

**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS
FOR COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN
WATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is initiating preparation of a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) non-project (programmatic) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Columbia River Basin Water Management Program (Management Program). The programmatic EIS will help guide Ecology; federal, state, and local governments and agencies; tribal governments; and stakeholders in formal development and implementation of the Management Program.

Description of Proposal: The Washington State Legislature authorized development of the Management Program through passage of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill (ESSHB) 2860, an act relating to water resource management in the Columbia River Basin. The act was signed into law by the Governor on February 16, 2006. ESSHB 2860 and other relevant information concerning the Management Program can be viewed on Ecology's Columbia River Water Management Program webpage at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/cwphome.html>.

Through passage of ESSHB2860, the legislature recognized that a key priority of water resource management in the Columbia River Basin is the development of new water supplies that include storage and conservation in order to meet the economic and community development needs of people and the instream flow needs of fish. ESSHB 2860 establishes the need for a Columbia River Basin water supply development program, directs Ecology to aggressively pursue development of water supplies to benefit both instream and out-of-stream uses, and creates a Columbia River Basin development account.

The Management Program that will be established under ESSHB 2860 will govern the development of a series of potentially connected activities that will require agency actions (for example permits or approvals). The activities that will be addressed through this programmatic EIS include:

- Develop the means to deliver Columbia Basin Project water to lands in the Odessa Ground Water Management Subarea (Odessa Subarea) currently served by local ground water;
- Evaluate the feasibility of, and construct where appropriate, new off-channel storage facilities, including aquifer storage facilities, for use in augmenting supplies of water for instream and out-of-stream use in the Columbia River Basin;
- Conduct water conservation projects in cooperation with the Washington Conservation Commission, conservation districts, irrigation districts, and other local partners;

- Administer a program for entering into voluntary regional agreements for purposes of providing new water for out-of-stream use, streamlining permitting processes, and protecting instream flows; and
- Create a water resources information system for the Columbia River to support effective mainstem water resource planning and management.

In addition, the EIS will evaluate several specific early activities associated with the Management Program that will require actions by jurisdictional agencies on permits or approvals subsequent to the completion of this EIS process including:

- A request from the Bureau of Reclamation to divert, predicated on agreement being reached with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, an additional 82,500 acre-feet from Lake Roosevelt during non-drought years to provide 37,500 acre-feet of municipal/industrial supply, 30,000 acre-feet of irrigation water for the Odessa Sub-Area, and 15,000 acre feet for stream flow enhancement downstream of Grand Coulee Dam;
- A request from the Bureau of Reclamation to divert 50,000 acre-feet, in addition to the aforementioned 82,500 acre-feet, from Lake Roosevelt during drought years to provide 33,000 acre-feet of water for mainstem Columbia River interruptible water right holders and an additional 17,000 acre-feet for additional flow augmentation downstream of Grand Coulee Dam;
- A proposal by the Bureau of Reclamation to provide an alternative feed route for water released from Pinto Dam at Billy Clapp Lake to reach the Potholes Reservoir through a reach of Crab Creek; and
- A voluntary regional agreement proposed by the Columbia Snake Irrigators Association that would involve implementation of multiple irrigation efficiency measure in exchange for new water rights.

Proponent and Lead Agency: The Washington State Department of Ecology is the proponent of the Management Program and is serving as the SEPA lead agency.

Location of the Proposal: The Management Program will address those portions of the mainstems of the Columbia and Snake Rivers as well as those portions of the Columbia and Snake River Basins that lie within Washington State (See Figure 1).

EIS Required: The Department of Ecology as lead agency has determined this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(c) and will be prepared.

Scoping: Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable

significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. An initial list of issues that are to be addressed in the EIS are identified in Attachment A of this document.

Written comments may be sent to:

Derek Sandison
Department of Ecology
15 West Yakima Ave. Suite 200
Yakima, WA 98902-3452

Or emailed to:

dsan461@ecy.wa.gov (please use "Columbia River Management Program" in the subject line).

The deadline for submitting comments is **June 5, 2006**.

Ecology will host four public open houses during the scoping period. Information related to the program and the EIS will be provided as well as an opportunity to submit verbal or written comments on the scope of the EIS. The locations, dates, and times of the public open houses are as follows:

May 17, 2006 – Wenatchee

Wenatchee Convention Center (The Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel), Gala Room, 201 N. Wenatchee Ave. 4:00-7:00 p.m.

May 18, 2006 – Colville

Agricultural Trade Center, 317 W. Astor. 4:00-7:00 p.m.

May 22, 2006 – Moses Lake

Fire Dept. Multi-Purpose Room, 701 E. Third Ave. 4:00-7:00 p.m.

May 23, 2006 – Kennewick

Three Rivers Convention Center, Meeting Room C, 7016 W. Grandridge Blvd. 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Responsible Official: Derek Sandison

