

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

March 4, 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 1:00pm. 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

Columbia River Collaborative

Tom Tebb asked Michael Garrity (WDFW) to give a brief update on the new Columbia Basin Collaborative (CBC). Michael provided an overview that the new effort is comprised of four states (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana) in cooperation with federal agencies and tribes. The first meeting was held the week prior and consisted of an information session on the CBC process. Guy Norman (Northwest Power and Conservation Council) and Michael represent Washington. They heard information regarding the Lower Snake River dam issue and other topics. Meeting documents are available at: <https://species.idaho.gov/columbia-basin-collaborative/> The goal of the Collaboration is to rebuild salmon and steelhead stocks and advance the goals of the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force. The Collaborative involves people from different stakeholder groups and will likely involve subcommittees to engage more interests.

Tom remarked that if the PAG is interested, we could schedule time at an upcoming meeting to discuss in more depth. Wendy McDermott encouraged participants to look seriously at this proposal as it includes much more than Snake River dam removal.

Questions and Answers

1. What timeframe is envisioned for the process? Up to three years
2. What is the funding process? Seed funding has been requested from the legislators and federal agencies have assisted. For the longer-term funding still needs to be acquired.

OCR Budget

Tom Tebb gave an update on OCR budget. His office was asked to prepare project lists for potential stimulus funding, looking at 2- and 5-year time horizons. This includes the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and the Columbia Basin Project. He will be providing this information to the Governor's office.

Melissa Downes gave an overview of the 2020 Columbia River Basin Water Supply Inventory Report, <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/2012001.html> which is Ecology's required annual legislative progress report. It describes completed, ongoing, and future work throughout the Columbia Basin, and an inventory list of water supplies developed since 2006. The Governor's budget included funding for the ongoing and future work described in the document - \$86 million total for the 2021-2023 capital budget.

Legislative Update

Carrie Sessions presented current status of relevant issues in the 2021 legislative session. The cutoff for bills to be out of their house of origin is March 9. She highlighted a few bills of interest:

- HB 1143 relates to trust water rights and addresses needs associated with the Walla Walla basin pilot to allow water right holders to donate water rights to Ecology for placement in temporary trust for a period of up to two years. The bill has passed the house, and has not yet been heard in the senate.
- SSB 5230 allows Ecology to enter into agreements with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for allocation of groundwater that exists as a result of the Columbia Basin project without following the procedures in RCW 90.44.130. It is on the senate floor right now.
- E2SHB 1382 creates a pilot program for streamlining environmental permitting for restoration projects associated with specific restoration programs, including OCR habitat recovery projects. Passed the house yesterday.
- HB 1385 relates to limiting out-of-basin water rights transfers. It appears to be inactive.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT – ODESSA GROUNDWATER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM – EAST LOW (EL) CANAL AND EL 47.5 PUMPING PLANT AND DELIVERY SYSTEM

Craig Simpson, manager of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District presented the recently completed and ongoing work by the District on the EL Canal and EL 47.5 pump station and delivery system. The presentation is available on the CRPAG website (see address at top of summary).

The District has made major progress on EL Canal improvements and its EL 47.5 delivery system. The purpose for this work is to replace groundwater withdrawals from the declining Odessa Subarea Aquifer with surface water from the Columbia River and continue the phased development of the Columbia Basin Project. Ceasing major irrigation groundwater withdrawals from these aquifers also helps preserve municipal drinking water supplies for rural communities that rely on groundwater.

Craig oriented the group to the area served by the East Low Canal, the facilities, and capital investments made already. To convey the surface water, 46 miles of the East Low Canal needed to be widened, seven siphons needed to be constructed, seven radial gates needed to be added, and twelve county road bridges needed to be replaced to span the widened canal.

The EL 47.5 pumping plant and delivery system has capacity to serve 10,500 acres. The pump station consists of six pumps with a combined capacity of up 63,100 gallons per minute. The delivery system consists of nearly nine miles of pipeline, ranging in size from 14- to 60-inch diameter. The total cost for the pump station and delivery system was \$20,800,000 funded by \$15,800,000 District funds (mainly municipal bonds) and a \$5,000,000 state capital grant. It will begin delivering water this spring and will initially serve 8,521 acres of its 10,500 acre capacity. This will reduce groundwater depletion by up to 73 million gallons per day.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

David Ortman asked if the stimulus funding project lists referenced by Tom Tebb earlier are available for public input. Tom clarified that his input was to the Governor's office. He is not involved in how that input is used for the Governor's letter, but the Governor's letter will be a public document.

Ann Lewis asked if the project list Tom Tebb referenced is available. Tom responded that he will provide the list to Ann.

PROPOSED COLUMBIA RIVER PUMP EXCHANGE PROJECT

Judith Johnson (Chair of the Walla Walla Management Partnership), Mike Ingham (Gardena Farms Irrigation District #13), and Dan Haller (Aspect Consulting) presented concepts under development by the Walla Walla Bi-State Flow Steering Committee Policy Advisory Work Group. See presentation file available on the CRPAG website (address above) for detailed information.

The Walla Walla Bi-State Flow Study has established streamflow target of 65 cfs during the low flow season (July 1 – November 30); the seasonal low flow during this period has historically been 0-20 cfs. The primary objectives are to improve streamflow to support harvestable populations of native fish species and maintain long-term viability of out-of-stream water uses. Secondary objectives are to replenish and sustain depleted groundwater reserves, improve streamflow in tributary streams, and supplement supply for out-of-stream water uses. This work is being done as part of the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan.

