

Methow River Basin Mitigation Policy Issues

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group
December 13, 2012

Presented by

Melissa Downes

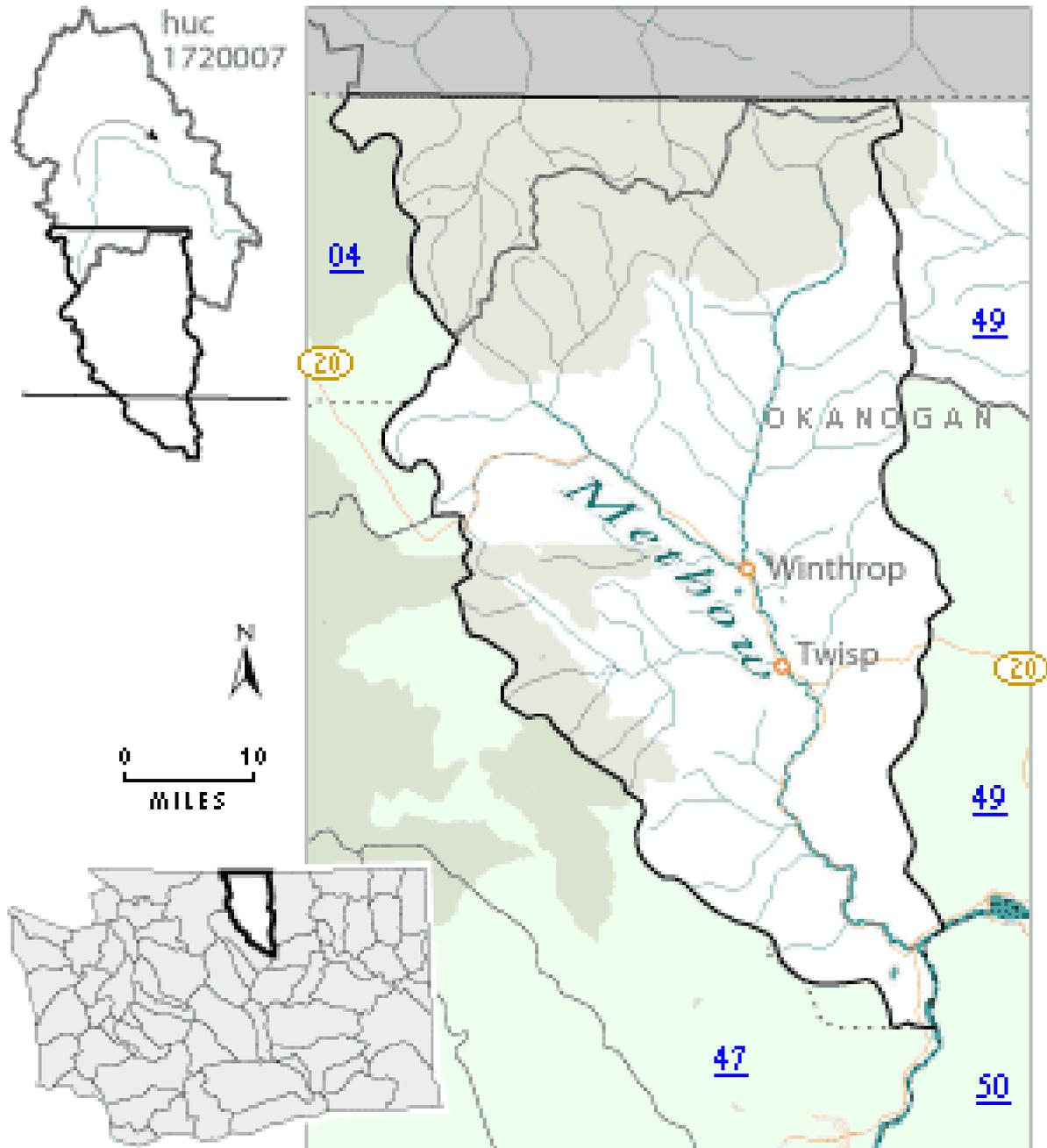
Washington State Department of Ecology

Office of Columbia River



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Methow River Basin WRIA 48



METHOW RIVER BASIN PROJECTS

MVID-West Canal

Move MVID West Canal diversion off the Twisp River to a diversion on Methow River (or combination of diversion and well field or a combination of wells) and pipe a majority of the West Canal.

