

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

September 2, 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 10:00am. Facilitator Cynthia Carlstad reviewed a couple of pointers for the online meeting. Members and guests introduced themselves. Tom Tebb welcomed the new Spokane Tribe representative Chad McCrea. Cynthia announced that the public comment period will be at 11:00am and asked that any who wants to make a public comment send her a chat directly to get in the queue.

PASCO BASIN 508-14 RULEMAKING

Ingrid Ekstrom provided a presentation on the Pasco Basin 508-14 rulemaking prompted by passage of SSB 5230 in 2021. The Pasco Basin groundwater subarea covers portions of Grant, Adams and Franklin Counties and is bounded by the Columbia River on the west and Snake River on the southeast.

Ingrid described the timeline of events up to the recent legislation. After the Columbia Basin Act passed in 1943, the new authorized irrigation created return flows that artificially recharged groundwater. This artificially stored groundwater co-mingled with existing naturally occurring groundwater. In 1967 the state issued a withdrawal of groundwater for the lands within the Columbia Basin Project in cooperation with Reclamation, and later that was codified in WAC 508-14. It established an interim rule and governance to groundwater withdrawal in that shallow aquifer management area.

Later, groundwater management programs were set up. First in 1973 the Quincy rule was established for the northwest portion, and then in 1982 the Odessa Rule established the boundary for the Odessa area. Once those two management areas were set up, the 508-14 area was modified to remove the Quincy and Odessa areas, leaving the Pasco Basin area as the only area still under the 508-14 rule.

Beginning around 2000, efforts focused on developing a groundwater management area in the Pasco basin. In 2002, RCW 89.12.170 passed, allowing for the state and federal government to enter into agreements on management of this groundwater. However, a lack of information on quantifying the artificially stored shallow groundwater posed a hurdle. The 2016 USGS study was commissioned to address this information gap. Most recently SSB 5230 passed the state legislature in 2021, authorizing rulemaking for the Pasco Basin area.

The USGS study looked at the volume of artificially stored groundwater. It included a groundwater flow model that compared pre-irrigation conditions to current conditions to estimate the volume of artificially stored groundwater. The model is still being used to evaluate groundwater management scenarios.

In 2021, the passage of SSB 5230 amends RCW 89.12.170 providing clarity on procedures allocating artificially stored groundwater. This includes boundary delineations, similar to what

happened in the Quincy and Odessa. Currently Ecology is in early stages of talking with Reclamation about agreements.

Ingrid described the expected schedule, including:

- Model updates - ongoing
- Boundary designation – through June 2022
- Development of groundwater management strategy - ongoing
- Ecology rulemaking – starting this fall
- Agreements with Reclamation under RCW 89.12.170 – ongoing starting this fall
- Implementation – starting in 2025.

Tom added that they are working on a draft MOU with Reclamation that addresses how they will work together and what each party is responsible for. He said OCR is please to have this lingering issue moving along toward resolution. Mike Maynard, Reclamation’s Ephrata Field Manager echoed Tom’s comments.

Tom pointed out too that they worked closely with the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District and City of Pasco during the legislative process. The goal is to provide the ability to allocate this federal water. It’s some of the first new water supply that OCR has been able to develop in the last few years. The potential amount of water to be allocated is still being evaluated, and Ecology will likely take an incremental approach to new allocations.

