

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group
August 5, 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. Neil noted that we were going to shift topics on the agenda around a bit.

Update: Columbia River Treaty

Tom Tebb, OCR Director provided a status report. A letter has been signed by the four northwest governors and sent to the president, asking that the Treaty be modernized and that the federal government coordinate with the states. Tom has reached out to Brian Doherty, lead for the U.S. State Department, and invited him to attend the PAG. Brian declined the information for now, since nothing has started up yet. Tom noted the state team is trying to re-form in anticipation of coordination work with the federal government.

Tom asked Commissioner McCart if he had anything to add on the Treaty, since he's been engaged in this. The only thing he added is that Rep. McMorris Rogers told him there has been nothing new on this front.

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. He hopes to have more information soon.

Supply and Demand Forecast

Tom Tebb introduced this topic. This is the third supply and demand forecast; these are required by the legislation creating the Columbia River Program. They are done at five year intervals. Jennifer Adam with WSU picked up from here and showed a PowerPoint presentation. [See the presentation on the OCR website for details]

The forecast looks at three areas of potential change: climatic, economic, and water management. Several different models were used.

- Climate models show uncertainty around future precipitation patterns. The models predict an increase in water supplies, but a shift in when that water is available. More water will be available between November – May, less water available between June – October.
- Economic models looked at future crop mix, which affects overall water demand. One trend was noted with a potential increase in wine grapes; this crop results in less water needed. One PAG member said he wasn't sure about the assumption for increasing wine grapes, we may have neared the top of that trend.
- Water management: municipal water needs are simpler to address; Jennifer reviewed how these needs were calculated, based primarily on population growth.

Melissa Downes reviewed the five exploratory “modules” that are addressed. These modules are an expansion of the forecast beyond the statutory requirements, and are intended to serve as a foundation for work in future forecasts. These modules, or additional areas of focus, are:

- Declining groundwater
- Use of a crop demand model called METRIC;
- Water banking
- User-pay requirements and the effect on water permitting; and

- Western Washington supply/demand forecasting.

Additional information on these modules was provided by Melissa, Chad Krueger, and Dan Haller.

Discussion and observations from PAG members and alternates:

- Darryll Olson noted three areas which aren't being addressed: no demand compensation for water rights; no programmatic conservation is being factored into the report; and water marketing is not being addressed. He does not believe there is no over-supply, anything available is being bought
- Steve Malloch agrees and thinks tightening up the system is best hope – conservation important
- Tom Ring urged caution, noting that conservation is site-specific
- Lisa Pelly thinks groundwater should not be labeled as a policy question; the issue is more data is needed

Neil asked Tom if anything from the report is surprising him. He mentioned that agricultural demand is going negative. The report has gotten a lot more sophisticated, and is a work in progress. He agrees that groundwater is a fact of life, but work there is not funded. He wonders what is important to the PAG – what do they want to see in the next ten years?

Additional comments from the PAG:

- Steve thinks it would be useful to use scenarios – distill the big policy buckets into scenarios
- Jennifer said they are ready to develop some scenarios on the Columbia River Treaty, at an appropriate time
 - Mike Schwisow asked if they're ready to look at on-call flood control scenarios, or water supply scenarios; Jennifer said they are
 - Craig Simpson asked if the called-upon switch for flood control related to only the 7 federal dams, or to all dams; Jennifer said just the seven federal dams
 - Craig mentioned the Treaty is not specific about whether it affects just the seven federal dams or all
- Mike Schwisow is very interested in the growth of wine grapes as a crop, since it has rapidly expanded since the early 1990s
- Wes McCart agrees with Darryll, good to show the demand of people looking for irrigated ground; he's seen a lack of availability of irrigated ground in Stevens County
- Mike Leita pointed out that early on, we had specific questions to answer but now the need is broader

Public Comment

David Ortman noted that the Sierra Club won't be participating in a letter of support for the Columbia River Program.

2017-19 Budget Proposal

OCR is working on a budget proposal for submittal internally and to OFM [see powerpoint presentation on OCR website]. The thrust of the proposal emphasizes finishing projects currently underway. Melissa showed a slide with a map generally depicting the projects across the state.

The primary projects are:

- Continued investment in the Odessa groundwater area. The change from the amount mentioned at the May meeting is an increase to up to \$15 million, at the request of legislators. Darryll noted that CSRIA formally opposed putting public funding where

private funding is being held up; but if a settlement is reached then their perspective may change.

- Iceicle: \$3-4 million to finish the EIS and start some projects. The group was convened 3-4 years ago. Scoping for EIS occurred February through May; will take about a year to prepare.
- ASR: Additional investments to further this option
- Coordinated conservation in the Columbia Basin Project: \$1.5 – 3 million
- Horse Heaven Hills: \$1 million to move permitting. Darryll noted that the CSRIA Board opposed this; they think it's unlikely to be built and want the funding put to different use. Darryll thinks putting this money into projects in the Roza Irrigation District would be better. Dave McClure thinks this Horse Heaven Hills project should move forward.
- Walla Walla integrated plan: \$0.5 million to move a suite of projects along
- Several other projects noted in the presentation

Tom mentioned there is almost equal funding to move projects forward in the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan.

