

YBSA Monthly Report November, 2008

Public Relation Campaign: Yakima Basin Storage Alliance implemented a public relation campaign to illustrate how important the Black Rock Reservoir project is to Central Washington, the State of Washington, and the Nation. See informational video on bottom left of page at www.futureoffourvalley.com. The project improves instream flow with an additional water supply for the Yakima River of about 600,000 acre-feet annually. With the availability of more water managed for salmon recovery, approximately 1 million salmon would return to the Yakima River and its tributaries. The Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study does not include 1 million salmon returning as a fish non-use benefit.

The Black Rock Project would add at least \$469 million to the local and regional economy, create approximately 6,000 jobs, and the recreation benefit would exceed \$1 billion. Again the Storage Study does not credit the Black Rock Project with the enormous benefit to the economy. See www.ybsa.org, BOR report, critique of the BOR benefit analysis.

With the economy in the doldrums a public works project, the Black Rock Reservoir, would create jobs, inject money into the economy and provide the Yakima Basin with the additional water which would benefit the Northwest for the next generation.

Obama's Opinion: "Implementing a meaningful salmon population recovery plan will be a key environmental priority of my administration, and I support efforts to create a salmon recovery plan that balances all of these important environmental, agricultural, and renewable energy interests," President-Elect Obama said in April in response to a written question from the Idaho Statesman. The newspaper followed up on that noncommittal reply with a direct question on dam breaching, and Obama aide Nick Shapiro replied, "Barack Obama believes action must be taken to protect the salmon population and ensure its survival for generations to come. To that end, he believes all efforts to restore habitat must be exhausted before dam breaching is considered."

Value of Black Rock: Dr. Michael Barber, Director of the Washington Water Resource Center at WSU, said, "We have a finite amount of water. We need water. We need it for growth. People are coming. Our cities are expanding. Most places have population projections that are still trending upward. There are huge issues related to how much water is needed for salmon, and we still get a good portion of our GDP from agricultural sources." Competition for our resources comes from fish, farms, and towns; there is another thing to consider.

"When you superimpose the problems associated with climate change, where we have perhaps more water in the winter but less water in the summer, when we all need it, we are setting ourselves up for some very tough years."

“Black Rock Reservoir” is a proposal being evaluated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, would take water out of the Columbia River during winter time, or high flow periods, pump it up into an off-channel reservoir, off-channel means it’s not on an existing stream, it’s on a kind of dry gulch, and then they would release it for irrigation purposes in the Yakima Valley, and the Yakima irrigators would not take their water out of the Yakima River. So the river flows would be higher for salmon.”

“We have water during the peak snow melt. In general we don’t have a shortage in March or April. We have our shortages in July, August, and September. Their plan would be to take that water when it wasn’t needed in the Columbia, pump it up over a hill into a different watershed. While it’s technically feasible to do that, the real impediment is going to be cost.”

Storage Study Completion: Kim McCartney, Storage Study Manager, reported that the final report of the Yakima River Basin Storage Study will be published late December, 2008. It is in final review by the Bureau of Reclamation in Boise, Idaho. There will be two volumes; one will be the original Study and the second volume will contain the EIS comments and the answers to those comments. The seepage mitigation report will be completed by late December. There will be a 45 to 60 day comment period for comments on the mitigation report prior to completion. Fish non-use values will be discussed in the answers developed based upon the EIS comments. NO change in value will be presented for fish-nonuse.

DOE Feasibility Study: The Department of Ecology is in the process of finalizing the “Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement”. The Supplemental Draft EIS is expected to be released in early to mid-December, 2008.