

INTER-STATE OPTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
COLUMBIA RIVER-UMATILLA SOLUTIONS TASKFORCE

MEETING NOTES

JULY 5, 2012

Attending:

Barry Norris, OWRD

Dave Filippi, Stoel Rives

Derek Sandison, Washington Dept. of Ecology

Rick Kepler, ODFW

J.R. Cook, Umatilla Basin Commission

Gibb Evans, IRZ Consulting

Eric Quaempts, CTUIR

Dawn Wiedmeier, BOR

Brett Swift, American Rivers

Crystal Ball, BPA

Craig Reeder, Hale Farms

Karl Weist/Leann Bleakney, NPCC

Charge for the Subcommittee

The first item of discussion was the Charge from the larger Taskforce to the subcommittee. Steve Greenwood summarized that charge as follows:

- Help frame and focus the larger Task Force discussion of options that involve partnership with other states and/or tribes outside Oregon, and help the Task Force making informed decisions.
- Examine specific options for storage or other actions (such as conservation) that can provide (either individually or in combination) mutual benefits for in-stream and out-of-stream uses in the Umatilla Basin.
- Also look at legal or institutional barriers or requirements that may need to be addressed to implement the recommended options.

There were no amendments or changes to the committee charge at this time.

Recap of Washington actions and options to date:

Derek Sandison presented a summary of efforts that Washington is engaged in to provide additional storage and/or water supply issues in the Columbia Basin. Derek first emphasized two key study areas for Washington: (1) The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, and (2) the Odessa Special Study. Both project areas are being conducted in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

- Yakima Basin storage areas being studied are primarily for in-basin use; i.e. the water will probably never reach the mainstem of the Columbia River, as there is a deficit of water for current uses in the Yakima Basin. (“The Yakima River is currently operated as an irrigation conveyance system”)
- Mainstem Columbia studies have been conducted for 6 sites, 4 of which have been rejected. Two studies are currently in draft form and not final. These studies are for “off-channel” storage facilities (i.e. requiring pumping from the Columbia) in coulees adjacent to the mainstem.
- Washington has begun looking at large-scale aquifer storage, in aquifers adjacent to the Columbia River. The idea behind this option is to use gravity/passive return to the Columbia River, reducing pumping costs. Washington is looking at both basalt and upper aquifer storage. They have looked at potential sites and some are on publicly-owned land, which might make them more easily implementable. They have a contractor lined up to do aquifer testing.
- Use of water stored in Canadian facilities is another option being explored. There are discussions going on currently related to the U.S. - Canada Treaty on the Columbia River, where a decision about whether or not to amend the Treaty may be made in 2014.

Specific Washington Storage Options

Derek identified three possible storage options. He noted that any numbers associated with these options are quite preliminary, but do give an order of magnitude sense of the potential and cost.

1. Crab Creek. This site is not truly “off-channel”, and has environmental concerns associated with the current design. It has a potential of up to 3 million acre-feet of storage, with an estimated cost of \$1.1 billion.

2. Goose Lake. Located in the Colville reservation area. Estimated capacity is 1-3 million acre-feet. The cost for one million acre-feet would likely be \$2-4 billion.
3. Nine-Mile. Also in the Colville reservation area. Also 1-3 million acre-feet, and the cost of one million acre-feet is estimated to be up to \$4 billion.

Other Options Discussed

4. Additional draw-down of Lake Roosevelt. Dawn Wiedmeier of BOR said that there is “not a lot of opportunity for additional Lake Roosevelt water, as it is tied through its Congressional authorization only to the Columbia Basin Project in Washington. Would therefore require Congressional action, at minimum.
5. Revised management of existing (“run of the river”) reservoirs. Derek mentioned that there are 14 feet of elevation at one reservoir being looked at. Would have to be evaluated for ESA-related impacts.
6. Flathead and Hungry Horse Reservoirs in Montana. The group seemed to think that these would be longshots, and not a productive use of our investigative attention at this time.
7. Management of Columbia River Pools. Craig Reeder raised the potential for managing the Columbia River flow to increase flow in the John Day or McNary pools at specific periods of time so that additional use would not impact fish migration or survival. One specific version of this option involves Canadian storage and release, discussed earlier. Both BPA and NPCC representatives were asked about this option. They both indicated a willingness to examine this option, but asked for a more specific target to run the analysis.
8. Coordinated Conservation projects. Steve Greenwood mentioned that the Washington Governor’s office has raised this potential option in his discussions with them. If Oregon were to help finance conservation measures as some scale, might there be enough savings that would then allow Oregon irrigators (and or in-stream uses) access to a commensurate portion of the resulting additional mainstem flow.

Derek Sandison said that there are some Coordinated Conservation projects being discussed on the mainstem Snake River and the John Day Pool area that might be possible options. However, the downside is dealing with “individuals and not districts”.

9. Washington partnership on expansion of Wallowa Lake. Steve raised the question as to whether Washington might have interest in helping finance the \$12 million cost of raising Wallowa Dam, resulting in an additional 4000 acre-feet. It was not clear how this might

benefit Umatilla Basin farmers, unless Washington farmers were willing to pay a much higher price for their portion of that water, reducing the per-unit cost for Oregon farmers.

10. Short Term options. The sub-committee discussed a couple of possible short-term options, involving lease/purchase by Oregon irrigators of Municipal water rights in Washington: The Port of Walla Walla currently has unused water rights. Also the Klickitat Public Utility District may have unused water rights.

Discussion of Options and Issues

The sub-committee discussed these options briefly and raised a number of other issues that may need to be addressed further:

- Craig Reeder and J.R. Cook offered to provide a “needs analysis” for the group’s consideration, by the next meeting, i.e. showing how much more water is needed for consumptive use (primarily agriculture) in the Umatilla Basin. Craig indicated the figure would be between 200,000 and 400,000 acre-feet between May and September.
- Derek indicated that any of the large storage projects discussed would need to be federal projects (Bureau of Reclamation), and would need federal authorization from Congress.
- The question was raised about what in-stream requirement might apply to any stored water shared between Oregon and Washington. Some thought the 1/3 instream Washington requirement would apply. Barry Norris indicated that if HB3369 finance authority in Oregon were involved, there would be in-stream requirements.
- When asked if Washington has a Conservation Use rule similar to Oregon’s (requiring a minimum of 25% in-stream use), Derek replied that only the Yakima Basin has a similar rule applied in Washington.
- Washington is currently looking at using “negative power” situations for pumping water into (or out of) storage facilities to reduce costs.

Next meeting and assignments

The next meeting of the Interstate Options Subcommittee will be July 18, at the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District offices in The Dalles. The meeting will go from 11-2. Bring a brown bag lunch.

Assignments:

- Steve will forward the web address for the Washington State 2011 report looking at storage options, and will also put it on the Columbia River-Umatilla Solutions Taskforce website.
- Craig Reeder and JR Cook will develop and make available a draft Needs Analysis prior to the next meeting.
- Barry Norris and Steve Greenwood will work with Washington to further explore current work done by Washington on aquifer storage and provide additional information at the next meeting.
- Crystal Ball and Karl Weist or Leann Bleakney will do additional review on the potential and/or constraints about using “river flow management” as a potential option.
- Derek said that Bob Barwin of his staff is working on the Coordinated Conservation options. Steve Greenwood said that he would contact Bob and get additional details before the next meeting.