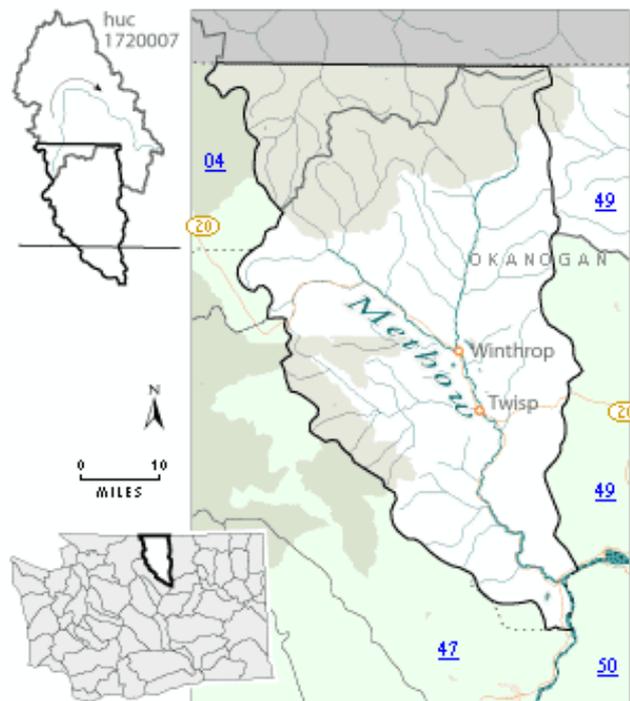


# **Methow Instream Flow Improvement Project**

Columbia River Policy  
Advisory Group  
June 1, 2017



# Vicinity Map



# Early history

- The Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) has been operating a system of open irrigation canals since early in the 20th century
- Historically, MVID provided irrigation water for over 2,000 acres of land, generally located between Twisp and Carlton



# A little more history...

- MVID's system included diversions from the Twisp and Methow rivers
- Primarily flood irrigation during the district's early years
- A severe freeze in 1968 killed many of the valley's fruit trees and brought about a change in agricultural methods. Since 1968, sprinkler systems have become common
- However, the system was still inefficient, and becoming more so with age. Water often did not reach the lower ends of the canals

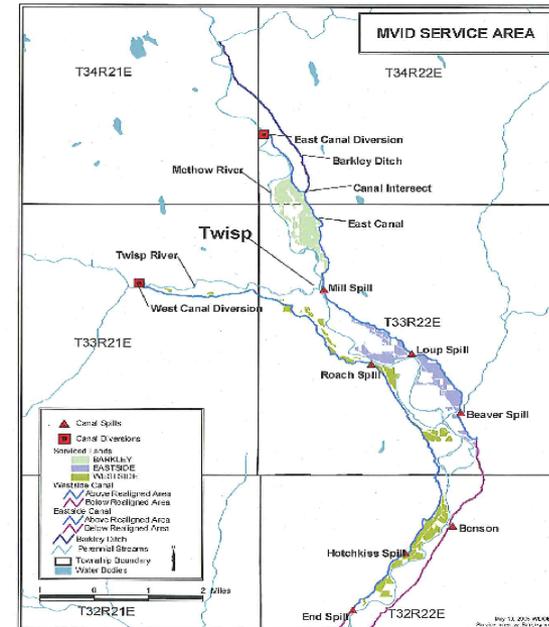


# Changing times

- In the 1980s and '90s, MVID began to evaluate means of improving the efficiency of the canal system and providing more reliable service to members
- During the same period, MVID engaged with Ecology
- MVID and Ecology have been involved as both litigants and funding partners since the early 1980s

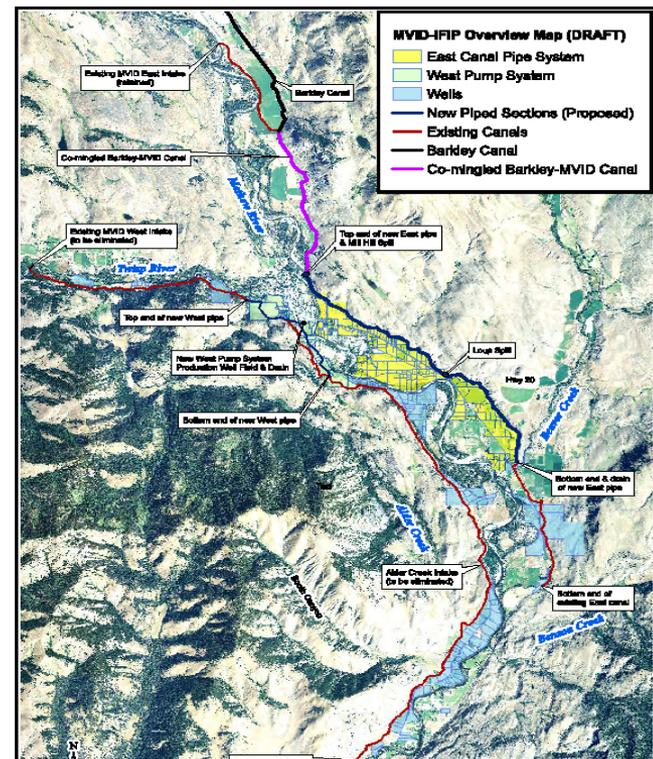
# Reducing service area

- In an effort to improve reliable water delivery, MVID excluded 105 members irrigating about 713 acres in 2000
- The landowners were provided with individual wells
- The exclusions provided reliable water to land farthest from the district's diversions. They also reduced the size of the district and its tax base
- The aging open canal system remained inefficient, and the district had fewer resources with which to operate and maintain it



