

Contact: Kim McCartney, Upper Columbia Area Office, (509) 575-5848, ext. 370

Notice of Public Scoping for the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study

The Bureau of Reclamation is preparing a Planning Report and Environmental Impact Statement (PR/EIS) for the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study (Storage Study) in cooperation with the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology). Reclamation and Ecology are hosting two public scoping meetings to obtain your input regarding the Storage Study. During these meetings, the current alternatives being considered will be described and staff will be available to answer questions about the study. You will also be given opportunities to identify issues and concerns associated with the current alternatives and to identify other alternatives for the project. The public scoping period runs through January 31, 2007.

When and Where:

January 23, 2007

Open House: 1-2 p.m. and 6-7 p.m.

Public Scoping Meeting: 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m.

Yakima Convention Center
10 North 8th Street, Yakima, WA 98901

**Si desea atender la junta y necesita un interprete en espanol, por favor llame a
John Evans al (509) 575-5848, ext. 238**

Purpose and Need for the Project

The purpose of Reclamation's Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study is to evaluate alternatives that would create additional water storage for the Yakima River basin and assess their potential to supply the water needed for ecosystem aquatic habitat, basinwide agriculture, and municipal demands. The need for the study is based on the existing finite water supply and limited storage capability of the Yakima River basin in low water years. This finite supply and limited storage capacity do not meet the water supply demands in all years and result in significant adverse impact to the Yakima River basin's economy, which is agriculture-based, and to the basin's aquatic habitat, specifically, anadromous fisheries. The study seeks to identify means of increasing water storage available, including storage of Columbia River water, for purposes of improving anadromous fish habitat and meeting irrigation and municipal water supply needs.



Overview of the Project

Reclamation's Feasibility Study authority for this Storage Study is limited to storage alternatives. However, Ecology has indicated that they will evaluate a range of alternatives that include both storage and nonstorage and inbasin and out-of-basin components. Therefore, the jointly prepared EIS will provide NEPA coverage for storage alternatives that Reclamation may consider as part of the Storage Study, as well as SEPA coverage for a broader range of alternatives that Ecology may consider.

The alternatives currently being investigated by Reclamation include inbasin water storage alternatives as well as water exchanges with the Columbia River. Previous Yakima River Basin investigations, such as the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Program and the Watershed Management Plan for the Yakima River Basin, are being used to develop the alternatives.

Appraisal-level studies indicate that the Black Rock and Wymer Dam Plus Yakima River Pump Exchange Alternatives, which use a combination of excess instream flows and reregulation of winter instream flow releases, may be able to meet the purpose and needs of the Yakima River Basin in varying degrees.

The Black Rock Alternative would pump 3,500 or 6,000 cfs (depending on the size of the reservoir) of Columbia River water to a reservoir east of the city of Yakima when flows are in excess of instream target flows. Water would then be delivered to irrigation districts in the lower half of the Yakima River. Deliveries from Black Rock would offset existing diversions from the Yakima River. Those foregone diversions would be used to improve flows for anadromous fish and provide additional supplies in drought years to existing irrigators beyond what would otherwise have been available. Water stored as part of the project would not be used to expand irrigation in the Yakima Basin.

Wymer dam and reservoir, located off the Yakima River about 15 miles north of the city of Yakima, would store the excess instream flows and reregulate winter flows for use later in the irrigation season and for drought situations. This alternative also includes a Yakima River Pump Exchange, which is accomplished by pumping up to 1,200 cfs from below the mouth of the Yakima River up to portions of the Roza and Sunnyside Irrigation Districts. The water that is currently being diverted to those districts would be left in the Yakima River to benefit the fishery.

Neither alternative would be used to expand irrigation in the Yakima basin.

What Can You Do?

Attend a Scoping Meeting

Please come to one of the public scoping meetings on January 23, 2007, and share your thoughts with us. If you are unable to attend, please send us your written comments on the attached sheet by January 31, 2007. Also, please feel free to share this invitation with your friends and neighbors.

An open house will be held immediately prior to the scoping meetings. The open house will give you an opportunity to view maps, displays, and descriptions of the alternatives identified to date, and to visit with Reclamation and Ecology staff about the project.

The meeting facilities are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Please direct requests for sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired or other special needs to David Kaumheimer, Bureau of Reclamation, at 509-575-5848, extension 232 (TTY/TDD: 711), or by fax to 509-454-5650, by January 8, 2007.

Provide Your Comments

If you cannot attend one of our public scoping meetings, but wish to submit a comment, or if you wish to be added to the Storage Study mailing list, attached is a comment form for your use.

For further information regarding the Storage Study, please visit our website at http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/storage_study/index.html.



THE NEPA PROCESS

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed by Congress and signed into law in 1969. NEPA directs all Federal agencies to consider the environmental factors of proposed actions and to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for any major Federal action that may have significant impacts

What is the NEPA Process for this project?

For this project, a planning report required under the Feasibility Study authority will be incorporated into the EIS. Requirements of SEPA, a State law similar to NEPA, will be included as well. A Notice of Intent to Prepare a Combined Planning Report and Environmental Impact Statement (PR/EIS) was published in the Federal Register on December 29, 2006. The PR/EIS will be prepared jointly by Reclamation and Ecology and will satisfy the requirements of both NEPA and SEPA.

A public scoping period, in which issues and concerns and other potential alternatives are identified, will run through January 31, 2007. Reclamation will develop a scoping summary of the comments received during this scoping period and it will be available to the public.

Following the scoping period, a draft EIS will be developed for public review and comment. It is anticipated that the Draft EIS will be available in 2008. An EIS is a comprehensive, full-disclosure document that assesses the social, economic, and environmental effects, both positive and negative, of a proposed action and alternatives to it. Impacts of those alternatives are compared to the No Action Alternative. Following a 90-day public review and comment period, a Final EIS will be prepared and made available to the public. The NEPA process is concluded with a Record of Decision (ROD) issued no sooner than 30 days after the Final EIS is completed. The ROD identifies Reclamation's decision and the basis for that decision.

For Additional Information, You May Contact:

David Kaumheimer
Environmental Programs Manager
Bureau of Reclamation
1917 Marsh Road
Yakima WA 98901-2058
Telephone: 509-575-5848, ext. 232 (TTY/TDD: 711)
Fax: 509-454-5650
Email: storagestudy@pn.usbr.gov

Or view our website at:

http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/storage_study/index.html

COMMENT FORM

Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study

Name (please print legibly):	
Organization:	
Mailing Address:	
City, State, and Zip Code:	
Telephone:	E-mail:

Request to be placed on the mailing list:

- I want my name put on the mailing list to receive information on the Environmental Impact Statement.
 I want my name removed from this mailing list.

Please note: Our practice is to make comments, including names, home addresses, home phone numbers and email addresses of respondents, available for public review. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their names and/or home addresses, etc., but if you wish us to consider withholding this information you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. In addition, you must present a rationale for withholding this information. This rationale must demonstrate that disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy. Unsupported assertions will not meet this burden. In the absence of exceptional, document-able circumstances, this information will be released. We will always make submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public disclosure in their entirety.

My comments on the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study are:

(Use back of sheet or additional sheets as necessary)

Please mail, fax, or email your comments before January 31, 2007, to: David Kaumheimer, Environmental Programs Manager, Bureau of Reclamation, 1917 Marsh Road, Yakima, WA 98901-2058; fax: (509) 454-5650; email: storagestudy@pn.usbr.gov.



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

