

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

June 3, 2021

ONLINE MEETING

*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 9:00am. Facilitator Cynthia Carlstad reviewed a couple of pointers for the online meeting. Members and guests introduced themselves.

OFFICE OF COLUMBIA RIVER (OCR) DIRECTOR'S UPDATES

Tom Tebb began by announcing that Melissa Downes has been promoted to the newly-created Financial and Project Manager position. OCR will also be adding a senior technical person, likely a hydrologist, to its staff.

Tom reflected on the events of 2020, as they relate to advancing the work in the Columbia River Basin. Economic forecasts in the spring were dire, projecting a potential \$8 billion biennial deficit. The financial outlook improved dramatically over the year, and OCR was very successful in the legislative budgeting process. Some of the accomplishments from last year include working with the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership to draft their strategic plan, completion of major irrigation delivery infrastructure on the East Low Canal, and moving ahead on many other projects. He hopes (and plans) to be able to meet with the CRPAG in-person for the September meeting.

Legislative Session Recap

Carrie Sessions provided an overview of significant legislation for the Columbia Basin from the 2021 legislative session. This was a “long session” and budget year; most of it was done virtually. Two bills passed that pertain to water resources in the Columbia Basin:

- HB 1143, Walla Walla Trust Water Rights – This bill authorizes water right holders who have banked rights in the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership’s pilot water bank to temporarily donate these water rights into the Trust Water Rights Program. The donated water rights retain the same quantity as a trust water right that they held while banked under the pilot water bank for a period of two years.
- SSB 5230, Groundwater Agreements – This bill clarifies that Ecology and USBR may enter into agreements to co-manage and allocate groundwater that exists as a result of Columbia Basin Project operations without complying with procedures in RCW 90.44.130 on determinations of groundwater availability.

In addition to the two bills that passed, the legislature passed two water banking budget provisos:

- Capital budget - \$5 million for a pilot grant program, \$2 million of which is for applicants in the Methow
- Operating budget
 - \$9 million for a pilot grant program
 - \$1 million for administering the pilot grant program
 - \$40,000 for policy work and reporting to the legislature
 - \$125,000 to the Washington Conservation Commission for a water bank in Okanogan County

In total, the pilot grant program is funded at \$14 million (capital + operating provisos) for pass-through funds. These funds support development of water banks to serve local water needs, and acquisition of water rights for those banks. Banks must preserve water rights for use in the county-of-origin and for permanent instream flow. Eligibility criteria are the following:

- Banks must be in rural, headwater counties
- Entities must be public or in a public/private partnership
- Projects must be “ready-to-go”
- Applicants agree to maintain 1/3 of a water right for instream flow

The policy work funding is to be used for the following:

- Change the process for review of water banks to make more information publicly available
- Refine policy recommendations from 2020 on the state’s framework for water banking, trust water, and water transfers
- Report to the legislature

The legislature also passed an adjudications proviso, directing \$1 million to prepare for an adjudication in the Nooksack basin and in the Lake Roosevelt/Upper Columbia Basin (WRIA 58).

OCR 2021-2023 Budget and Major Work Envisioned

Melissa Downes presented the major work planned for the coming two years. In total, the legislature appropriated \$91.2 million for Columbia River Basin, with \$46.2 million for the Yakima River watershed (Yakima Basin Integrated Plan / Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Program) and \$45 million for the remainder of the Columbia Basin (OCR).

Work supporting the Odessa Groundwater Replacement directive comprises a major element of planned work, with OCR supporting the East Low (EL) 79.2 system, Grant County Conservation District, and EL 85 gate; and the EL 22.1 system, all aimed at building out the surface water distribution system to replace groundwater irrigation water sources.

Other work to be supported by OCR includes the following:

- Icicle Creek water resource management strategy
- Aquifer storage and recovery exploration and development
- Walla Walla Integrated Plan
- Potholes Supplemental Feedroute
- Supporting Columbia River interruptible water rights
- Project mitigation needs

New projects include the following:

- New water supply development projects (feasibility studies)
- Water acquisitions and leases
- Walla Walla Leased Water
- Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release Program
- Barkley Irrigation Company Conservation Project

Administrative and technical support items include the following

- OCR facilitation support
- Pasco Basin 508-14 rule making

- 2021 Supply and Demand Forecast
- WRIA 31, Switzler Storage Data Gaps
- OCR staffing and WDFW staffing support

PUBLIC COMMENTS

David Ortman commented that the draft Water Supply and Demand Forecast does not refer to conservation and efficiency. Conservation targets have not been met. In addition, there is no mention of the 250,000 acre-feet assumed to be added by 2040. It also does not include changing crops.

WALLA WALLA PROPOSED COLUMBIA RIVER PUMP EXCHANGE PROJECT

Tom Tebb explained that OCR would like advice from the CRPAG on the Walla Walla proposed Columbia River Pump Exchange Project (introduced at the March CRPAG meeting). He has not decided when formal consultation process will start, and he would like feedback from the PAG before a formal process is initiated.

