

YBSA Monthly Report February, 2008

Realtors: The Washington State Realtors Association along with contributions from Yakima, Lower Yakima Valley, and the Tri-Cities contributed \$55,000 to YBSA to promote Black Rock Reservoir. The realtors believe Black Rock will have a high impact on the "Quality of Life" in the Yakima Basin and the State of Washington. A press conference was held Feb 7th when the presentation was made. See www.ybsa.org.

The BOR reported: Kim McCartney, BOR, reported the Draft PR/EIS of the Storage Study is available and he distributed copies of the Executive Summary. The draft can be viewed on the Internet at http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/storage_study. After a 60 day comment period the BOR will compile all comments, including those from the 4 public hearings, then the Bureau will answer the questions raised and forward the report with answers to the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency for review and comments.

The EPA will place the report in the Federal Register for a 30 day comment period. The Record of Decision will be made by the Department of Interior.

The Department of Energy is doing a study on the possible effects ground water from Black Rock will have on Hanford. The DOE will study the information based on the Bureau's seepage study and when the study is released at the end of March it will include a mitigation program.

Olympia Trip: YBSA traveled to Olympia on Feb 12th & 13th and met with Governor Gregoire, members of the Legislature, and the State Labor Council. The value of the Black Rock Project was discussed. Everyone was surprised that the study did not make an effort to include benefits to the State of Washington and the Yakima Basin.

With hundreds of millions of dollars spent annually on fish, the study did not include that as a benefit. The study also narrowed down the benefits that would be derived from agriculture and recreation by not including the value to the region with a consistent supply of water. Also we discussed the possible seepage problem. The Bureau as indicated the seepage can be mitigated and the Department of Energy Study of Ground Water Movement would be finished at the end of March. The report will include a mitigation program.

The Governor and the Legislature were surprised the study did not take into consideration the effects of how climate change can effect the water availability for fish, agriculture and municipal use. The State of Washington is taking climate change seriously and during the Legislative session are making plans to help address the problem.

Jack Stanford: Jack likes the Yakima River for salmon recovery because not many structures need to be removed, and flood plains are still largely available as habitat. Warm water temperature is a problem and rearing flows are too small to access side

channel habitat with the water available currently. He said the Yakima Basin was a “fish factory”. Jack has already done some analysis of the Yakima Basin and concluded the potential is high for Chinook, Steelhead, Coho, Sockeye, and Bull Trout. He believes the Yakima is the only place he knows of that has a chance to significantly restore salmon. The Yakima River, in his book: The Rivers of North America and in Jacks “Reaches Report”, describes the potential for large increases of salmon returns to the Basin.

Meetings and Hearings: Board members attended the public hearing on the Storage Study’s EIS process. Many people who attended the Bureau of Reclamation’s Public Hearings on the Storage Study spoke in favor of the Black Rock Project. A meeting was held with groups in the Tri-Cities to discuss the EIS process. A presentation was made to the Kiwanis in Yakima and a question and answer program was aired on KIT Radio.

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