Questions/Answers/Comments

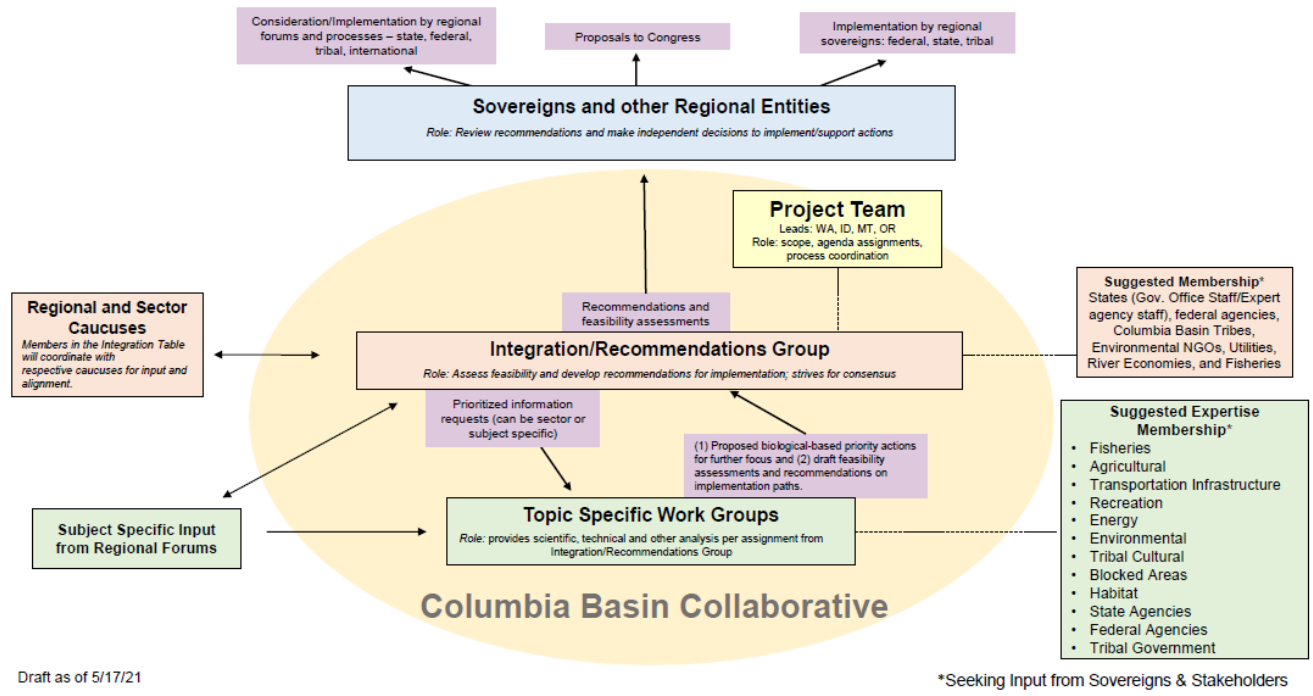
1. Farmers see the artificially stored groundwater surfacing in their fields - could they use that water, and if not, then is Reclamation responsible for draining the farmer’s fields? Canals also leak, which can impact farm field drainage. Reclamation envisions using the program to alleviate surface impacts through new water use. Reclamation’s responsibility to drain fields is contingent on several contractual agreements they have with districts and with the project acts and how project was set up. There is a lot to be worked through during this process; these are good examples.
2. Reclamation is separately doing drainage studies on all project lands as part of an approximate ten-year rotation.
3. Responding to the comment about canal leakage - while leakage does occur from canals, most are lined and do not leak much.

COLUMBIA BASIN COLLABORATIVE UPDATE

Guy Norman, Northwest Power and Conservation Council gave an update on the Columbia Basin Collaborative. This initiative was launched with a letter from the governors of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana that committed to furthering the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force effort to recover salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin. The work kicked off with an ad hoc planning group convening to develop the process and draft a charter. Full workshops were held in February and June 2021.

Using the organizational chart and process graphic shown below, Guy described the planned process and groups. An Integration/Recommendations Group is the focal point for evaluating recommendations. This group will have representatives from tribes, state and federal agencies, environmental groups, utilities, river economies, and fisheries. They will also interact with Regional and Sector Caucuses to discuss input and alignment.

A regional approach to achieving the Columbia Basin Partnership goals



The Integration/Recommendations Group will make assignments to Topic Specific Work Groups centered around main impact issues: habitat, hydropower, harvest, hatcheries, predation, and blocked areas. The Topic Specific Work Groups will provide recommendations to the Integration/Recommendations Group on these issues. The Integration/Recommendations Group will conduct a feasibility assessment, namely – what are impediments to implementing recommendations, what are various paths forward to implementation, and how might you address hurdles for implementation. The Integration/Recommendations Group will work together and hopefully reach consensus on moving recommendations forward.

Implementation pathways for recommendations that advance from the Integration/Recommendations Group are expected to be existing pathways:

- Consideration / implement by regional forums and processes – state, federal, tribal, international
- Proposals to congress
- Implementation by regional sovereigns: federal, state, tribal

This is not a regulatory framework; the Implementation/Recommendations Group does not have regulatory authority.

Currently, they are planning to convene the Integration/Recommendations Group later this fall. Nominations for memberships are open.

Questions/Answers/Comments

1. Where are counties and local governments represented in the process? They are represented in a few areas – could be in association with specific sectors like river economies or as representatives from related efforts. The Columbia River Commissioners Caucus is also a forum through which counties could engage.

2. What is timeframe for this process? They are looking at a short-term/longer-term framework. Short-term actions should be recommended and progress within 1-2 years. Longer-term will continue into the foreseeable future.
3. A sense of urgency was expressed - those actions need to move quickly – a 4 or 5 year process is too slow, especially with the severe impacts we are seeing to fish, flows, and water temperatures.
4. What are best ways for interested people to stay in touch beyond the website and being on the distribution list for updates? There are good opportunities to engage with the Topic Specific Work groups.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made.

ICICLE CREEK INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A team from the Icicle Work Group presented work occurring on the Icicle Creek Integrated Water Resource Management Strategy. Presenters were Mike Kaputa, Chelan County; Lisa Pelly, Trout Unlimited; Jeff Dengel, WDFW; Jim Craig USGWS Leavenworth National Hatchery; James Kraft, Washington Water Trust; and Peter Dykstra, Icicle Work Group Facilitation.

Icicle Creek is a tributary to the Wenatchee River in Chelan County. Development of an integrated water management strategy was prompted by chronically low streamflows, unmet obligations to tribes, irrigation/domestic water supply needs, and litigation. The Co-Conveners – OCR and Chelan County - saw opportunities in needed infrastructure upgrades and existing water storage in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Participants were motivated to work together to solve the issues and resolve litigation.