# Laying groundwork for the project

- Ecology issued two waste orders, in 2002 and 2003, imposing limits on MVID's diversions
- Following several years of litigation, MVID and Ecology signed a settlement agreement in 2011
- With the agreement, all litigation was concluded, paving the way for a collaborative project to reduce diversions from the Twisp and Methow rivers and make comprehensive improvements to the canal system



# Changes required

- In order to comply with the settlement agreement, MVID needed to:
  - Improve its aging infrastructure
  - Right size the district to ensure that the amount of water diverted and the acreage being irrigated would be in compliance with the agreement
- MVID began to work with Ecology and Trout Unlimited (TU) to design and build a project that would bring MVID into compliance



# Project goals

- MVID directors' goals
  - Create a viable long-term delivery system for members
  - Provide water to as many MVID acres as possible
  - Reduce risk from ESA, aging infrastructure and open canals
- Additional goals
  - Improve ecosystem function (including benefits to habitat, fish passage, water quantity, and summer instream flows)
  - Provide municipal water for the Town of Twisp

# Process

- Critical to project success; enabled participants to move beyond past adversarial relationship and serve multiple interests



# Process details

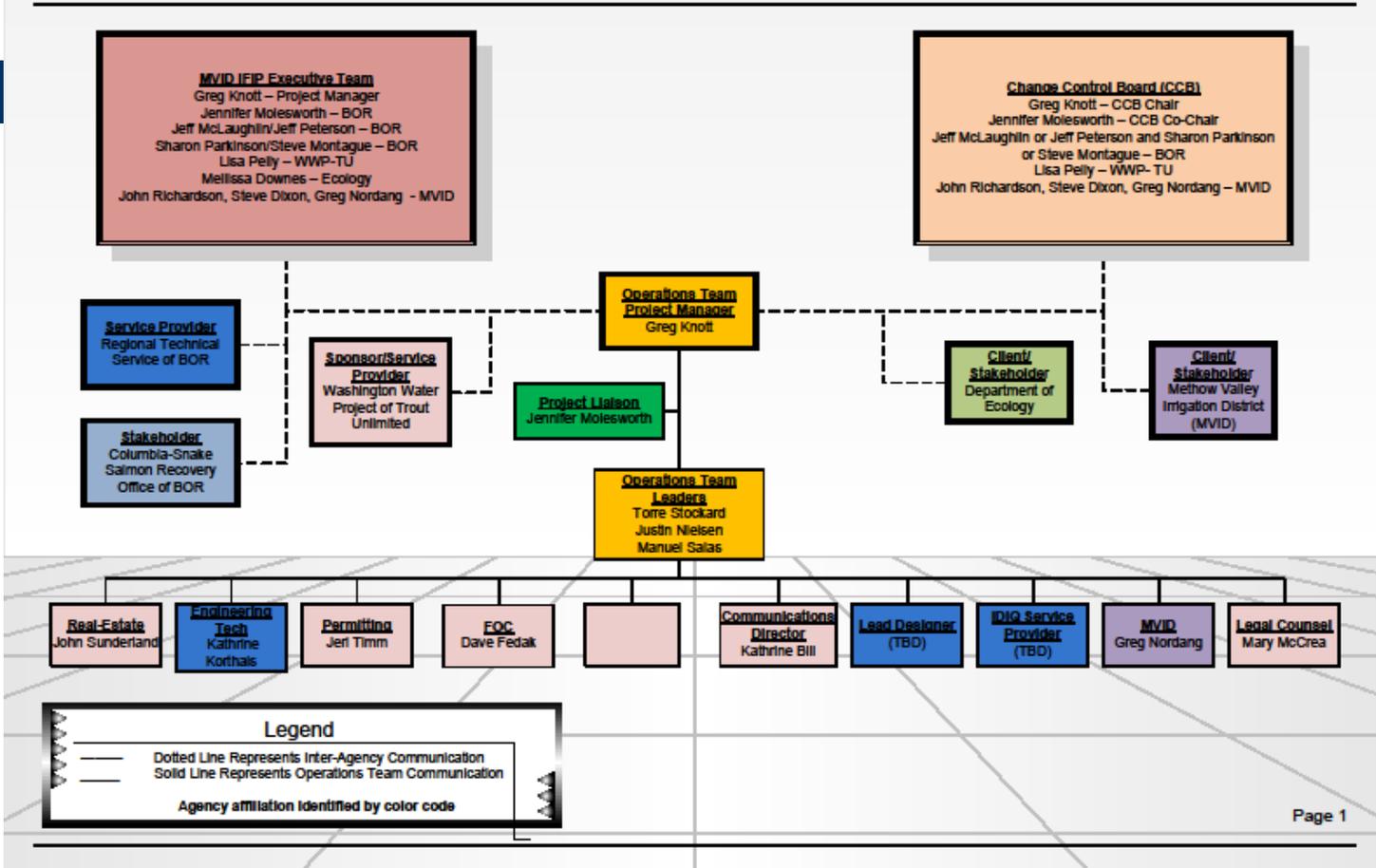
- Alternatives
- Member engagement
- Directors' engagement
- Partnerships and working relationships
  - With the project team
  - With consultants
    - Engineers
    - Attorneys
    - Project coordinator—funded by Ecology's Office of Columbia River (OCR) to ensure project success
  - With the Town of Twisp
- Consensus process