Comments and observations from PAG members/alternates:

- Mike Schwisow disagrees with Darryll and supports funding for Odessa
- Tom wants to finish the infrastructure needed for Odessa
- Tom has been asked by Ecology financial staff to prioritize projects but he has resisted that push, since the funding list has been developed with stakeholder input
- Mike Leita thinks the proposal is fine for now and don't think we should get into specific debates

Letter of Support for the Columbia River Program

Neil opened this agenda item and explained it came out of discussion at the last meeting on the future of the program. He emphasized this is not something OCR is leading on, as that would not be appropriate, but it's on the agenda due to stakeholder interest. Neil wants to get a discussion of points that could be included in such a letter, then stakeholders need to take the lead if such a letter is desired.

Comments and observations from PAG members/alternates:

- Acknowledge that the original legislation is visionary and has served the basin well
- Integrated planning process is a national model, being looked at in other states
- Has provided a forum to work through disagreements
- It's a state model, not just regional
- Both in-stream and out-of-stream uses have been supported; some cities have gotten water
- Compare the state of progress on what's been achieved
- We're not done!
- A basin-wide perspective is very important
- BOR thinks this approach is very consistent with their basin wide perspective; good to have all stakeholders around the table, this is ground-breaking work
- State involvement has allowed various people to come together and discuss; individual projects don't always come together
- Has been very successful; if continued funding doesn't happen then progress will fizzle away. Especially important in light of the unknowns of the Columbia River Treaty.
- Agree about PAG being a venue for CR Treaty; not many forums for that

Neil asked if anything could have gone better or differently:

- OCR should have been administratively in control of CR water management
 - Would like to see a subcommittee of the PAG discuss management approaches

Neil will write up this discussion in the meeting notes for use by stakeholders.

Structure of Columbia River PAG

Tom wanted to raise this topic. He sometimes feels that he’s just reporting to the PAG, rather than getting their engagement on policy issues. He’d like to see the group helping to shape the program in the future. This might include forming subcommittees to work in-between the quarterly meetings; some topics might including funding; or policy choices.

Michael Garrity likes this idea. In 2006, when the program started, there were some clear priorities. We had to work through many challenges. Wes McCart said the “aggressively pursue” concept was quite new. It seems like that piece has been lost; he doesn’t mean that as a negative, can’t always go at a breakneck pace. How do we re-invigorate the PAG? A lot of need is still unmet. Mike Schwisow agrees with Wes. Part of this is natural evolution of the program. An example is YBIP, with its long term focus.

Paul Jewell is concerned about just having more committees. One alternative for Tom to consider is framing these meetings differently. Consider including more background documents with the agenda, more materials up front – frame the questions in advance so PAG members have time to think about them, rather than having to provide opinions right after they’ve heard about something. Could consider ad hoc, short lived committees on specific topics.

Wes noted there are a whole set of policy suggestions for consideration arising out of the supply and demand forecast. He is concerned about having the PAG address a Western Washington component.

OCR Legislation

OCR is proposing some legislation as a result of supreme court cases. The intent is to ensure that their administrative rules do what is needed related to issuing permits for Columbia River water. Melissa said they use a consultation process, and want to be sure they can keep doing this. Paul Jewell asked that this be discussed at the Commissioners’ meeting in November. In response to asking for some projects that this might have affected, Tom mentioned Lake Roosevelt water.

Project updates

Melissa and Tom showed a powerpoint presentation with some recent highlights. The groundbreaking ceremony for the Lind Coulee project was highlighted, along with the recent YBIP tour. They had good attendance on the tour, were able to get Rep. Steve Tharinger along as well as several other legislators and policy staff. Projects shown included a demonstration of the “Whoosh” fish passage project, Teanaway Community Forest, Gap to Gap floodplain restoration, and Roza improvements.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:35 p.m.

The next meeting of the CRPAG will be on December 8 in Ellensburg, WA.

Attendees: *CRPAG members and alternates:*

Wendy Christensen, BOR
Michael Garrity, WDFW
Keith Goehner, Chelan County Commissioner
Paul Jewell, Kittitas County Commissioner
Mike Leita, Yakima County Commissioner
Steve Malloch, American Rivers
Wes McCart, Stevens County Commissioner
Darryll Olson, CSRIA
Lisa Pelly, Trout Unlimited
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
Mike Schwisow, CBDL/Irrigation Districts
Evan Sheffels, WSFB
Craig Simpson, ECBID

Others in attendance:

Neil Aaland, Facilitator
Jennifer Adam, WSU
Hannah Castro, Sen Warnick's Office
Scott Cave, SC Communications
Carl Christianson, Tetra Tech
J.R. Cook, NE OR Water Assoc
Cari Cortez, WWT
Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation
Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology
Dan Haller, Aspect
Tim Hill, Ecology
Jason Smith Jacobs
Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
Michele Kiesz, OGWRP Landowner
Chuck Klarich, YBSA
Chad Krueger, WSU

Heather Lawrence, BOR
Ben Lee, Landau Associates
Chris Marks, CTUIR
Jason McCormick, MWS
David McClure, Klickitat County
Carl Merkle, CTUIR
David Ortman, Sierra Club
Sage Park, Ecology
Nicky Pasi, AR
Joye Redfield-Wilder, Ecology
Kristina Ribellia, WA Water Trust
Tom Ring, Yakama Nation
Tom Tebb, Department of Ecology
Chris Voigt, Potato Commission
Adam Wicks-Arshack, CELP
Shelly Wilkins, State Senate