The goals include both instream and out-of-stream objectives. For out of stream uses, the group is seeking 3 cubic feet per second (cfs) for agricultural uses and 6 cfs for domestic uses in both drought and average water years. For instream flow, they are seeking 88 cfs in average years, and 58 cfs in drought years.

Project types in three categories are included in the Icicle Strategy – water conservation and efficiencies, water storage, and habitat improvement. Completed projects include:

- City of Leavenworth installation of advanced water meters to enable leak detection and better measure water use. This is the first step toward additional conservation measures starting with a rate study.
- Icicle and Peshastin Irrigation District has completed 15 miles of pipe installation and canal lining projects. They estimate that so far 7 cfs has been conserved through these actions. More work is planned with a goal of ultimately saving 10 cfs through these actions.
- The Boulder Field and Leavenworth Fish Screen Project was completed in 2021 and includes correcting a fish passage blockage created by a landslide into icicle Creek, likely caused by the over steepened slope above the Icicle Creek Road. The blockage was corrected with an innovative step pool design that fits with the natural character of the stream. This project also replaced an outdated fish screen for the City of Leavenworth.

In-progress projects include:

- Replace the fish screen on a major irrigation diversion for the Icicle and Peshastin Irrigation Districts. This project first required installation of a new bridge across Icicle Creek on the Snow Lake Trail to enable heavy equipment access to the screen site.
- Several projects at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery are also aimed at improving streamflows and instream habitat and improving reliability of hatchery operations which support tribal harvest obligations. Projects include:
 - o replacing a valve at the Snow Lake outlet (complete)
 - o Piloting circular tanks to replace fish raceways. The circular tanks recycle water which could reduce hatchery water use by 50%
 - o Updating the hatchery's surface water intake and fish screens.
- Additional work is planned at the hatchery to improve fishing conditions for Yakama Nation and Colville Tribes' fishers at traditional fishing sites.
- Cascade Orchards Irrigation Company conservation project will convert an open ditch irrigation system to pumped and piped system, returning 11.9 cfs to the most critical flow-limited reach of Icicle Creek.
- Eightmile Lake Dam Rebuild is currently undergoing a project-level EIS environmental review, due to be completed in early 2022.
- Stream enhancement projects to improve habitat are planned for construction in 2022 in the lower end of Icicle Creek.

Streamflow benefits from in-progress projects is estimated at 30.5 cfs. However, challenges remain, particularly with storage projects in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness where project work is controversial, and has legal, real property, and operational complexities. The Icicle Work Group has stayed together through this difficult work and is having constructive dialogue with Wilderness stakeholder groups about additional bigger options that could transform water management and bring even more significant integrated benefits.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 12:10pm. Next meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2021.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates:

Chad McCrea, Spokane Tribe	Jerome Delvin, Benton Co. Comm
Phil Rigdon, YN	Lisa Pelly, TU
Stuart Crane, YN	Guy Norman, NW Power & Conservation Council
Bruce Wakefield, Colville Tribes	Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League
Jeremy Weber, ACOE	Craig Simpson, ECBID
Talmadge Oxford, BOR	Darryll Olsen, Columbia-Snake Rivers Irrigation Association
Megan Kernan, WDFW	Tom Tebb, OCR/Ecology
Jeff Dengel, WDFW	Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology
Ron Anderson, Yakima Co. Comm	Jacob Anderson, Klickitat Co Comm
Wes McCart, Stevens Co Comm	Clint Didier, Franklin Co. Comm
Mark Stedman, Lincoln Co Comm	

Others logged in for the meeting¹:

Bruce Wakefield, Colville Tribes
Chris Maykut
Claire Miller, Small Communities Initiative, Dept of Commerce
Dan Church, BOR
David Child, BOR
Denny Rohr
David Ortman
Elaine Packard, Sierra Club
Elise Wright, USGS
Ethan Lockwood, WWT
Greg McLaughlin
Henry Allen, City of Spokane Valley
Ingrid Ekstrom, Ecology OCR
Jack Myrick, WCC
Jacqui Brown Miller, WDOH
James Kraft, WWT
Jim Craig, USFWS
Joye Redfield Wilder, Ecology

Kevin Haydon, WWT
Kris McCaig, Teck American Inc.
Marc Maynard, BOR
Margie Van Cleve, Sierra Club
Mat Maxey, USFWS
Mike Kaputa, Chelan County
Mike Krautkramer, Robinson Noble, Inc.
Paul Jewell, Washington Assoc. of Counties
Peter Dykstra, Icicle Strategy Facilitation
Sarah Dymecki, WWT
Scott Kuhta, State Dept. Commerce
Stuart Crane, YN
Steve Nelson, RH2
Tim Poppleton, Ecology
Tom Myrum, Washington State Water Resources Assoc.
Urban Eberhart, KRD
Whitney Reynier, Klickitat County

Facilitation

Cynthia Carlstad

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