Improves Twisp River instream flows by 11cfs in the lower 3.5 river miles & eliminates historic pushup dam.

Chewuch Canal

Additional canal piping, will eliminate diversion during low flow periods.

Improves instream flows by 9.5cfs in lower 7 miles Chewuch River

Adds irrigation reliability.

Provides recreation opportunities.

Twisp Water Right

Issue a new water right (50-300 ac-ft) to Town of Twisp that is offset by consumptive use from an irrigation water right.

Provides public reliability and conservation-minded development within town boundaries and eliminates exempt well promulgation.

Barkley Diversion

Reconnects Bear Creek to the Methow River, eliminates wing dam, provides approx 20 cfs of instream flow benefit in a section of Methow River, improves water quality, lowers fish mortality.

Davis Lake Storage

Provides additional storage capacity in the Methow Basin.

Most feasible storage project out of three proposed.

Water Acquisition

Acquisition of 52.3 acre-feet of water at the confluence of Gold Creek and the Methow River.

Irrigation Efficiencies

Work with Conservation Commission to identify and fund irrigation efficiency projects.

Basin-wide

Policy Questions

Interruptible Rights

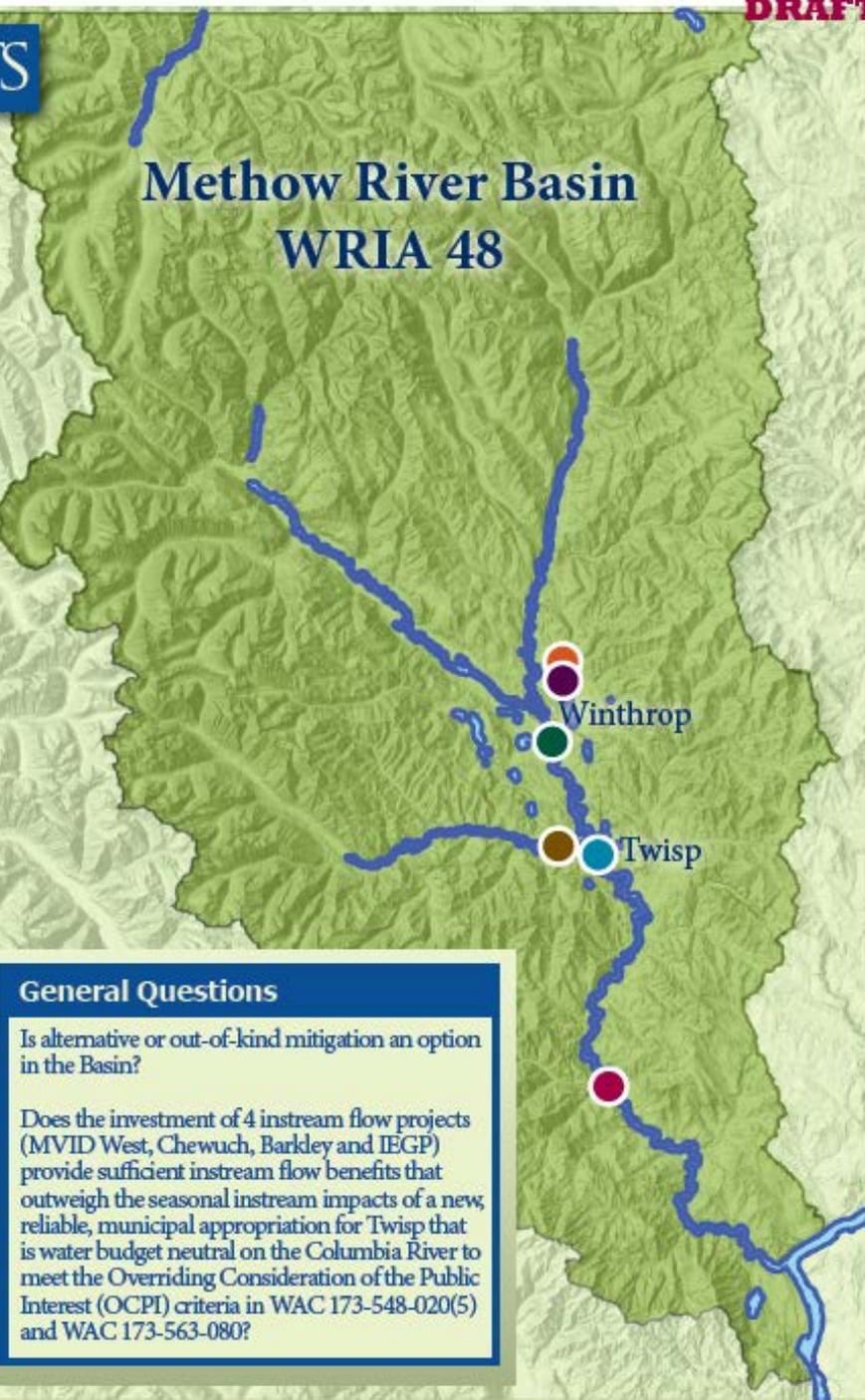
Currently 67 interruptible water rights on the Methow River

