

Yakima Basin Water Budget Neutral Project Policy

Bob Barwin

What does the policy do?

- Expedite processing of new applications for permit when they are matched with existing trust water rights
- Clarify water budget neutrality in the context of Yakima River basin
- “Bank” credit for substantial enhancement to the natural environmental

Expedited Processing

- Applications must be non-consumptive and substantially enhance the natural environment -- WAC 173-152-050(2)(b)
 - Application matched with a trust water right must be water budget neutral
 - Substantial enhancement to the natural environment is determined with consideration of the trust water right

Water Budget Neutrality

- The “gold standard” in Yakima is consumptive use measured at Parker
- Further defined by CAG Guidelines
 - <http://www.roundtableassociates.com/xfer/CAG%20Guidelines.htm>
 - Equivalent reductions in consumptive use
 - Water that would have been used if not for transfer
 - Transfer must adhere to specific delivery schedule
 - Must be no adverse change in instream flow
 - Yakima Project operational impacts must be identified

Mitigation bank

- Applications can be expedited as long as the trust water program holds rights that obtain the substantial benefit to the natural environment
 - Tributary flow and habitat improvement
 - Consumptive use surplus provides lower Yakima River flow improvement

Summary

- The draft policy relies on mitigation concepts tested in 2001 and 2005 droughts
- In areas where ground water is present, but is far removed from the Yakima River, a new permit is required to authorize a mitigated use
- Expedited processing is the only available means to permit non-exempt uses in cases where the source is far removed from the river
- Policy would not be used without Reclamation and Yakama Nation concurrence