

## **YBSA Monthly Report September, 2009**

YBSA Emphasizes More Storage: Yakima Basin Storage Alliance continues to emphasize the need for more stored water for the future of the Yakima Basin. A study completed by the U.S. Forrester Service based on climate change in the Northwest shows that warmer weather in the region will likely mean more rain and less snow and that 25% of the last 50 years shows a severe decrease in water flow in the 43 rivers and streams.

Work Group Discussions: The Work Group members appointed by BOR and DOE have been meeting searching for a solution to address the lack of enough water for instream flow and fish, irrigation and municipal growth in the Yakima Basin. So far most of the discussion revolves around fish passage, habitat, conservation, and market based allocation. Discussions by the Work Group of potential sites for additional water supply included

- 1) Enlarge Bumping Lake – not environmentally sound and would not fill every year;
- 2) ground water storage – may have to treat water;
- 3) drain the existing reservoirs in the Yakima Basin below their historic lake beds – just planted sockeye in Lake Cle Elum;
- 4) Keechelus to Kachees pipeline – study shows neither irrigation or fish habitat benefits;
- 5) raise the elevation of Lake Cle Elum 3 feet – requires purchase of properties and installing riprap along the shoreline for 14,600 a/f of storage.
- 6) Wymer Dam in the Yakima Canyon – pipe water from Lake Cle Elum when available .

The current discussion on water supply does not identify the amount of water needed during drought years, the number of years it would take to provide the additional water, and the total cost. Interbasin transfer of water from the Columbia River to the Yakima Basin is a solution that would provide the water needed for the future of the Basin.

Groundwater Study: John Vaccaro, USGS Hydrologist, presented information on the Yakima Basin Groundwater Study. The final modeling of the groundwater will be done by next year. He stated two methods to address ground water depletion are (1) put more water in the system and (2) use surface water and less groundwater. Additional information can be found on the USGS website.

Kittitas Groundwater Moratorium: Excerpts from the Attorney General of Washington opinion on the groundwater moratorium imposed on the upper Kittitas County:

- 1) Ecology has the statutory authority to withdraw groundwater in an area entirely from appropriation if it lacks sufficient information and data to allow for making a sound decision regarding water rights. Permits may be issued for new water rights or authorized new exempt withdrawals when the new appropriations of water are mitigated by existing trust water rights;
- 2) Ecology is authorized to acquire water rights by various means and apply them to a “trust water rights” program. Trust water rights can be exercised if Ecology determines that “no existing water rights, junior or senior in priority, will be impaired.”

Jay Manning on Global Warming: Jay Manning, Director of Ecology of Washington State, stated in the CEO Magazine on Global Warming: “There will be a 60-80% loss of snowpack by 2060. In a basin like Yakima, there isn’t enough water to go around. To take that much runoff out of the equation causes problems for existing water users such as farmers, and it also creates issues for growth. Warming could also have a devastating impact on fisheries. And the human health impacts will also be great. There will be mortality, disease and pests that expand their range.”

Future Needs Solution: With the prediction by the University of Washington Climate Center, the U.S. Forrest Service and Jay Manning of a reduction of snow pack and water available, it is time to find a long term solution which will meet the needs of the Yakima Basin for the next 100 years. With all the predictions of less water available in the Yakima Basin the fisheries, agriculture, and the residence of the Basin cannot settle for less than a complete solution.

See [www.ybsa.org](http://www.ybsa.org) for more information.