Policy Consideration - Is there an opportunity to make some/all of these water rights whole?

Reserve Accounting

Each of the seven reaches in the basin has a 2 cfs reserve quantity, totaling 14 cfs .

Policy Consideration - Can these reach reserve quantities move up/down stream?



General Questions

Is alternative or out-of-kind mitigation an option in the Basin?

Does the investment of 4 instream flow projects (MVID West, Chewuch, Barkley and IEGP) provide sufficient instream flow benefits that outweigh the seasonal instream impacts of a new, reliable, municipal appropriation for Twisp that is water budget neutral on the Columbia River to meet the Overriding Consideration of the Public Interest (OCPI) criteria in WAC 173-548-020(5) and WAC 173-563-080?

Town of Twisp

New Water Right

- ▶ Issue a new water right to Town of Twisp with a consumptive use not to exceed 52.31 acre-feet
- ▶ OCR holds an existing trust water right with a consumptive use of 52.31 acre-feet located 18 miles downstream of Twisp (water budget neutral to Columbia River)

Town of Twisp

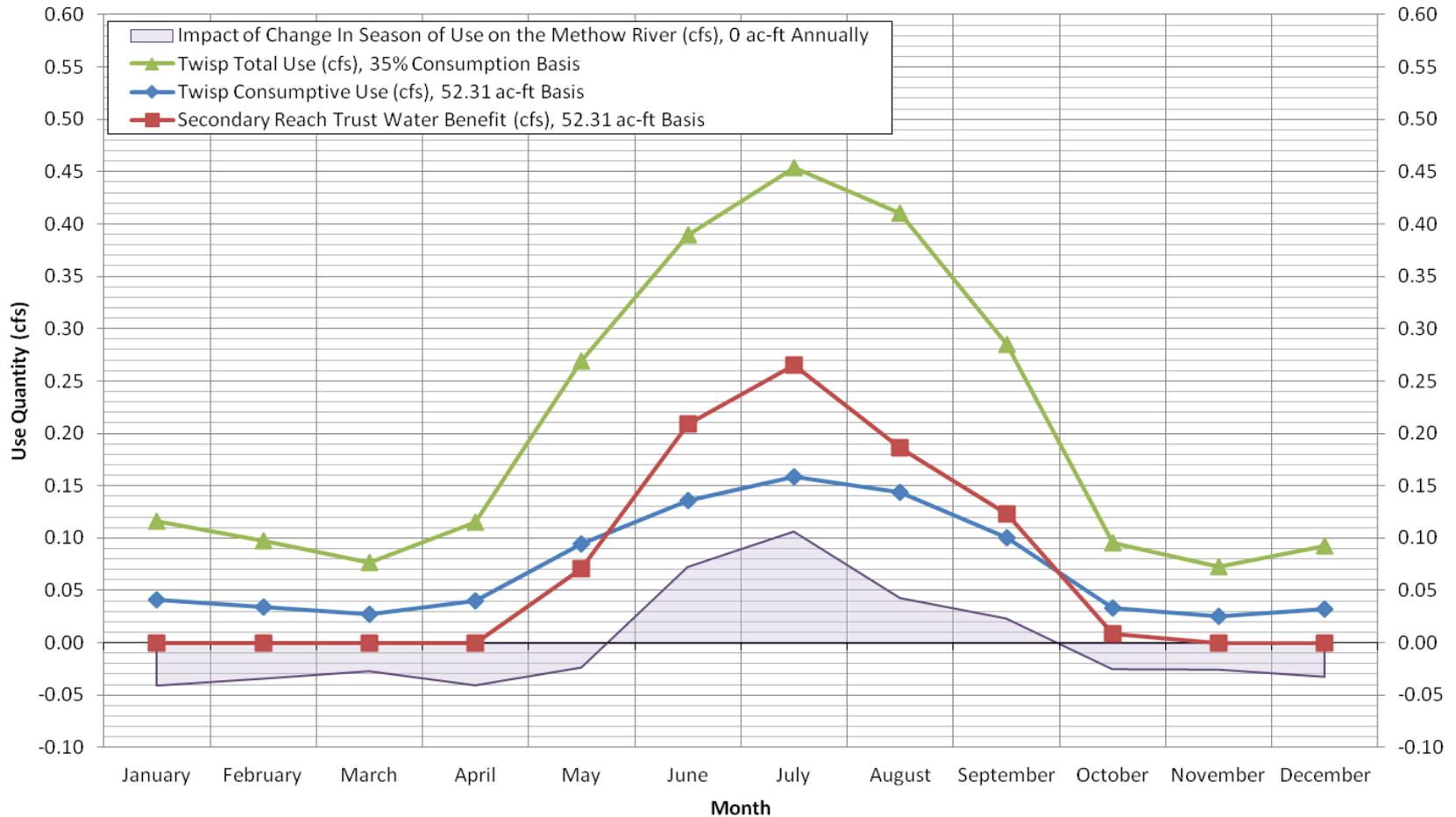
New Water Right

- ▶ OCR funds a package of instream flow improvement projects in the Methow Basin that offsets the imperfect location and timing of the trust water right relative to the new Twisp appropriation
- ▶ Twisp enters into a water service contract with OCR for long-term repayment of the trust water acquisition costs
- ▶ Ecology uses OCPI as the permitting vehicle to balance project impacts and benefits

Town of Twisp

New Water Right

Seasonal Benefits and Impacts - OCR Trust Water Right
Town of Twisp, Washington



General Policy Question(s)

- ▶ Does the investment of four (4) instream flow improvement projects (MVID West, Chewuch, Barkley and IEGP) provide sufficient instream flow benefits that outweigh the seasonal instream impacts of a new, reliable, municipal appropriation for Twisp that is water budget neutral on the Columbia River to meet the Overriding Consideration of the Public Interest (OCPI) criteria in WAC 173-548-020(5) and WAC 173-563-080?

General Policy Question(s)

Restated

- ▶ Is out-of-kind or alternative mitigation an option in the Methow Basin?
- ▶ Do the benefits of the retired irrigation water right in combination with the fish benefits of the Greater Methow improvement package, outweigh seasonal impacts of a new appropriation?
- ▶ Need an OCPI determination to waive interruptibility (WAC 173-548 & WAC 173-563)

Questions?

Acknowledgements

- Town of Twisp
- Aspect Consulting
- WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife
- Methow Watershed Council
- Trout Unlimited

