

CR-PAG Strategic Planning Summary

February 23, 2018

Introduction

The Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (PAG) provides advice to the Office of Columbia River, Washington State Department of Ecology, regarding implementation of the Columbia River Basin Water Supply Act. The PAG held a strategic planning session at its meeting of December 6, 2017. This summary describes background on the PAG, a description of the process used for the session, and the results of the session.

Legislative background

In 2006, the Washington Legislature adopted the Columbia River Basin Water Supply Act. Codified as RCW 90.90, section 005 includes the following finding:

(1) The legislature finds that a key priority of water resource management in the Columbia river basin is the development of new water supplies that includes storage and conservation in order to meet the economic and community development needs of people and the instream flow needs of fish.

(2) The legislature therefore declares that a Columbia river basin water supply development program is needed, and directs the department of ecology to aggressively pursue the development of water supplies to benefit both instream and out-of-stream uses.

Creation of the Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (PAG)

The enabling legislation (CW 90.90) did not explicitly create the PAG. Ecology decided it needed a way to seek stakeholder input in implementing the Act, and established a workgroup comprised of stakeholders with interests in the issues. The PAG began meeting in 2006. The early years were focused on bigger issues, such as whether to go beyond just the mainstem of the Columbia River, and establishing the funding program. In later years the focus has been on potential new areas to find/use water, such as ASR (Aquifer Storage and Recovery). See Attachment One for a summary of the policy issues discussed by the PAG.

Since the Act was adopted, the Columbia River Policy Advisory Group (PAG) has provided advice to Ecology on water supply development projects pursued with the original \$200 million bonding authority. Additionally, the PAG has fostered productive communications between state, local, and Tribal governments, and improved relationships between agencies, non-profits, and private industry. These relationships and partnerships have proven instrumental in achieving collaborative and productive solutions to longstanding water supply challenges. These efforts allow the PAG to guide Ecology on which proposed solutions and water supply developments are likely to provide substantial benefit, making significant and timely progress in developing water supplies for farms, fish, and communities of the Columbia River Basin.

Strategic Plan – How the discussion was structured

The PAG has had several agenda topics over the past couple of years focusing on its future. The Strategic Plan is intended to address several things, including the future of the group, structural changes to address the ability to forward a recommendation from the group, and a funding strategy for future

projects. This plan is intended to address the next four years (two biennia) and provide broad guidance for the PAG. It may also be revisited and revised at any time during that period if necessary.

The strategic planning session was organized as follows:

1. History of PAG (Tom Tebb and Neil Aaland)
 - a. Review of enabling legislation (provided in packet), purpose
 - b. Formation of PAG
 - c. Policy recommendations that have been brought to PAG
 - d. Discussion over past two years about future of PAG and CR Program
2. Review focused questions (provided in advance of the session):
 - a. What has been the value of the CR Program and the CRPAG over its 10-year life?
 - b. What should we look to accomplish in the next 10 years?
 - c. What specific tasks should the CRPAG focus on for (and during) the 2019-2021 biennium?
 - d. What should the CR Program have for a funding strategy?
 - e. To realize the vision, is there anything in the CRPAG structure that should be changed?
 - f. E.G. should the CRPAG have a different structure (e.g. formalize executive committee, appoint a chair)?
3. Strategic planning exercise
 - a. Divide into small groups
 - b. Discuss the focused questions
 - c. Develop responses, answers to questions
 - d. Come back together and discuss the answers to the questions
 - e. Neil summarize the results

Results of the Strategic Planning Session

Broad Goals

1. Establish long term funding for current and future water supply projects
2. Continue progress on Odessa and Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, so that these projects can be brought to fruition
3. Improve dialogue and collaboration with tribal governments, legislators, and other stakeholders
4. Further develop water for instream and out-of-stream uses (including storage and conservation, as directed by the statute)

Specific Tasks

1. Stay current on Columbia River Treaty re-negotiations and opportunities to meet in- and out-of-stream demand through Treaty and non-Treaty Canadian storage.
2. Identify data gaps to understand the array of potential impacts of climate change and associated avenues for adaptation
3. Begin including groundwater integration and mitigation actions
4. Continue advising Ecology on legal and technical water supply solutions.

Other ideas raised during the discussion:

1. Initiate outreach efforts with western WA stakeholders [the Hirst legislation adopted by Legislature in January includes this]
2. Focus more on groundwater and groundwater decline – tied to water availability

3. Seek to expand the approach of an integrated water resource management plan to other river basins, as has been done in the Icicle Creek and the Walla Walla River Basins – look to a creative, “big picture” approach
4. Priority of finding stable long-term funding – OCR is discussing with Ecology’s budget office what another long-term bonding approach would look like