estates, Sand Hollow, Vantage-area boat launch/marina and Desert Aire, all of which include Grant PUD-owned shorelines. The FERC license specifies that the Shoreline Management Plan include provisions to protect and enhance Crescent Bar Island. Grant PUD Commissioners desire extensive public input as they move forward on deciding the future of Crescent Bar Island. The Crescent Bar Island lease with the Port of Quincy expires in June of 2012. Once the SEPA scoping is complete, Ecology will coordinate with FERC to understand what is needed to complete a NEPA document.

Derek Sandison and Rick Roeder reviewed the impacts of the budget cuts on Ecology's water programs. There have been minimal cuts to the Columbia River Program, but that program depends on the Water Resources Program for permitting. Twenty positions were cut in Water Resources including 10 in the Central and Eastern regions. Ecology will be looking at more efficient ways to do permitting, for example, batch processing.

In June the Bureau of Reclamation completed its Lake Roosevelt EA and Findings of No Significant Impacts. Ecology and Reclamation will soon enter into a service contract. There should be some additional in-stream water in the river in August. The agencies will address Odessa water next year.

Ecology completed its EIS on Yakima Basin Integrated Management Alternatives. This EIS reviews a range of options including fish passage, habitat, and storage that, taken together, could restore the Yakima River. Reclamation and Ecology have formed a group to develop an implementation plan by the end of December.

Representative Warnick commended the CRPAG on its continued efforts and offered help during future legislative sessions.

The next CRPAG meeting will be September 9 at Central Washington University.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates

Dan Brudevold, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Nation
Gary Chandler, Association of Washington Business
Bill Eller, Washington State Conservation Commission
Michael Garrity, American Rivers
Bill Gray, Bureau of Reclamation
Bob Hammond, City of Kennewick
Mike Leita, Yakima County Commission
Joe Lukas, Grant County PUD
Bill Quaempts, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla

Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
Dave Sauter, Klickitat County
Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League, Irrigation Districts
Teresa Scott, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Craig Simpson, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District
Richard Stevens, Grant County Commission
John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau
Rob Swedo, Bonneville Power Administration

Others in attendance:

Neil Aaland, Washington State Association of Counties
Doug Adams, Okanogan PUD
Dan Boettger, Okanogan PUD
Wendy Christensen, Bureau of Reclamation
Nick Christoph, Okanogan PUD
Stu Crane, Yakama Nation
Michael Crowder, Barker Ranch
Charity Davidson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mike Dexel, Department of Health
Dennis Dorratcague, MH Global
Dick Ericksen, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District
Andrew Grassell, Chelan PUD
Doug Grover, Watch Enterprises
Dan Haller, Department of Ecology
John Houck, Freestone Environmental Services
Perry Huston, Okanogan County Planning
Diana Kirchheim, Senate Republican Caucus
Paul LaRiviere, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Dave McClure, Klickitat County
Jason McCormick, Washington Water Trust
Shannon McDaniel, South Columbia Basin Irrigation District
Peggy Miller, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Bob Montgomery, Anchor QEA
Jeremy Pratt, Entrix
Rick Roeder, Department of Ecology
Ben Rough, Okanogan County Planning
Pat Ryan, Department of Natural Resources
Derek Sandison, Department of Ecology
Dan Silver, facilitator
Tom Tebb, Department of Ecology
Representative Judy Warnick
Meghan Lena, Washington Rivers Conservancy