

YBSA Monthly Report December, 2007

Landowners Meeting: YBSA held a landowners meeting to discuss with the residents and property owners the need for Black Rock and to answer questions. Benton County Commissioner Max Benitz provided the introduction and explained the need for additional water in the Yakima Basin. He stated at the present time we don't have enough water in the Basin for fish and people. Yakima County Commissioner Ron Gamache stated the importance of Black Rock goes beyond fish and irrigation; it's also a quality of life project.

Tom Carpenter, YBSA Board Member, explained YBSA's broad base of support for Black Rock. He stated Black Rock is a multi-interest, multi-benefit project which will provide the needed water for generations.

Bob Hall, YBSA Finance Chairman, said, Black Rock will solve the water problems and YBSA will work with everyone to address their needs.

Questions: Twelve property owners attended the meeting. Others who couldn't attend requested a copy of the minutes.

The following were questions brought up at the meeting.

Will the water be able to be used to irrigate outside irrigation districts boundaries?

No this water is to be used to guarantee at least 70% of the water needed in proratable districts.

Will seepage be available for use?

Probably, it can be considered return flow and be treated in the same manner.

What will be the cost of the water?

That number has not been determined by the BOR. At present costs Irrigation Districts pay a portion of the maintenance and operation.

What about water level fluctuation in Black Rock?

There is water available in the Columbia River for short periods of time throughout the year that can be pumped to keep the reservoir as full as possible.

What about erosion in and around the lake?

That will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement.

What will the cost of pumping be?

Pumping costs will vary based on the time of day and the time of year. Also, electricity will be generated by this project that could be used to offset the cost of pumping.

What about the purchase of property?

The Federal guidelines require negotiations and the County Commissioners present stated there will be no condemnation of property.

Where will Highway 24 be located?

No determination has been made, but the north side of the lake is much leveler and will have more frost and ice free days and be safer.

BOR Report: Kim reported the Storage Study Team is still working on the Report for NEPA and SEPA. The public draft will be printed and ready at the end of January, 2008. There will be a public review period for 60 days. During that time there will be a 1 hour open house prior to the hearings in both the Tri-Cities and Yakima. Oral and written testimony can be presented at that time.

Climate Change: The Study Team believes there are a lot of discrepancies among reports on climate change. Because of that conclusion the team feels they don't have enough information to make a model to deal with water availability due to climate change.

Fish: The following fish will be presented in the Storage Study: Spring Chinook, Fall Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead.

Jack Stanford, Director of the Flathead Lake Biological Station: Jack Stanford is very interested in the improvement the Black Rock project would make for fish in the Yakima River. He will meet with YBSA and others within the next month. The BOR included information in Jack Stanford's "Reaches Report" in their Storage Study.

Yakama Nation: The Yakama Nation is interested in the benefits of Black Rock. YBSA will request meetings with the Yakama Nation's leadership and committees to ask for their input into what needs to be done in the Yakima Basin to restore salmon runs and provide water for out of stream use.

YBSA Investors: Letters to investors were mailed asking for a pledge for the next 24 months. The revenue would provide YBSA with funding necessary to attempt to secure funding for the Black Rock Project in 2009. All 3 counties and every city in the Yakima Basin were asked to participate. Board members will do a follow-up by phone.

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee met numerous times to plan a response to the seepage report. The seepage can be considered return flow and would be beneficial to both industrial and agricultural interests. YBSA will continue to seek interested parties who could use the seepage water.

At a meeting with Gerry Kelso, BOR manager, he stated the Bureau will plan to control the seepage, but it will take money. Seepage is estimated to be about 25,000 acre/feet or 22 CFS. They will determine how big a well will be needed to intercept the water. The EIS will include a report on seepage and mitigation costs. The EIS report will use what habitat exists at the present time to determine the number of fish that will return to the

Yakima River. YBSA agrees with the Jack Stanford's "Reaches Report", that improvements in the habitat will increase the number of fish 6-10 times the number estimated by the Storage Study.

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group: Department of Ecology is finalizing their Legislative report. It will appear on their website by the end of the month.

A panel discussed the demand for additional water in the Columbia River

- operational supply and climate change
- what is the water from "Crab Creek" to be used for
- we need new water to fill the gaps
- how do we meet the Yakama Nation's demand and who pays for the water
- we need to do both storage and instream flow including improving habitat at the same time

The proposed drawdown of Lake Roosevelt would make more than 130,000 a/f available if needed. 82,500 a/f would be used annually for instream flow, to provide surface water for the Odessa Aquifer, and municipal use.

An idea was presented by Grant PUD that would increase the level of water in the Wanapum Reservoir by 3½ feet which could provide approximately 70,000 a/f of additional storage.

See www.ybsa.org for more information.

Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. Think Big Black Rock!!