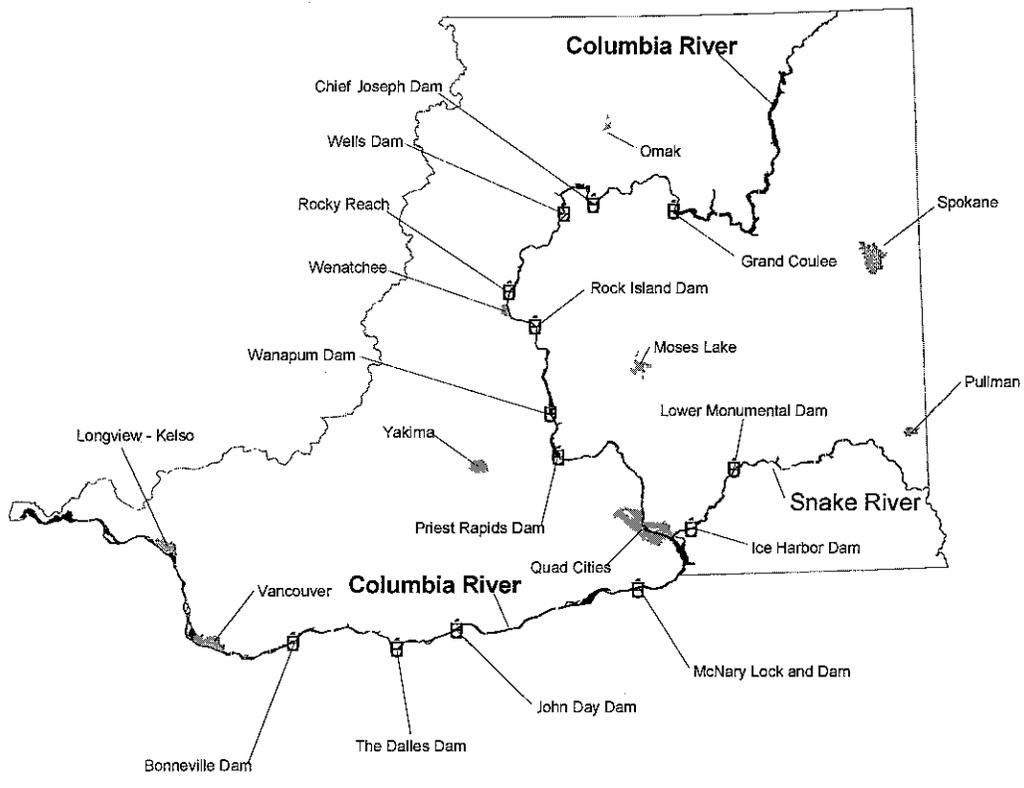
Position/Title: Central Regional Director

Date: May 5, 2006

Signature:



Figure 1
 Columbia River Water
 Management Program Location



 Dams
 Columbia - Snake Rivers
 Cities

 40 0 40 80 Miles
WDOE-CR-WM-2009-040-2009-040-0000

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ATTACHMENT A – ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN EIS

General Issues:

What will be the short- and long-term impacts to natural and built environments associated with water infrastructure elements (for example storage facilities and conveyance systems) of the Management Program?

To what extent can existing water infrastructure be modified to maximize its use in meeting legislative objectives contained in ESSHB 2860?

How will the Department of Ecology (Ecology) relate water storage and conservation projects within tributary streams to the mainstem Management Program?

How will the Management Program relate to the biological opinion under the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS)?

Policy Issues Related to Specific Sections of ESSHB 2860

Sections 2 and 3 (Pertaining to Columbia River Account, Storage Facilities, and Conservation):

How will water conservation projects within the Columbia basin project be used to mitigate new permits to provide an alternative source of water for lands in the Odessa subarea?

How will conservation projects be evaluated to ensure that the environmental mitigation is adequate? How will the lands to receive Columbia River water be determined?

How will “net water savings” be calculated?

Who will manage the trust water rights derived from state funding of conservation projects? How will the conservation projects be evaluated with respect to conveyance efficiency, consumptive use, surface return flows, and ground water recharge? How will monitoring and evaluation be done?

How will water rights for reservoir projects relate to the permits for out-of-stream uses? Who will hold the storage rights? How will permits to use the stored water for instream uses and out-of-stream uses be prioritized and managed?

How will Ecology decide which storage projects (including ASR) will be advanced to feasibility, funding, permitting, and construction? Will there be a process for consideration of small storage projects? What criteria would be used for decisions to fund the planning, feasibility, design, and construction of small facilities?

Is the program limited to conventional surface water storage facilities?

Will the one-third/two-thirds (instream purpose/out-of-stream purpose) criterion for allocation of water from publicly funded storage projects apply to privately funded water storage projects?

Section 4 (Pertaining to Voluntary Regional Agreements):

How will Ecology decide to sign a voluntary regional agreement? What are the minimum requirements? How will Ecology “harmonize” Voluntary Regional Agreements with watershed plans?

How will Ecology interpret the term “No negative impact on Columbia River mainstem instream flow during the months of July and August?” What environmental protection is appropriate for months other than July and August?

How will Ecology determine those water rights and ground water sources within one mile of the mainstem Columbia River as defined in Section 4(12)(a) of ESSHB 2860?

How will Ecology monitor and evaluate the water allocated to instream and out-of-stream uses. How will Ecology evaluate the program?

Section 5 (Pertaining to Water Use Inventory and Demand Forecast):

How will Ecology, in conjunction with county legislative authorities, watershed planning units, tribal governments, and interested parties, develop a Columbia River water supply inventory and a long-term water supply and demand forecast? What data and methodologies will be used?

Will climate change predictive modeling be employed as part of the water supply and demand forecasting? How would climate change modeling be used to plan, site, and operate water storage infrastructure?

What organizations in addition to those listed in Section 5(1) would participate or assist Ecology?

Section 6 (Pertaining to Water Resources Information System):

What information will Ecology maintain to allow effective water resources planning and management?

How will the water use and water right data be acquired from local watershed planning groups, federal agencies, the Bonneville Power Administration, irrigation districts, conservation districts, and other available sources? How will such data be analyzed?

If water use information is not available from existing sources, how will Ecology acquire it?