

**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE  
AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF  
SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE  
YAKIMA RIVER BASIN WATER STORAGE FEASIBILITY STUDY**

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) is initiating preparation of a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study. In January 2008, Ecology and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) issued a Draft Planning Report and EIS for the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study. The EIS was a combined National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and SEPA document. Based on comments received on the Draft Planning Report and EIS, Ecology has determined that it should evaluate additional water supply alternatives that were not considered in the January 2008 document and will prepare a SEPA Supplemental Draft EIS. Further, since a number of the comments received made the valid point that it is not possible to adequately evaluate all reasonable water supply alternatives without consideration of habitat and fish passage needs to meet fish restoration goals of the alternatives. Such needs will be addressed in the SEPA supplemental evaluation as well. Ecology is requesting comments regarding the scope of the Supplemental Draft EIS. The Supplemental Draft EIS will not duplicate alternatives or analyses already presented in the January 2008 Draft Planning Report and EIS.

**Description of Proposal:** The purpose of the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study is to improve anadromous and resident fish habitat and water supply for irrigation and future municipal needs. In the January 2008 Draft Planning Report and EIS, Ecology and Reclamation jointly evaluated three storage alternatives: Black Rock Reservoir, Wymer Reservoir, and Wymer Reservoir with Yakima River Pump Exchange. In addition, Ecology evaluated three additional alternatives: enhanced water conservation, market-based reallocation of water resources, and ground water storage. The three State Alternatives were developed in response to comments received during Draft EIS scoping indicating that Ecology should consider a broader range of alternatives, including non-surface storage options, to meet SEPA requirements for identifying and evaluating reasonable alternatives.

Based on comments received on the January 2008 Draft Planning Report and EIS, Ecology has determined that additional water supply alternatives should be evaluated together with related anadromous fish habitat improvements. The additional alternatives fall into three general categories—fish passage improvements, new storage or modifying existing operations, and fish habitat enhancement on tributaries and mainstem rivers. Ecology will work with interested parties in the Yakima River Basin to identify habitat constraints and potential related to the three alternatives.

**Proponent:** Washington State Department of Ecology

**Location of Proposal:** The project area is the Yakima River Basin in Benton, Yakima, and Kittitas Counties, Washington and encompasses Water Resource Inventory Areas 37, 38, and 39.

**SEPA Lead Agency:** Washington State Department of Ecology

**Supplemental EIS Required:** Ecology as lead agency has determined that additional alternatives to improve water supply and fish habitat and in the Yakima River Basin should be evaluated. In accordance with WAC 197-11-405 (4), a supplemental draft EIS will be prepared. The evaluation of

additional alternatives will augment the analysis contained in the January 2008 Draft Planning Report and EIS for the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study.

The Supplemental Draft EIS will address impacts of the additional alternatives only. It will not include additional analysis of the State Alternatives that were evaluated in the Draft Planning Report and EIS. The Supplemental Draft EIS will be released to the public for comment in Fall 2008. A Final EIS will subsequently be prepared and will incorporate responses to comments on the Supplemental Draft EIS as well as comments on the State Alternatives from the January 2008 Draft Planning Report and EIS. The Supplemental Draft EIS and the Final EIS will be separate SEPA documents. Reclamation will complete its NEPA analysis of the Draft Planning Report and EIS with Ecology serving as a cooperating agency.

**Possible Alternatives:** Ecology has identified some preliminary projects for the three general categories of alternatives. Ecology will further develop the alternatives through scoping and the Supplemental Draft EIS analysis.

#### **Fish Passage**

This alternative would provide for fish passage at existing storage reservoirs and other structures that currently restrict or block passage. It also includes providing for passage improvements on tributaries that are restricted by flow barriers.

- Cle Elum Dam
- Bumping Lake
- Rimrock Lake
- Keechelus Dam
- Kachess Dam
- Improvements at Roza Dam
- Passage at other facilities including facilities on tributaries
- Flow passage barriers on tributaries

#### **Storage/Modification to Existing Facilities and Operations**

This alternative includes the construction of new storage reservoirs and operational changes to existing reservoirs to optimize the basin's water supply. Other structural projects such as pump stations and modifications to canals are included.

- Modifications to the Wymer Reservoir proposal evaluated in the January 2008 Draft Planning Report and EIS
- Naches River basin storage opportunities including enlargement of Bumping Lake
- Pine Hollow Reservoir in the Ahtanum Creek basin
- Operational changes to existing reservoirs
- Pumping plant for Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) to help Easton Ladder flows
- KRD canal modifications to improve tributary flows
- Kennewick Irrigation District Pump Exchange

#### **Habitat Enhancements**

This alternative includes habitat improvements on mainstem rivers and tributaries. Potential improvements include improving streamflow, modifying floodplains to improve habitat, reestablishing side channels, and acquiring habitat.

- Tributary enhancements
  - Taneum
  - Teanaway

- Manastash
- Swauk
- Wilson/Cherry
- Ahtanum Creek
- Wapato Creek
- Toppenish Creek
- Mainstem enhancements
  - Cle Elum/Upper Kittitas reach
  - Ellensburg reach
  - Lower Naches reach
  - Gap to gap (Selah to Union Gap) reach
  - Wapato reach

**Preliminary Issues:** Among the major issues to be considered are effects on surface and ground water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife, plant communities, geology and soils, land use, recreation, scenic resources, cultural resources, social/economic impacts, hydropower, and transportation.

**Scoping:** Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the Supplemental EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. The comment period will open on June 27, 2008 and end on July 30, 2008.

Written comments may be sent to:

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

Or emailed to: [dsan461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:dsan461@ecy.wa.gov) (please use “Yakima River Basin scoping comments” in the subject line).

The deadline for submitting comments is July 30, 2008.

Two public open houses will be held on July 21, 2008 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Yakima Convention Center at 10 N 8<sup>th</sup> St. in Yakima. Verbal comments can be given at each event.

**Responsible Official:** Derek Sandison

**Position/Title:** Central Regional Director

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_