

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group
May 12, 2016
Hal Holmes Center
Ellensburg, Washington

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. Facilitator Neil Aaland reviewed the agenda. Introductions were made around the room.

Yakima Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan (YBIP)

This agenda item was presented by Wendy Christensen, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Tom Tebb, OCR Director (see OCR website to view the PowerPoint presentation). This is a thirty year workplan, currently in the first ten years. Key projects include:

- Cle Elum Dam Fish Passage – has a unique design (“Whoosh” technology to deliver fish above the dam), and will open thirty miles of habitat and tributaries above the dam. The Yakama Tribe has been working to re-establish sockeye runs. This will save \$12 million over capture and haul processes.
- Cle Elum pool raise – adding three feet to radial gates on spillway. Includes shoreline protection along the east side of the reservoir; considering using bioengineering to protect residences from the raise.
- Lake Kachess projects include the K to K (Keechelus to Kachess) conveyance, to move water from Lake Keechelus to Lake Kachess. The agencies are working on the Final Environmental Impact Statement, and have not yet decided whether to move forward.
- Kachess drought relief pumping plant – adding a floating pump as new alternative.

Tom Tebb noted last summer’s work around the Manastash watershed, which was able to get water in the streams to help salmon.

Other projects include:

- Groundwater storage – City of Yakima Aquifer Storage and Recovery project. OCR also looking at other areas for re-timing water, including Kittitas Reclamation District and Wapato Irrigation Project.
- Teanaway Community Forest – purchase of 55,000 acres of habitat. It has been previously logged, and the plan is to rehabilitate forest and work in the tributaries. This helps balance Yakima plan work. Tom listed several specific projects within the forest as examples of rehabilitation work.

Tom reviewed funding for the plan. The 2013 – 2015 Washington State budget included a total of \$131 million for the plan. Reclamation’s budget for fiscal years 2015-2017 included \$56.7 for related projects. Senator Maria Cantwell was successful in passing a federal package by the Senate, and it has now gone to the U.S. House of Representatives.

CR-PAG members and alternates had these questions and observations:

- What is the size of the Cle Elum reservoir? [435,000 acre feet]
- How is recharge done for ASR? [Depends on the project; methods include passive recharge, Yakima is using an injection well]
- How old are the aquifers? [Can be tens of thousands of years old]
- There is a concern regarding chlorine; disinfection byproduct can exceed groundwater standards

- Concerns from Yakima Basin Storage Alliance about additional storage not moving forward [YBSA is encouraged as part of the workgroup to work collaboratively with the Yakima workgroup]
- What is the path in the U.S. House? [House has two committees; they are considering how to handle the conference committee process; discussion should conclude before August]
- Over the past forty years there have been failed individual efforts which did not succeed; this collaborative effort is providing forward progress, including things like Teanaway Forest
- Temperature issues are being looked at by a new subcommittee, looking at the lower river

Update: Columbia River Treaty

Tom Tebb provided this update. He consulted with Tom Karier, one of Washington State's representatives for the process. During the meeting between Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau and President Obama, Senator Cantwell asked the Prime Minister about the Treaty and urged him to start moving on this. On the U.S. side, there was an April 15 meeting with Brian Doherty, representative from the U.S. State Department. He is still reaching out to northwest stakeholders. Tom noted that Washington State counties along the Columbia River are seeking representation in Washington D.C. on this issue. Tom is thinking about asking Brian Doherty to meet with the CR PAG at their next meeting on August 4.

Tom also noted that there is a new decision regarding the Columbia River Biological Opinion. Judge Michael Simon, who replaced Judge Redden, issued a decision in favor of plaintiffs National Wildlife Federation and others. More to come on this.

Public Comment

- Question about a study from John Yoder, Washington Water Resources Center, which had different information on cost/benefit for several Yakima Basin plan components. [Wendy Christensen said BOR has a prescribed analysis they did for the plan; John did a different method. The economic factors are a series of assumptions. They're aware of these results; BOR only does their analysis if federal funding is involved.]
- David Ortman commented that the Icicle Creek scoping comment period closed yesterday, and provided a copy of a comment letter signed by a number of stakeholders asking for additional alternatives to be considered
- Chuck Klarich wondered if, with the Columbia River Treaty deliberations, there is any discussion about temperature issues with fish [no specific knowledge about that]

Future of the Columbia River Program

This item was moved to be earlier on the agenda. Facilitator Neil Aaland introduced the topic, and noted this has been on the agenda for several previous CRPAG meetings. The original funding provided in 2006, \$200 million in state bonding authority, is nearly gone. There is a general perception that the Program has been successful in addressing its mission. What should its future be? Tom Tebb reviewed three options under consideration for additional funding:

- Be part of a "big water bill" that has been under discussion for several legislative sessions;
- Seek reauthorization of the bonding authority; or
- Seek funding each legislative session for specific projects

Tom was asked about the legislature's perspective on the program. He said OCR submits regular reports, and noted success depends on the specific legislator. He thinks that generally OCR has been seen as successful. Evan thinks legislators react pretty favorably. Additional comments:

Neil asked PAG members to reflect on the program and provide their thoughts on its future.

