



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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June 14, 2012

The Honorable Christine Gregoire, Governor  
Honorable Members of the Washington State Legislature  
Olympia, Washington

**RE: Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast**

Dear Governor Gregoire and Legislators:

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) continues to aggressively pursue development of conservation and water supply projects to meet eastern Washington's economic and environmental needs. To support this mission, every five years, OCR prepares and submits to the Washington State Legislature a long-term water supply and demand forecast. The first forecast was released in 2006. I am pleased to submit to you the second "Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast (Forecast)."

The Forecast's purpose is to help OCR effectively plan and implement water supply projects by better understanding where additional water supply is currently needed and where it will be needed in the future. The results will guide OCR in investing in capital infrastructure projects to meet both instream and out-of-stream needs.

To develop the 2011 Forecast, OCR contracted with Washington State University (WSU) to conduct the agricultural, municipal and industrial, and hydropower components of the Forecast. Climate change impacts were also considered and incorporated into the results, both on the supply and demand side. The Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife developed a "Columbia Basin Instream Atlas" that reports on flows and fish life stages in eight critical basins.

Stakeholders played an important role in the Forecast's development. The Columbia River Policy Advisory Group, watershed planning units and the general public provided valuable input that helped the researchers refine the methodology. WSU's methods and models were peer-reviewed by four national experts in economic, modeling and regional water issues.

The results demonstrate that the state is unable to meet the current demand for instream and out-of-stream uses in eastern Washington. Water shortages exist in many watersheds, and regulation of out-of-stream uses in response to both senior water right holders and adopted instream flows is common. Adopted instream flows in watersheds regularly go unmet, with late summer being a time of particularly acute competition among fish, farms and people for the limited resource. Climate change and increased growth will bring additional pressure on these uses.

Nevertheless, the Forecast predicts a healthier future on which OCR has already begun to deliver. OCR has embarked on numerous projects that are already improving supply, with approximately 150,000 acre-feet already developed and another 200,000 acre-feet anticipated. With the money appropriated by the legislature, OCR is making progress on issuing new permits, improving flows for fish, converting declining groundwater users in the Odessa to surface water and reducing drought risk for interruptible water right holders. The Forecast is a valuable tool that will assist OCR in making smarter investments and help the state improve water supply for existing users, while meeting new growth needs.

Sincerely,

Ted Sturdevant, Director  
Washington State Department of Ecology

Derek I. Sandison, Director  
Office of Columbia River