Cynthia oriented the group to the advance materials provided to them on the project, and Perrin Robinson gave a brief overview of the proposed project. The primary objectives of the project are to provide additional flow to the Walla Walla River to:

- Support harvestable populations of native fish species
- Maintain long-term viability of out-of-stream water uses.

Two alternatives have been identified:

- Columbia River Pump Exchange
- Pine Creek Reservoir

This discussion focuses on the pump exchange which has two scenarios:

- Water budget neutral (29,000 acre-feet per year)
- Water budget neutral plus (87,000 acre-feet per year)

PAG members/alternates were assigned to breakout rooms to discuss three questions and then report-out to the whole group. Responses to the three questions are summarized below.

Question 1: What questions do you have for the project proponents or OCR about the project and the consultation process?

- Would there be any withdrawal of the 3% from the Columbia basin irrigation project. Using 2% now. Will it affect our water allotment in the 1905?
- Where is Oregon on this? Does Oregon have a vested stake in being a participant in the 2050 process? One thing that seems to be missing.
- Sites on the Colville- how does this coordinate with another potential storage facility?
- Economics, feet of head on pumping. How does this look in 2050 as we move to a renewable energy economy? How does this work with regards to the consultation process?
- Are there Walla Walla River temperature target goals in the pump back management plan?

- Will the USGS groundwater study be used to inform irrigation demand being served by the pump back?
- Are future municipal and rural domestic anticipated needs being factored into the plus plan?
- Cost—Along with the upfront implementation cost of constructing the pump back system, have operating costs and replacement cost (over time) be factored in prior to implementation? Who will pay? Will demand reduction activities with the end users be considered to reduce the all costs?

Question 2: What information do you need to be informed on this topic?

- How the timing of implementation might be impacted by a decision to implement one option over another.
- I am also interested to know whether the second option could be implemented as part of a phased approach (basically implement the water budget neutral option first and add the additional capacity in later as a second phase)?
- Previous materials- accounting of prospective projects who are looking to withdraw flows from the Columbia for surplus windows where instream is being met. They are all Washington projects.
- Don't want to lose water from the east high project. Brand new to me, lots more information is needed.
- Reiterate- what is the true extent on the accounting on the future demands across states? Relationship between this project and storage- couple different reservoir options that are being explored. As a complement to this project.
- More detail on cost estimates, secondary objectives, bucket for bucket exchange. How does the bi state study group plan to prioritize secondary objectives if Scenario 2 is the preferred path?
- Need a recap, what policy and considerations can be considered - Years ago, Ecology off channel storage study got put off to the side. There was an initial evaluation, additional water supply constraints and nothing else happened with it.
- Impacts to upper part of basin- didn't get a chance to open it up yet
- Curious what is going on in the upper Walla Walla. Potential future draw on Columbia system. What is creating the problem? What else are they looking to do to fix before taking on pumping from the Columbia?
- Intake – what would it look like, what other impacts to upper Columbia fish?

- Regarding primary objective - Support harvestable populations of native fish populations - So we can harvest fish where? What kind of habitat are we gaining here? Questions around whether or not a handful of fish to be harvested. What is the necessity of harvesting them here or how is it helping the system?
- What other ways can we create harvestable fish populations for tribal populations that do not require such expensive pumping?
- Regarding water rights: bi-state issues – questions about how that works
- Looking for as much information as I can get.
- See value of project but have questions

Question 3: What considerations related to overall Columbia Basin water management do you think OCR should evaluate as part of its decision process?

- Water in mainstem for water for salmonids.
- Ongoing tribal consultation needed
- Needs for upstream migration of fish at intake locations

2021 COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN LONG-TERM SUPPLY AND DEMAND FORECAST – DRAFT RESULTS

Melissa Downes introduced the 2021 Columbia River Basin Long-Term Supply and Demand Forecast. OCR is required by the legislature to prepare and submit a 20-year forecast every five years. Dr. Jenny Adam, Washington State University (WSU) led development of the forecast, which helps improve understanding of where additional water supply is most critically needed, now and in the future. Melissa acknowledged the team that produced the forecast, which included faculty and staff from WSU, Aspect Consulting, University of Utah, and Ecology.

Dr. Adam presented the forecast. Forecast components include the following:

- Supply – surface water and groundwater
- Demand – Agricultural, residential, flows for fish, hydropower

She described the model framework and improvements made to the modeling since the last forecast was done. The model includes 17 future climate scenarios for different greenhouse gas levels. Future climate covers annual temperature increases, with more increase in the summer, and a decrease in summer precipitation, with slight precipitation increases in other seasons.