The timeline calls for selecting a preferred alternative in 2021. They have identified two alternatives – (1) Columbia River Pump Exchange and (2) Pine Creek Reservoir - and are seeking input from the CRPAG. The Columbia River Pump Exchange is their preferred alternative.

The Columbia River Pump Exchange could be configured for two scenarios:

- Water Budget Neutral – 29,000 acre feet per year – meets primary objectives
 - Water Budget Neutral Plus – 87,000 acre feet per year – diverts additional volume when water is available in the Columbia River to support secondary objectives.
- Their preliminary analysis based on average flows indicates that flow could be available from the Columbia River in most years during all months except April, August, and part of November. Several other projects under development in the Columbia Basin could also be competing for that available water.

The group is interested in PAG feedback on these two scenarios.

Questions and Answers

1. Are climate change projections included in the 87,000 acre-foot per year estimate? Not yet.
2. How does the timing of potentially available water support the secondary objectives? Some secondary objectives are easier to meet with pumping, and potentially an aquifer storage and recovery could look at matching up supply with demand.
3. What are the next steps for this project and has this project come before the PAG before? It was discussed 5-10 years ago. The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership website is a good source for current information about project status.
<https://www.wallawallawatershed.org/>
4. Is there any opportunity for hydropower generation from the pumped storage? Not a great opportunity for that.

COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT AND GENERAL UPDATES

- Lake Roosevelt and middle tributaries (WRIA 58) adjudication – Ecology requested funding to begin pre-work on this; unknown whether it will be funded by the legislature this session.

- Lake Cle Elum Fish Passage and Pool Raise – the PAG viewed a video showing current status of the project.

WATER SUPPLY FORECAST

Jeff Marti, Ecology Water Resources Program, presented the latest water supply forecast for this year (see presentation file available at CRPAG website address listed above). He began by noting that NOAA has updated the “normal” period which climate data is referenced to from 1981-2010 to 1991-2020. The result of this will be that the historical period used for comparison will be more recent, and likely more similar, to current climate.

In reviewing the 2021 water year (beginning October 1 2020), Jeff noted that October through January was significantly warmer than normal, particularly in central and south-central Washington. The northern Cascades was cooler than normal during that period. February, however, was colder than normal throughout the entire state.

Precipitation has also been lower than normal in south-central Washington, but significantly higher in most of northern Washington. La Nina conditions delivered a strong Cascade Mountain snowpack this year, and snow-water equivalent (SWE) is also high. In fact, February 2021 was the 13th greatest SWE gainer since 1990.

The widespread drought conditions in 2020 that covered much of the Columbia Basin are predicted to be restricted to central and south-central portions of the basin. Precipitation in this region is only slightly above 2020 levels so far, and significantly below median.

NOAA predicts natural river flows to be at or above normal in most of the Columbia Basin. The one exception is the Colville River which is forecast at 75% due to low snowpack in that basin. Yakima system storage reservoirs are expected to be at nearly 650,000 acre-feet according to BOR estimates.

ROUNDTABLE COMMENTS FROM PAG MEMBERS

- Wes McCart – Concerned about the runoff forecast for the Colville River
- Jeremy Weber – The Corps has new delegated authorities that could support Columbia Basin work. He can share more details at a future meeting.
- Liz Klumpp – BPA recently finished new climate change forecasts. She provided a link in the meeting chat.
- Mark Stedman – Thanked Tom for supporting three years of groundwater static water level measurements; he also appreciates the East Low Canal build-out.
- Mike Schwisow – He is tracking the legislature closely; the virtual format is causing things to move very slowly.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm. Next meeting is scheduled for June 3, 2021, 9am-noon, and will be online.

Attendees:

CRPAG members and alternates:

BJ Kieffer, Spokane Tribe
Danielle Squeochs, YN
Stuart Crane, YN
Sandra Sampson, CTUIR
Jeremy Weber, ACOE
Dale Bambrick, NOAA Fisheries
Talmadge Oxford, BOR
Christi Davis Kernan, BOR
Michael Garrity, WDFW
Jeff Dengel, WDFW
Ron Anderson, Yakima Co. Comm
Wes McCart, Stevens Co Comm

Mark Stedman, Lincoln Co Comm
Jerome Delvin, Benton Co. Comm
Liz Klumpp, BPA
Mike Schwisow, Columbia Basin Development League
Craig Simpson, ECBID
Wendy McDermott, American Rivers
Tom Davis, Washington State Farm Bureau
Tom Tebb, OCR/Ecology
Melissa Downes, OCR/Ecology
Jacob Anderson, Klickitat Co Comm
Clint Didier, Franklin Co. Comm
Cory Wright, Kittitas Co Comm

Others logged in for the meeting¹:

Ann Lewis
Benjamin Serr
Bob Bugert, Chelan Co. Comm
Carrie Sessions, Ecology
Chris Hyland, WWMP
Chris Maykut
David Ortman
Dan Haller, Aspect Consulting
Devin Stoker
Ethan Lockwood, WWT
Holly Myers, Ecology
Jeff Marti, Ecology
John Reeves
John Warinner
John Warner
Joye Redfield Wilder, Ecology
Judith Johnson, WWMP

Kris McCaig
Larry Mattson
Marcie (no last name given)
Mike Ingham, Gardena Farms Irr. Dist. #13
Mike Krautkramer, Robinson & Noble
Perrin Robinson, Jacobs
R. Fehring
Rick Evans
Sara Higgins
Sarah Dymecki, WWT
Scott Kuhta
Scott Tarbutton, Ecology
Tim Poppleton, Ecology
Tom Myrum
Troy Baker, WWBWC
W. Welch
Whitney Reynier

Facilitation

Cynthia Carlstad
Neil Aaland

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