

YBSA Monthly Report February, 2009

Review of “No-Action”: The Yakima Basin Storage Alliance reviewed the choice by the Bureau of Reclamation of the no-action alternative based upon a cost benefit ratio in the Storage Study. No-action leaves the Yakima Basin without sufficient water for the future. Also, the Department of Ecology used the Bureau’s estimated costs and included a small fraction of the benefits. Ecology did not take into consideration in their Integrated Water Resource Management plan that Bumping Lake expansion violates all existing policies by building a dam on an active river and the results of the Climate Change Study which predicted a decreased snow pack of nearly 30% by the year 2020. Both the Bureau and Ecology decisions would leave the Basin without an option to acquire additional water. YBSA felt it was necessary to ask the Bureau to delay the Record of Decision and continue the Study. The Bureau of Reclamation should identify and analyze the best cost alternatives for supplying additional water. A more complete watershed analysis of the Black Rock Reservoir as a component of an integrated Yakima River system needs to be completed. Additional time is needed to answer the three questions asked by Congress; improve anadromous fish habitat by restoring a more natural river flow, improving the water supply for proratable irrigation districts by providing at least 70% irrigation water during dry years, and meeting municipal water supply needs for population growth to the year 2050. With no plan to find the water needed to prevent droughts every few years, YBSA is requesting along with Benton and Yakima Counties a continuation of the Storage Study with an appropriation to accomplish the objectives stated in Federal Law.

Letter to Governor: Chairman Sid Morrison delivered a letter to Governor Chris Gregoire asking for her to support by requesting a Record of Decision delay and seeking the “redirection” of the study. YBSA is willing to step back and let a different level of government see if they can work with both the state and federal findings and meet the criteria established by Congress. This has been proposed by Yakima County and it deserves the opportunity to be successful. YBSA will be at the table, and so will the Yakama Nation, the irrigation community, state and federal fisheries, and the many other players whose futures depend on a reliable water supply.

Copy of Letter: A copy of the letter to the Governor was given to Representative Frank Chopp, Speaker of the House, in the Washington State Legislature and to David Johnson, Executive Secretary, State Building and Construction Trades Council. They agreed to send a letter to the Bureau of Reclamation suggesting a delay in the Record of Decision on the Yakima River Basin Storage Study.

Proposed Bill Language: The following is the proposed Bill language that was sent to Senator Maria Cantwell’s Office. The Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, shall continue and complete an integrated feasibility study in which BOR starts with the total water needs then find the least cost alternative which combines a Columbia River exchange with the Yakima River; in a comprehensive plan of water storage, water conservation riparian habitat restoration and fish passage measures

to meet the 3 congressional criteria; irrigation supplies, normalizing instream flows and municipal supplies. The BOR should maximize this investment value for salmon recovery in the Yakima, climate change scenarios, recreational development opportunities and the integration of pumped-storage to reduce taxpayer burden and stimulate a new economic driver for Central Washington. There are authorized to be appropriated \$1.5 million to complete this feasibility study.

The letter sent to the Bureau of Reclamation for a delay and a copy of the comments to justify the extension of the Storage Study can be found on Yakima Basin Storage Alliance web site at www.ybsa.org.