

**Columbia River Policy Advisory Group**  
Olympia, Washington  
March 1, 2007

**Mission and Goals**

Dan Haller and Gerry O’Keefe reviewed the revised Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives statement. After discussion, the PAG agreed to the following revisions:

- The title will be revised to be the Columbia River Basin Water Resources Management Program.
- The Vision statement will be revised to read: “Preserve and enhance the standard of living for the people of Washington by strengthening economic conditions and restoring and protecting the Columbia Basin’s unique natural environment.”
- The Goals statement will be revised to read: “Enhance the natural environment to benefit people, fish and wildlife.”
- The final bullet under the Objectives statement will be revised to read: “Establish and maintain communication avenues that encourage dialogue between the program and the public; within the Policy Advisory Group; and with other states, Canada, and tribal governments.”

This mission and goals statement will become the working document of Ecology and the PAG and can be revised as necessary in the future.

**Kennewick Irrigation District**

Darryll Olsen of the Columbia Snake River Irrigators Association briefed the PAG on a proposed new water right for the Kennewick Irrigation District (KID).

KID applied for a water right 15 years ago. KID is proposing to develop the right through the Voluntary Regional Agreement (VRA), assuming the VRA is approved by Ecology. The permit would contain a number of conditions including best management conservation practices, measuring water use, installing screens, and a mitigation fee. The project would be developed in two phases over a period of years. The first phase would be based on a recalibration of acreage, transferring “wet acreage” elsewhere in KID to the Red Mountain area for use on high value crops. Phase II would be a more dramatic effort to shift the water diversion from the Yakima River to the Columbia River and irrigate new acreage. This would increase flows to the lower Yakima River, and would decrease the volume of the Columbia unless additional mitigation water to offset decreases in Columbia River flows could be found. Because the pump exchange in Phase II provides in-stream flow benefits to the Yakima River, and could be water neutral on the Columbia if mitigated, KID believes that the project is a legitimate candidate for state and federal funding. KID is seeking the permit to be issued in July 2007.

PAG members posed a number of questions about the project:

- What are the incentives for KID members to be efficient in the use of water for residential uses?
- What will the net shift from agriculture acreage to residential acreage be over time with and without the proposed project?
- How can the public be confident that water use is being accurately measured?
- What would the public money for Phase II be buying?
- Is KID seeking public money for a project that it otherwise would have built with its own money?
- Would the public be subsidizing the personal choices of residential owners? Can a restriction or condition on freely irrigating new grass and lawns be written into the permit due to the use of public monies?
- What is the demonstrated need for this project?
- The KID Yakima River diversion is the subject of a portion of the federal 1994 Yakima River Enhancement legislation which authorizes electrification of the KID hydro-pumps at Chandler.
- The KID Yakima River water right is subject to a settlement agreement to which the Yakama Nation, Ecology, Reclamation, and KID are all signatories. The settlement agreement includes, among other things, conditions for KID irrigation new lands with Yakima River water.
- How would the drawdown from the Columbia River be mitigated?

Gerry O'Keefe noted that this is one of the first potential Columbia River-related permit since passage of the Columbia River bill. Ecology is looking for a thoughtful and transparent review process. Ecology sees this project as an opportunity to visibly bring together parties in the Yakima and Columbia Rivers for both in-stream and out-of-stream benefits.

## **Status Reports**

Dan Haller briefed the PAG on two Ecology activities. First, Ecology will complete the 2007 legislative report in-house rather than using a contractor like it did for the first report. Ecology will bring a draft report to the PAG in early September. Between now and July 1, Ecology is interested in getting comments informally from PAG members about what changes they would like to see in the next legislative report.

Second, Ecology proposes hosting a Columbia River Water Resources Summit in June to engage the public in a discussion of the Columbia River Water Management Program and its objectives. PAG members were generally supportive of the idea, but offered a number of comments and suggestions:

- The purpose of the summit should be very clear. It should not be a review of the legislation. The more detailed and particular it is about what is actually going on, the more valuable it will be to the public.

- Tribal representatives should be asked to provide comments on out-of-stream benefits as well as in-stream benefits.
- Factual information should be presented within the context of the Basin's water supply and demand.
- County representatives should be added to panels which address both in-stream and out-of-stream benefits.
- There should be full opportunity for public comment.
- There should be ways to involve the public, perhaps by showing them where their project is in line, compared to other projects.

### **Programmatic EIS**

Derek Sandison discussed the options facing Ecology in the implementation of the recently issued programmatic EIS. There are three options for implementing the various alternatives: guidance, policy documents, or rulemaking. At this point, Ecology is looking at using rulemaking for two of the EIS alternatives -- voluntary stepping to the side of the line by senior applicants, and the calculation of net water savings from conservation. (Both of these rulemakings would apply state-wide, not just to the Columbia.) Ecology is planning to use guidance to address funding criteria and cost-sharing component of VRA applications, and guidance and policy documents for other alternatives.

