

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

June 2, 2022

Online Meeting Summary

*Note: Powerpoint presentations from this meeting are available on the OCR website:
<https://www.ezview.wa.gov/?alias=1962&pageid=37050>*

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting began at 9:30am. Facilitator Cynthia Carlstad reviewed a couple of pointers for the online meeting. Members introduced themselves and guests identified their name and affiliation through the chat function. Cynthia announced that the public comment period will be at 10:40am and asked that anyone who wants to make a public comment send her a chat directly to get in the queue.

2023-2025 STATE CAPITAL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Melissa Downes, Ecology Office of Columbia River (OCR) presented an overview of the capital budget proposal that OCR is developing for the governor's proposed 2023-2025 budget. The overall theme is continuing to invest to complete work that is underway. The total proposed budget is \$49 million for Columbia Basin work outside of Yakima Basin Integrated Plan activities.

- Odessa Groundwater Replacement Project – \$20 million to support all pumping plant /delivery system designs. Grant County Conservation District has recently been awarded a federal grant to conduct watershed planning in this area which could lead to additional Natural Resource Conservation Service funding to help support implementation efforts.
- Icicle Creek Water Resource Management Strategy - \$5 million primarily for project implementation. These funds are leveraged with numerous other funding sources, federal, state, and local.
- Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Exploration and Development - \$6 million, primarily working with municipalities to explore this approach for attaining secure water supply. Water quality considerations are key for ASR feasibility and Ecology continues to update guidance to help communities assess feasibility and cost effectiveness.
- Walla Walla Basin Strategic Plan - \$4.7 million intended for project implementation and programmatic environmental review. A complementary effort is currently underway with the USBR WaterSMART basin study to do a third-party review of the project portfolio to help identify any missing opportunities. This basin is particularly complex because of the interstate boundary with Oregon and some very old water rights.
- OCR Project Level Mitigation - \$2 million for mitigation obligations associated with early implementation actions – Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program, Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage & Releases Program, and Potholes Supplemental Feedroute.
- Potholes Supplemental Feedroute - \$1-1.75 million to support replacing the Potholes Reservoir supply.
- Pasco Basin Water Supply - \$400,000 to support rulemaking for the Pasco Basin groundwater resources.

- Columbia River Interruptible Water Rights - \$250,000 for work to identify possible strategies to address this OCR directive.
- New Project Proposals –
 - Opportunistic new water supply development projects (feasibility) - \$1.5 million
 - Opportunistic water acquisition and leases - \$1 million
 - Walla Walla leased water - \$1 million
 - Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Releases Program - \$1 million
 - OCR Facilitation Support - \$600,000
 - Small Municipal Source Exploration \$500,000 beyond the ASR element discussed above
 - Interim Supply and Demand Forecast Research - \$250,000-500,000 to add groundwater modeling to the forecasting tools
 - WRIA 31, Switzler Storage EIS completion - \$200,000
 - OCR Staffing and WDFW Staffing Support - \$2.6 million

2022 WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK

Jeff Marti, Ecology Water Supply and Drought Coordinator provided an update on water supply outlook for 2022, which has improved dramatically since late March.

Ecology issued a drought declaration in 2021 which continued through the winter and early spring 2022 based on extremely dry conditions, which were especially bad in southeastern Washington where mountain snowpack storage is not a significant water supply contributor.

Conditions changed dramatically in early April, and the entire state experienced much colder and wetter conditions in April and May. Snowpack statewide increased throughout April, which is very unusual. This has led to Ecology lifting the drought declaration except for five eastern Washington watersheds where soil moisture deficit still exists (Upper Crabbe Creek, Okanogan, Stevens, Little Spokane, Hangman Creek). Everywhere else in eastern Washington was downgraded to a drought advisory to recognize longer term precipitation deficits.

The water supply forecast for Yakima Project is 100%, whereas the Okanogan Irrigation District is currently at 44% of normal illustrating the difference in available storage between the two areas. Groundwater monitoring in several areas of eastern Washington is still showing depressed groundwater levels, which are unlikely to be fully restored this year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. David Ortman commented on several topics and provided them as a written attachment to this summary (see below).
2. John Reeves, Save Lake Kachess, commented on his opposition to the proposed Lake Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant. He also stated that he would like to see the CRPAG more actively advising Ecology and the legislature and noted that the legislature’s mandate to develop “new” water is outdated as there is no “new” water, and the program should be looking to the future climate and better ways to manage the water we have. He also requested the CRPAG discuss the Yakama Nation’s call for removal of Lower Columbia River dams. Referencing the proposed Goldendale Pump Storage project, he advocated for more exploration of private-public partnerships for better water managements.

COLUMBIA RIVER COUNTY CAUCUS UPDATE

Paul Jewell, Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC), described the series of Water 101 Training Modules that WSAC is sponsoring for members. This five-part series is aiming to equip County leaders with a basic understanding of topics and issues related to water in the Columbia Basin. There has been significant turnover in County leadership over the past few years, and many new leaders do not have background in water issues and topics.