# MVID Instream Flow Improvement Project

## Operations Team

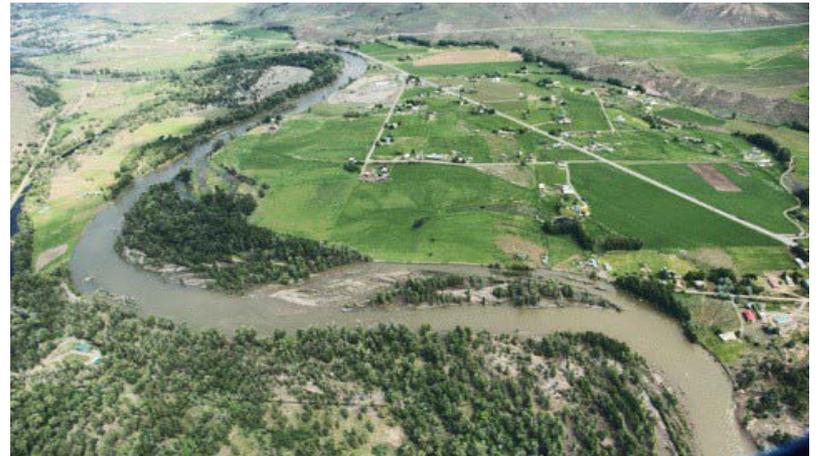
### Organization Chart

Wednesday, January 23, 2013



# Project structure

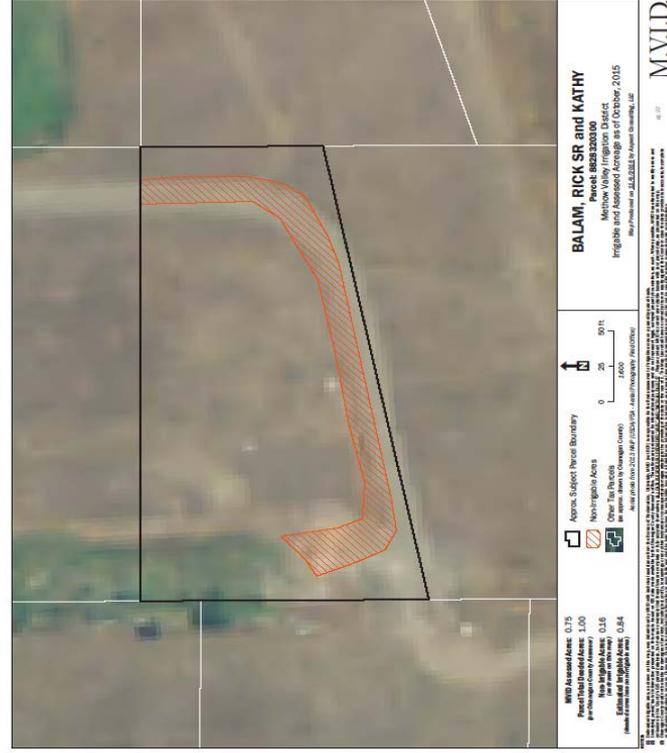
- District members eventually voted on an alternative with three components:
  - West pump system
  - East pipe system
  - Well conversions
- Water bank that reduces relinquishment risk
- The long-term cost of operating the district was a consideration, to ensure the district would remain financially viable



# Outcomes: Right-Sizing

- GIS mapping to reconcile irrigable with assessed acres
- Beginning in 2016, each landowner is assessed for the lesser of previously assessed acreage or irrigable acreage
- All assessed land is now irrigable
- Structures, roads and driveways, steep slopes, and floodplains have been removed from the assessment rolls
- By eliminating non-irrigable land from the rolls, the district is closer to being able to irrigate all of its assessed acreage within the limits of its permits

# Right-sizing examples



# Outcomes: System

- Twisp diversion eliminated
- Methow diversion remains
  - Canal has been piped from Mill Spill down
  - Upper 4+ miles of canal still open—hope to have piped this year
- TU installed 70+ wells to serve parcels outside the reach of the pump and pipe systems
- TU also offered conservation buy-outs to members eligible for wells