PAG members offered these comments:

- The two items slated for rulemaking make sense; they are procedurally necessary to deal with water right applications.
- It would be useful for PAG members to have some time to examine other alternatives to see if they might be good candidates for rulemaking and report back with suggestions by the April 18 meeting.

Dan Haller referred to handouts with maps showing all interruptible water rights within one-mile of the Columbia River and the first 21 pending applications. In effect, the pending application list is the current demand for water in the basin. Because many of the applications have been pending for a long time, it is likely that, once review starts, the list will be substantially whittled down to prospects that are real. Ecology and the regions can then make choices about how to match up sources of supply (e.g. from acquisition, conservation, storage) with the remaining applications. In effect, the sources of supply will drive Ecology's ability to fill the projected demand, with source-of-supply projects being vetted either through the TAG review process or through a water auction sponsored by the State.

### **Funding Criteria and Technical Advisory Committee**

Dan Haller and Gerry O'Keefe then reviewed the current template showing the process for developing water supply through Columbia River Basin Water Supply Development Account and how funding criteria would be applied to projects. Projects would be

reviewed either through the TAG process or through an Ecology review. Extensive discussion ensued.

PAG members offered the following observations:

- It would be better to name the Account with the same language used in the Columbia River bill.
- Watershed planning needs to play a more prominent role in evaluating projects. There should be an additional box inserted into the template titled “To WRIA for review and comment.” County commissioners will consider where and how the template should be amended regarding WRIA reviews and bring suggestions to the April 18 meeting.
- There should be more attention to efficiency in two respects: (1) the process should send clear signals to potential applicants who might be able to add to the region’s water supply. These projects should go through an early, upfront screening before being subject to a more extensive application process. (2) Applying the same funding criteria from the TAG process to the Ecology process for new large off-channel storage review may add value to the Ecology review. Different types of projects (e.g., new large off-channel storage, acquisition) may go through different types of Ecology and other environmental review, such as SEPA. This should be described more precisely.
- Fisheries co-managers should be added to the Ecology review side of the template when expertise is needed for the review of benefits for fish.
- There should be further consideration of the permanent water threshold for projects that are reviewed by the TAG. It might be useful for the TAG to evaluate the permanency of all water applications. Projects that deliver permanent water should be prioritized over those that would make water available over a limited period of time (e.g., leases). The latter should not be the basis for issuing new, permanent water rights. Given this, it may make sense to set up two lines, one for permanent and one for short-term conservation.
- Acquisition projects might better be handled within the context of the TAG process rather than the Ecology process.

In response to questions, Dan Haller clarified that the scoring factors were not yet weighted, but that weighting would be considered as Ecology develops comprehensive guidance for funding application and for project scoring. Currently Ecology is not anticipating putting a “threshold” score in place. Projects would simply be ranked from highest to lowest in score order and all ranked projects would be sent forward. Development of the funding process will continue and additional information will be brought before the PAG at the April meeting or a subsequent meeting.

### **Federal Funding**

Gerry O’Keefe will visit Washington D.C. in April, among other reasons, to discuss federal funding for appraisal studies of potential large off-channel storage projects.

## Next Meeting

The next CRPAG meeting will be on Wednesday **April 18 at the Tumwater Lodge in Olympia, beginning at 9:00 a.m.** The preliminary agenda will include: a briefing on collaborative water projects in the San Joaquin Valley; planning for the Columbia River Water Supply Summit; the project funding process; additional rulemaking options to implement the EIS; and a program status update by Ecology.

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The following people attended the meeting:

### *PAG members:*

Jon Culp, Washington State Conservation Commission  
Jim Fredericks, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Bill Gray, Bureau of Reclamation  
Dan Haller, Department of Ecology  
Mike Leita, Yakima County Commissioner  
Rob Masonis, American Rivers  
Michael Mayer, Washington Environmental Council  
Gerry O'Keefe, Department of Ecology  
Darryll Olsen, Columbia-Snake Rivers Irrigators Association  
Merrill Ott, Stevens County Commission  
Lisa Pelly, Washington Rivers Conservancy  
Rudy Plager, Adams County Commissioner  
Philip Rigdon, Yakama Nation  
Derek Sandison, Department of Ecology  
Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League  
Teresa Scott, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau  
Rob Swedo, Bonneville Power Administration

### *Others in attendance:*

Bob Barwin, Department of Ecology  
Dave Burdick, Department of Ecology  
Joel Frendenthal, Yakima County  
Kirby Gilbert, MWH Global  
Al Josephy, Department of Ecology  
David McClure, Klickitat County, WRIAs 30 and 31  
Elizabeth McManus, facilitator  
Barbara Markham, Attorney General's Office

Peggy Miller, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Jim Milton, Yakima Basin Water Resources Agency  
Steve Nelson, RH2 Engineering  
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation  
Pat Ryan, Washington Department of Natural Resources  
David Sauter, Klickitat County  
Dan Silver, facilitator  
Michael Taylor, Cascade Economics LLC  
Tom Tebb, Department of Ecology  
Steve Thurin, HDR Engineering