

Why the Black Rock Reservoir is not evaluated in the *Columbia River Mainstem Storage Options Off-Channel Assessment Pre-Appraisal Report*

The Department of Ecology has received inquiries concerning why the Black Rock reservoir proposal was not identified as a reservoir site option in the *Columbia River Mainstem Storage Options Off-Channel Assessment Pre-Appraisal Report*. The following explains the relationship between the Black Rock reservoir proposal and the pre-appraisal report.

The Black Rock project involves a proposal to construct an 800,000 to 1,300,000 acre-foot storage reservoir in eastern Yakima County. The proposed reservoir would be filled with water pumped from the Priest Rapids Dam pool of the Columbia River, when such water is available in excess of current instream flow targets. Water from the reservoir would be used by participating irrigation entities within portions of the lower Yakima Basin in exchange for water currently diverted by those entities from the Yakima River under existing water rights. Yakima River water “freed-up” by this exchange would be used to achieve a number of objectives established by the Bureau of Reclamation under congressional authorization including:

- Improve anadromous fish habitat by leaving more water instream and creating more normative flows in the Yakima River;
- Improve reliability of water supply for proratable irrigation districts; and
- Assist in meeting growth in demand for municipal water supply.

Black Rock reservoir is currently undergoing analysis by the Bureau of Reclamation as an alternative in the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study. The study was initiated in May of 2003 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2008. The state of Washington is a major financial and technical contributor to the Yakima storage study.

While the Black Rock reservoir proposal is similar in capacity to a number of the off-channel storage facilities in the *Columbia River Mainstem Storage Options Off-Channel Assessment Pre-Appraisal Report*, it was not evaluated in that report. However, the absence of the Black Rock reservoir proposal from list of potential storage facilities in the report should not, in any way, be construed as a statement regarding the feasibility or infeasibility of that project. Rather, since the Black Rock reservoir proposal will continue to be analyzed through the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study, it was determined that the Yakima storage study was the best venue for further consideration of that proposal. Factoring into that determination was the fact that the Black Rock reservoir proposal: 1) has a substantially different purpose from the reservoirs evaluated in the *Columbia River Mainstem Storage Options Off-Channel Assessment Pre-Appraisal Report*, 2) has a separate congressional authorization (Public Law 108-7), and 3) is already nearly three years into feasibility analysis.

Additional information regarding the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study and the Black rock reservoir proposal can be viewed at the following link:
http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/storage_study/ .