

**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE  
AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE  
YAKIMA RIVER BASIN INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Washington State Department of Ecology's Office of Columbia River is initiating preparation of a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan (Integrated Plan). The Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) are the joint lead agencies for this EIS, which is being prepared in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**Description of Proposal:**

The Yakima River Basin is adversely affected by a variety of water supply and aquatic resource problems. The proposed Integrated Plan is intended to address those problems through development and implementation of measures to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat as well as to improve the reliability of water supplies for irrigation, municipal, industrial, and domestic uses in the basin. The proposed Integrated Plan, which is the focus of the EIS, is based on a series of studies and management actions dating back to the authorization of the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) by Congress in 1979 and culminating with the current Yakima River Basin Study, being conducted through a partnership between Reclamation and Ecology.

In 2009, Reclamation and Ecology convened a Workgroup under Reclamation's YRBWEP authority composed of representatives of the Yakama Nation, federal agencies, Washington State and local governments, an environmental organization, and irrigation districts. The Workgroup was tasked with gleaning the most useful information from studies and other information compiled over the past 30 years and to formulate a comprehensive solution for the basin's water supply and aquatic resource problems.

In March 2011, members of the Workgroup agreed to advance a proposed Integrated Plan for further evaluation and refinement, including analysis of the plan in a Programmatic EIS. The proposed Integrated Plan is comprised of seven major elements that incorporate a broad range of water management and habitat improvement approaches intended to address the long-standing water resource problems in the basin. Elements of the Integrated Plan include:

- Fish Passage (fish passage improvements at Cle Elum, Bumping, Clear Lake, Keechelus, Kachess, and Tieton Dams);
- Fish Habitat (mainstem floodplain restoration, tributary enhancement, and watershed enhancement programs);

- Structural/Operational Changes (Kechelus to Kachess Pipeline and subordination of power generation at Roza and Chandler Power Plants);
- Surface Storage (new Wymer Dam and Reservoir, Bumping Reservoir enlargement, Kachess inactive storage);
- Groundwater Storage (groundwater infiltration prior to storage control);
- Enhanced Water Conservation (agricultural water and municipal/domestic conservation); and
- Market-Based Reallocation of Water Resources (institutional improvements to facilitate market-based water transfers).

The programmatic EIS will provide a general evaluation of the alternatives and potential significant adverse impacts associated with the proposed Integrated Plan. Additional project-level environmental review under NEPA and SEPA would occur when individual projects within the plan are proposed for implementation.

The proposed Integrated Water Resource Management Plan can be viewed at:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/images/pdf/ProposedIPlanDraft.pdf>

Information on this project may also be found at:

<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/index.html>

**Proponent:** Washington State Department of Ecology

**Location of Proposal:** The proposal addresses the Yakima River Basin in Benton, Kittitas, Klickitat, and Yakima Counties, Washington

**SEPA Lead Agency:** Department of Ecology, Office of Columbia River

**SEPA Responsible Official:** Derek I. Sandison

**EIS Required:** The 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. Written comments will be accepted through **May 19, 2011**. Send written scoping comments, requests to be added to the mailing list, or requests for sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired or other special assistance needs, to:

Bureau of Reclamation, Columbia-Cascades Area Office  
Attention: Candace McKinley, Environmental Program Manager,  
1917 Marsh Road  
Yakima, WA 98901;

or by e-mail to [yrbwep@usbr.gov](mailto:yrbwep@usbr.gov).

### **Scoping Open Houses:**

Scoping open houses will be held at the following communities, dates, and times:

- Ellensburg, Washington; Hal Holmes Center, 209 N. Ruby Street; **May 3, 2011**, scoping open houses 1:30 to 3:30 pm and again from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.
- Yakima, Washington; Yakima Area Arboretum, 1401 Arboretum Way; **May 5, 2011**; scoping open houses 1:30 to 3:30 pm and again from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.

Requests for sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired or other special assistance needs should be submitted by April 26, 2011 to Candace McKinley, Environmental Program Manager, Telephone (509) 575-5848, ext. 237. TTY users may dial 711 to obtain a toll-free TTY relay.

**DATE: April 4, 2011**