WSAC kicked the workshop series off in late May, and the second session is tomorrow (June 3). Each module has a specific focus:

- Module 1. Water law and water resource issues generally
- Module 2. History of major water management programs in the Columbia Basin
- Module 3. Projects focus
- Module 4. Emerging and ongoing water resources issues
- Module 5. Field tour of projects

Attendance has been good so far, and Paul noted that members see significant value in the workshop series.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:05am.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates:

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Chad McCrea, Spokane Tribe | Liz Klumpp, BPA |
| Clint Didier, Franklin Co. Commission | Megan Kernan, WDFW |
| Cody Desautel, Colville Tribes | Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League |
| Cory Wright, Kittitas Co. Commission | Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation |
| Jeremy Weber, ACOE | Talmadge Oxford, USBR |
| Jerome Delvin, Benton Co. Commission | Tom Tebb, OCR/Ecology |
| Jon Culp, WCC | Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology |
| Mark Stedman, Lincoln Co Commission | Wendy McDermott, American Rivers |
| Lisa Pelly, TU | Wes McCart, Stevens Co. Commission |

Others logged in for the meeting:

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| Brent Nichols, Spokane Tribe | Jeff Marti, Ecology |
| Bruce Wakefield, Colville Tribes | John Reeves, Save Lake Kachess |
| Cathy Kellon, NW Power & Conservation Council | Kim Nguyen, Columbia Basin development League |
| Christina Frantz, WDNR | Mark Nielson, Benton and Franklin County CDs |
| David Ortman, private citizen | Ted Knight, Spokane Tribe |
| Elaine Packard, Sierra Club | |

Facilitation

Cynthia Carlstad, NHC

Cynthia Carlstad

From: deortman@msn.com
Sent: Thursday, June 2, 2022 11:48 AM
To: Cynthia Carlstad
Subject: Comments for the OCR PAG - June 2, 2022

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of NHC. Do not open links or attachments before verifying sender.

Comments of David E. Ortman, Seattle, WA
Office of Columbia River Policy Advisory Group - June 2, 2022

1. The PAG has advisory responsibility to Department of Ecology. This includes the Yakima Workgroup (on which no comprehensive report was made, even though the Workgroup met yesterday). However, the Ecology webpage did not post the agenda of the Yakima Workgroup meeting and neither did the BuRec's webpage. Ecology did not distribute the Yakima Workgroup agenda until Friday before the Memorial Day holiday for Wednesday's (June 1st) meeting. The Yakima Workgroup has over \$40 million to spend, with consultants paid to run these meetings, but apparently they cannot provide information to the public in a timely fashion. This should be reviewed by the PAG.
2. Ecology wants to build uneconomical and environmentally damaging water project dams in the Yakima Basin, including a new Bumping Lake dam, a Wymer Dam, as well as pumping 200,000 acre-feet out of Lake Kachess. Ecology also wants to build an environmentally damaging dam in the Chehalis River Basin. Ecology has set up a Chehalis Basin Board, which holds monthly meetings. Within an entire month, Ecology has chosen to hold the Chehalis Basin Board meeting this morning in conflict with this morning's OCRPAG meeting, forcing the public to choose between which meeting to monitor. The PAG should request that Ecology avoid these conflicts
3. As part of the Icicle Strategy report, Tom Tebb said "we're in a good place." Yet again, Ecology fails to mention that the "good place", includes the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Apparently, Ecology's strategy is to avoid mentioning the proposed impacts to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in the hopes that you won't notice. People all over the United States know about the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and we do not forget.
4. RCW 90.90.040(3) provides that the Department of Ecology shall complete the first Columbia river long-term water supply and demand forecast by November 15, 2006, and shall update the report every five years thereafter. This means that the 2021 Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply & Demand Forecast should have been completed over six months ago. Again, OCR also has received over \$40 million. Ecology has had five years to prepare this report, but it has still not been released. In addition, there are concerns because this Long-term forecast did not take into consideration water conservation. The PAG should determine why Ecology cannot meet legislative deadlines.
5. Ecology has requested funding for yet another Walla Walla basin study. Ecology spent a decade spinning its wheels to the point where the Office of State Auditor was called on by the State Legislature to do an audit. Rather than just listening to Ecology spin its wheels again in the Walla Walla, the PAG

should review the State Auditor Office audit and determine if Ecology has a feasible plan to move forward.

6. Finally, there was a mention of the Washington Agriculture Irrigation Guide, which is extremely outdated, but was still incorporated into Ecology's Yakima River Basin water market study that was presented at yesterday's Yakima Workgroup meeting. The PAG should push harder for an update of the Irrigation Guide.

Sent from [Outlook](#)