Future crop mix looks at the relationship between crop mix and crop prices. Different statistical modeling approaches are used for two different groups of crops:

- Crops that account for a lot of acreage: hay, grains, tree fruit
- Crops that are smaller in acreage but economically important: blueberries, wine grapes, hops

Key takeaways from the 2021 Long-Term Supply and Demand Forecast are the following:

- The timing of surface water supplies is shifting, especially in the snowmelt-dominated Cascades watersheds. By 2040, on an annual basis for the Washington portion of the Columbia Basin, the total volume of surface water is not projected to change, however wet season volume (November-May) is projected to increase by 14.2 % ($\pm 2.5\%$), and dry season volume is projected to decrease by 32.2% ($\pm 3.1\%$). This change will be the most pronounced in snow-dominated watersheds such as the Wenatchee River. At Bonneville Dam, the center of peak flow timing is projected to shift fifteen days earlier – from late May to early May.
- Locally increasing agriculture and residential water demands are combining with lower water supplies at critical times, leading to increasing frequency of instream flow deficits. These will affect fish and result in water use curtailments.
- Groundwater levels generally are declining in all aquifer layers across most of eastern Washington. This is based on trend analysis of existing monitoring wells, pilot monitoring in some areas, interpolation, and prediction of future vulnerabilities.
- Irrigation demand is projected to decrease slightly by 2040 and decrease more by 2070, however more irrigation is expected to be needed in the early season (March through June) than now. The projected decrease is driven by higher water-use efficiencies due to increases in carbon dioxide and shifting of irrigation requirements to early in the season when soil moisture is higher. Opposing factors that will drive increased irrigation demand include increased evapotranspiration, a shift toward less water-use efficient crops, expanded irrigated acreage, and double cropping.
- Demand for hydropower generation is also expected to increase. The forecast examined three scenarios for demand – population growth only, population growth + electric vehicles, and population growth + electric vehicles + data centers. Under the third (highest demand) scenario, hydroelectric demand is projected to increase 33-34% by 2040.

ROUNDTABLE COMMENTS FROM PAG MEMBERS

- Guy Norman – Update on Columbia Basin Collaborative: There is a four-state letter of agreement to work on recovering salmon stocks. NOAA Fisheries convened the task force and governors from each state designated representatives – Guy Norman and Michael Garrity for Washington State – to work with tribes and stakeholders. They met for the first time on May 19 and June 10 is the second meeting.
- Jeremy Weber – The Corps has new delegated authorities for surface water decisions that could support Columbia Basin work. He can share more details at a future meeting.
- Jon Culp – thanked Tom and group for a great meeting.
- Mike Schwisow – Appreciated Carrie’s report on the work in the Pasco Basin.
- Craig Simpson – Offered a tour to EL distribution system and other Odessa sites.
- Tom Davis – On the topic of water supply and demand - noted the issue of double-cropping is coming up more commonly in the basin.

- Clint Didier – On SB 5230, we’re experiencing more wet areas on cultivated fields, and recommends allowing farmers to recycle use of water to a storage facility.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at noon. Next meeting is scheduled for September 2, 2021, 9:30am to 1:00pm, and will be in-person in Ellensburg.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates:

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| BJ Kieffer, Spokane Tribe | Lisa Pelly, TU |
| Phil Rigdon, YN | Guy Norman, NW Power & Conservation Council |
| Danielle Squeochs, YN | Liz Klumpp, BPA |
| Stuart Crane, YN | Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League |
| Jeremy Weber, ACOE | Craig Simpson, ECBID |
| Talmadge Oxford, BOR | Darryll Olsen, Columbia-Snake Rivers Irrigation Association |
| Jon Culp, WCC | Wendy McDermott, American Rivers |
| Megan Kernan, WDFW | Tom Davis, Washington State Farm Bureau |
| Jeff Dengel, WDFW | Tom Tebb, OCR/Ecology |
| Ron Anderson, Yakima Co. Comm | Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology |
| Wes McCart, Stevens Co Comm | Jacob Anderson, Klickitat Co Comm |
| Mark Stedman, Lincoln Co Comm | Clint Didier, Franklin Co. Comm |
| Jerome Delvin, Benton Co. Comm | |

Others logged in for the meeting¹:

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| Ann Lewis | Larry Mattson |
| Benjamin Serr | Mike Ingham, Gardena Farms Irr. Dist. #13 |
| Carrie Sessions, Ecology | Perrin Robinson, Jacobs |
| Chris Hyland, WWMP | R. Fehring |
| Claudia Yaw, Centralia Chronicle | Rick Evans |
| David Ortman | Sara Higgins |
| Dan Haller, Aspect Consulting | Scott Kuhta |
| Devin Stoker | Scott Tarbutton, Ecology |
| Ethan Lockwood, WWT | Tim Poppleton, Ecology |
| Holly Myers, Ecology | Tom Myrum |
| John Warinner | Troy Baker, WWBWC |
| John Warner | W. Welch |
| Joye Redfield Wilder, Ecology | Whitney Reynier |
| Judith Johnson, WWMP | |
| Kris McCaig | |

Facilitation

- Cynthia Carlstad
Neil Aaland

¹ Note on attendance: some participants did not list full name on Zoom login.