

YBSA Monthly Report March, 2009

Solution to Our Water Problems: The goal of YBSA has been from the start of the Storage Study was to acquire water from the Columbia River to prevent droughts which harm fish, destroy the environment, damage the economy, including irrigated agriculture and leave the cities and towns with rationing. Mixing Columbia River water with Yakima River water would harm salmon returning to the Yakima River, damming up existing rivers creates problems, and direct pumping from the Columbia River during irrigation season would threaten the Columbia River flow targets, YBSA chose to pursue off stream storage as the solution. YBSA asked Congress to find a solution to ensure a sufficient water supply for the future even with climate change. Congress directed the Bureau to study how additional stored water could (1) improve anadromous fish habitat by restoring Yakima and Naches River flow regimes to better approximate the naturally (unregulated) hydrograph, (2) improve the water supply for proratable (junior) irrigation entities by providing at least 70% irrigation water for districts during consecutive dry years, and (3) meet future municipal water supply needs for the next 50 years. The Storage Study concluded the best and only method to accomplish the 3 tasks was stored water from the Columbia River. YBSA's draft Yakima River Basin Environmental and Salmon Restoration program was developed as a possible program to satisfy the needs of the Yakima Basin for the next 100 years.

BOR Report to YBSA Board: Wendy Christianson and Kim McCartney reported the BOR is reviewing comments on the EIS. The Bureau is considering Benton County, Yakima County, and YBSA's request to delay the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD decision at this point in time would recommend No-Action. Unless Congress gives the Bureau of Reclamation an exception to find the best cost alternative that answers the three criteria set by Congress the Bureau can not proceed to draw a conclusion.

Movement Toward Solution to Water Problem: YBSA and guests presented to the Roza Sunnyside Joint Board of Control reasons why everyone in the Yakima Basin should join together to find a more permanent solution to prevent additional water short years. Predictions by the University of Washington Climate Impact Group (see www.cses.washington.edu/cig/outreach/waccia/index.html) show a possible 30% reduction in snow pack by the 2020's and up to 65% by the 2080's. Since two-thirds of our water during the summer and fall comes from snow pack, available water from snow could be reduced by approximately 400,000 a/f in the year 2020. The Yakima Basin reservoir system, which provides approximately one-third of the water needed, will be less likely to supply water to all its users, especially those with junior water rights without the available water to fill the reservoirs with the reduction in snow pack.

The inclusion of Bumping Lake enlargement as means of acquiring more water for the Basin is not feasible. Bumping Lake Reservoir, if expanded, violates all sorts of existing policy by building a dam on an active stream, endangered species exist in the current reservoir and the river that would be impounded, it's adjacent to a Federal Wilderness Area, and the release of water will further deteriorate the habitat in Bumping River. Bumping Lake, as a storage component, has been rejected by the Bureau of Reclamation repeatedly.

YBSA is now willing to step back and let a different level of government see if they can work with both the State and Federal Governments and meet the criteria established by Congress. YBSA has worked for years to find a solution to the water shortages in the Basin and were pleased that the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility showed the only solution for survival in the future for fish, agriculture, and municipal needs is an inter-basin transfer of water from the Columbia to the Yakima Basin.

See our website at www.ybsa.org