- Mike Leita thinks it has been successful, and has been a bright spot
- Mike Schwisow says the Program has a very good track record; we're now in an uncertain time. The bonding authority has been helpful, lately we've been on a hybrid path (project by project AND bonding authority). There are other considerations this session, such as the McCleary education issues. He thinks we should seek a new dedicated bond for the program, and support OCR's normal budget process
- Wendy Christensen is talking with other states, including Oregon and Idaho, who have expressed how impressed they are with the progress made by Washington
- Rich Stevens said the Eastern WA Council of Governments would like to see bonding re-authorized; they also support the pay as you go approach, as needed
- Evan Sheffels thinks it has been incredibly successful, and we need to tell the story. Originally we thought bigger storage projects would be built, but the funded projects have been great. He thinks we should do all three options for additional funding
- David Close wants to look at what has been achieved, in terms of the original goals. It is useful to revisit in detail.
- Justin Bezold passed on comments from Lisa Pelly, who thinks OCR has done some phenomenal work and has more to do. She would prefer the larger water bill idea but recognizes other approaches may be important as well.
- Having state, federal, and local funding sources broadens the interest
- OCR demonstrates a different model of success
- Jim Brown thinks this fits in well with WDFW's mandate to preserve and protect resources
- Gary Passmore thinks looking at future generations is important; without water and infrastructure, he sees more people having to move off the reservation
- Melissa Downes noted that OCR has gone to the legislature 5 times and has gotten what they've requested each time
- Craig Simpson thinks the state funding has been an important catalyst

Neil opened the floor to general comments from the audience. It was suggested a letter of support for funding could be drafted, and anyone wishing to sign it could do so. Evan thought that was a good idea, and cited a joint letter that helped on a different project (Voluntary Stewardship Program). Tom asked Jim Skalski, Ecology Water Resource Program budget manager, to add any thoughts. Jim noted that there are several current OFM-mandated studies on water issues, due at the end of this year and early next year. He agrees with the challenges on the budget. He also noted that the capital budget has a total of \$2 billion for all capital projects. State general fund is moderately healthy, but the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) is low due to the price of oil. In response to a question, he thinks a letter of support should go to the Governor's office.

Projects Funded by OCR

Tom Tebb gave a PowerPoint presentation: "The Columbia River Program: A Decade of Water Supply Development" (see OCR website). 306,064 acre-feet has been developed for out-of-stream use, and an additional 210,463 acre-feet is in process. 82,751 acre-feet has been developed for instream flows, with 11,278 acre-feet in process. OCR has funded 33 habitat improvement projects, with 80 miles of stream improved. He then presented this information in categories of the five legislative mandates (see RCW 90.90.020).

Tom reviewed the 2017-2019 budget proposal for OCR. He has to work within \$30 million of available funding. The request includes:

1. Finish Odessa (\$10-12 million)

2. Icicle (\$3-4 million)
3. ASR (\$2-3 million)
4. Columbia Basin - buy water (\$1.5 million)
5. Horse Heaven Hills Switzler Canyon Storage (\$1 million)
6. Walla Walla basin planning process (\$0.5 million)
7. Several smaller projects

For the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, the request is for \$31.1 million. This makes a total of \$61-62 million overall for OCR. Questions and comments:

- Have the legislative mandates helped or hindered the program? [Tom thinks they have helped]
- What are interest payments on the \$200 million? [25 year bonds would have interest, but don't have the exact figure – to date \$125 million in bonds have been sold]
 - During the last ten years bonds have been cheap
 - The return on investment has been impressive
- Have municipalities seen any relief from their water shortages? [Not yet; OCR is focusing on the Odessa replacement and then can turn attention to small communities]

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the CRPAG will be on August 4 in Ellensburg, WA.

Attendees: *CRPAG members and alternates:*

Jason Bezold, Trout Unlimited (for Lisa Pelly)
 Jim Brown, WDFW
 Wendy Christensen, BOR
 David Close, CTUIR
 Jon Culp, WSCC
 Gary Passmore, CTCIR
 Phil Rigdon, Yakama Nation
 Mike Schwisow, CBDL/Irrigation Districts
 Evan Sheffels, WSFB
 Mark Stedman, Lincoln County Commissioner
 Craig Simpson, ECBID
 Jim Sizemore, Klickitat County Commissioner
 Rich Stevens, Grant County Commissioner

Others in attendance:

Neil Aaland, Facilitator
 Jacob Anderson, Klickitat County
 Chris Augustine, EA EST
 Jim Browitt, Schroeder Law Offices
 Scott Cave, SC Communications
 Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation
 Mike Dixel, WDOH
 Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology
 Urban Eberhart
 Bernie Erickson
 Tim Flynn, Aspect
 Dan Haller, Aspect
 Tim Hill, Ecology

Todd Hunziker, CH2M
 Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
 BJ Kieffer, Spokane Tribe DNR
 Michele Kiesz
 Chuck Klarich, YBSA
 Mike Krautkramer, Robinson Noble
 Chris Marks, CTUIR
 David McClure, Klickitat County
 Mike Miller
 Dave Nazy, Ecology
 David Ortman, Sierra Club
 Elaine Packard
 Nicky Pasi, AR

Joye Redfield-Wilder, Ecology
Kristina Ribellia, WA Water Trust
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
Cathy Schaeffer, Rep. McMorris Rodgers
George Schneider
Jim Skalski, Ecology

Jason Smith, Jacobs Engineering
Tom Tebb, Department of Ecology
Arden Thomas, WWT
Bill Wagoner, National Frozen Foods
Bruce Williams, GeoEngineers