How Did Twisp Benefit from the MVID Instream Flow Improvement Project?

by Mayor Ing-Moody
Town of Twisp

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How Did the Town’s Water Right Problems Start?

- Twisp’s original surface water right from the Twisp River dated back to 1912.
- In 1948, a flood destroyed Twisp’s diversion, and unfortunately, at the time was not restored.
- Prior to the flood, Twisp had drilled wells to provide for better water quality.
- Twisp received certificates for its wells in 1967 & 1971.
- In 1993, Twisp applied to transfer its 1912 surface right to its wells, which was appealed by the Okanogan Wilderness League.
- In 1997, Supreme Court concluded Twisp abandoned the surface rights, which reduced Twisp water rights from 610 acre-feet to 224 acre-feet.
Twisp Responses (1997 to 2007)

- Over the next 10 years Twisp reduced water use from 610 afy to under 224 afy:
  - Installed service meters and reduced pipe leaks
  - Changed rate structure to promote conservation
  - Tried repeatedly to buy rights
  - Temporarily leased rights
  - Explored reuse of wastewater
  - Converted wastewater operations to reduce potable water use in favor of internal plant reuse
  - Temporarily issued moratoriums on growth
Still Stuck!  Continued Challenges

- Not many water rights to buy at the top of the state

- Upstream transfers nearly impossible with adopted in stream flows on the Methow River

- Changing a summer irrigation right (the only kind of water right available to purchase) to year-round use is difficult, due to very small impacts on winter time instream flows
What Did We Do?

- Partnered with Office of Columbia River to find creative solutions
- Partnered with MVID and TU on a regional improvement project with significant instream flow and habitat benefit
- Negotiated purchase of irrigation right
Summary of Water Right Purchase

Seasonal Benefits and Impacts - MVID Project Analysis
Town of Twisp, Washington

Impact of Change in Season of Use on the Methow River (cfs), 124.2 ac-ft Basis
Twisp Total Use (cfs), 50% Consumption Basis (248.2 ac-ft Total Use)
Twisp Consumptive Use (cfs), 124.2 ac-ft Basis
MVID Irrigation Consumptive Use (cfs), 124.2 ac-ft Basis (90% of 138 ac-ft)

Use Quantity (cfs)

Month

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

20 gpm impact
40 - 90 gpm benefit
20 gpm impact
Twisp bought 124.2 ac-ft of consumptive use from MVID, which helped MVID defer their future pumping costs after switching from a gravity system.

OCR provided initial funding through a 20-year water service contract to be paid back by Twisp.

Twisp received a new water right out of the MVID Water Bank.

Twisp 20-year growth now secure.
Next Steps . . .

- Because Twisp is at the top of the state, we need to plan for 50 to 100 years of water right authority.

- Typical 20-year water system planning is o.k. for wells and storage, not for water rights.

- Twisp continues to look for future additional water right acquisitions or water supply projects.

- We will maintain conservation incentives to ensure that what we have can be stretched as long as possible.
Questions?

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