

YBSA Monthly Report May, 2009

Salmon Recovery: Yakima Basin Storage Alliance is concerned that not all fish projects have been evaluated equally. What are the true costs and how many more fish will there be returning to the Yakima River Basin when the project is completed. There needs to be adequate flows in the lower reach of the river so a greater number of fish can return to make additional habitat and passage over the existing reservoirs beneficial.

Climate Change: The climate change study which was just completed for the Department of Ecology by the University of Washington Climate Group indicates snowpack in the Cascades will be reduced. Two-thirds of the water needed in the Yakima River comes from snow melt. Storage provides about one-third of the water needed. Department of Ecology and the Bureau of Reclamation must utilize climate change data to forecast the most likely scenario that will occur in the next ten to twenty years.

More New Water Needed: YBSA pushed for a study and funding for the Yakima River Basin Storage Feasibility Study which was completed by the Bureau of Reclamation. The Study stated the Black Rock Reservoir project would meet all three criteria set by Congress. The Bureau concluded that a no action alternative was their recommendation after the study was completed due to the estimated cost of the total program. This left the Yakima Basin with no solution to solve our water problems.

The Bureau of Reclamation along with the State Department of Ecology have now received additional funding to organize a Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP), 2009 workgroup. The plan is attempt to find a solution to head off additional droughts and climate change which would endanger both salmon recovery and the basins economy.

YBSA is stepping back as requested by our elected officials from Benton and Yakima Counties and will participate in the workgroup. The Yakima Basin Storage Alliance only goal is to ensure sufficient new water is available to meet the 3 criteria set by Congress.

- Improve anadromous fish habitat by restoring the flow regimes of the Yakima and Naches Rivers to resemble more closely the natural (unregulated) hydrograph.
- Improve the water supply for proratable (junior) irrigation entities by providing a not-less-than-70% irrigation water supply for irrigation districts during dry years.
- Meet future municipal water supply needs by maintaining full municipal water supply for existing users and providing additional surface water of 182,000 acre-feet for population growth to the year 2050.

See www.ybsa.org for more information.