

ODESSA SUBAREA SPECIAL STUDY

Columbia Basin Project

STUDY UPDATE

August 2008

STUDY BACKGROUND

The Odessa Subarea Special Study is an investigation of continued phased development of the Columbia Basin Project to provide a replacement surface water supply for current groundwater irrigation occurring in the Odessa Ground Water Management Subarea. An estimated 170,000 acres within the Odessa Subarea are now being irrigated with groundwater; an estimated 140,000 of these acres are eligible to receive Columbia Basin Project surface water. The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is participating in the Study to provide support for state and local agency permit decisions that may be necessary to implement a selected alternative. Additional information about the Study is available at Reclamation's website:

http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ucao_misc/odessa/index.html.

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS SCHEDULED

Reclamation is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in cooperation with Ecology that will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Reclamation and Ecology are hosting two public meetings to obtain your input about the Study. During these meetings, the current alternatives being considered will be described and staff will be available to answer questions. You will also be given an opportunity to identify issues and concerns associated with the current alternatives and to identify other potential alternatives.

SCOPING MEETING DETAILS

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

Town of Coulee Dam Town Hall
300 Lincoln Avenue
Coulee Dam, Washington

Thursday, September 11, 2008

The Advanced Technologies Education Center (ATEC)
Big Bend Community College
7611 Boling Street
Moses Lake, Washington

Both meetings are from 7 – 9 p.m.

The meeting facilities are physically accessible to people with disabilities. If you need other accommodations or auxiliary aids, please contact Jennifer McConnell at 509-754-0202 before September 5, 2008. TTY users in Washington may dial the following numbers to obtain a toll free TTY relay: 800-833-6384(V) for the hearing impaired; 800-833-6388(T) for the deaf.

Si desea atender la junta y necesita un interprete en Espanol, por favor llame a Casimira Garza al (509) 754-0239.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

The purpose of Reclamation’s Odessa Subarea Special Study is to evaluate alternatives to replace current groundwater irrigation in the Odessa Subarea. The Study is needed to fulfill the obligation Reclamation made in a Memorandum of Agreement between the State of Washington (State) and the Columbia Basin Project irrigation districts in December 2004, to cooperatively explore opportunities for delivery of Columbia Basin Project water to existing groundwater-irrigated lands within the Odessa Subarea.

Action, if taken, would avoid significant economic loss in the near term to the region’s agricultural sector resulting from resource conditions associated with continued decline of the aquifers in the Odessa Subarea. Groundwater is currently being depleted to such an extent that water must be pumped from depths as great as 750 feet in some areas, with well depths as great as 2,100–2,400 feet deep. Well drilling and pumping costs have resulted in expensive power costs and poor water quality due to high water temperatures and high sodium concentrations.

The ability of farmers to irrigate their crops is at risk. In addition, water supply for domestic, commercial, municipal, and industrial uses is also affected. Those irrigating with wells of lesser depth live with uncertainty about future well production. Washington State University conducted a regional economic impact study assessing the effects of lost potato production and processing in Adams, Franklin, Grant, and Lincoln counties from continued aquifer decline. Assuming all potato production and processing is lost from the region, the analysis estimated the regional economic impact would be a loss of about \$630 million dollars annually in regional sales, a loss of 3,600 jobs, and a loss of \$211 million in regional income (Bhattacharjee and Holland. 2005. Economic Impact of a Possible Irrigation-Water Shortage in Odessa Subarea: Potato Production and Processing. WO2005-4. Washington State University, Pullman, Washington).

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

Reclamation is currently investigating the alternatives summarized below. These alternatives involve construction of water delivery infrastructure to convey Columbia Basin Project water to current groundwater-irrigated lands. Proposed construction would include expanding the capacity of existing facilities and constructing new canals, siphons, tunnels, pumping plants, piped laterals, and a re-regulating reservoir. The proposed infrastructure is part of the original development plan for the Columbia Basin Project.

Alternatives	Groundwater Acres Served	Additional Columbia River Diversion (acre-feet)	Appraisal-level Estimated Construction Cost Range* (in million \$)
No Action	0	0	\$ 0
Enlarge and extend existing East Low Canal south of Interstate 90 and construct a new East High canal system north of Interstate 90 in phases	127,300	453,200	\$ 1,944 – \$ 4,391
Enlarge and extend existing East Low Canal south of Interstate 90	61,900	202,300	\$ 377 – \$ 2,261

*These are appraisal-level cost estimates that are considered preliminary and not suitable for determining actual construction costs or requesting construction fund appropriations from the Congress. Updated feasibility-level cost estimates are currently being prepared.

Additional Columbia River diversions will be required above current diversions for the Columbia Basin Project to provide the replacement surface water supply. Reclamation is examining several options to provide replacement water including modifying operations at Banks Lake through additional draw down or a two-foot operational raise, and construction of a new 127,000 acre-foot reservoir in Rocky Coulee. All water supply options would be configured to work with the proposed alternatives; several water supply options may be necessary to provide a sufficient replacement water supply.

YOUR FEEDBACK REQUESTED

We want to hear your thoughts about the issues and concerns associated with the alternatives proposed for study. Please attend one of the scoping meetings scheduled in September 2008 to provide input. If you cannot attend one of our public scoping meetings, please submit your comments using the enclosed comment form and return it to us no later than **September 19, 2008**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Study, please contact:

Ellen Berggren, Study Manager
Bureau of Reclamation
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, Idaho 83706
208-378-5090 (telephone)
208-378-5102 (fax)
StudyManager@pn.usbr.gov

Visit our website at http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/ucao_misc/odessa/index.html, or sign up with Ecology's list serve at <http://listserv.wa.gov/archives/cwp.html>.

THE NEPA/SEPA PROCESS

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed by Congress and signed into law in 1969. It requires Federal agencies to evaluate and consider the environmental factors of proposed actions during decision making and to seek input to these evaluations from state and local agencies, Tribal Governments, organizations, and the public. Agencies must also consider and evaluate a range of alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed action. A Federal agency must prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for any major action that may have significant impacts.

What is SEPA?

Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), enacted in 1971, provides the framework for State agencies to consider the environmental consequences of a proposal before taking action. Environmental review is required for any proposal which involves a government "action," as defined in the SEPA rules, and gives agencies the ability to condition or deny a proposal due to identified likely significant adverse impacts. The Act is implemented through the SEPA Rules, Chapter 197-11, Washington Administrative Code.

What is the NEPA/SEPA Process for this project?

Reclamation published a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the Federal Register on August 21, 2008 (Federal Register, Vol. 73 No. 163, 49487), and Ecology published a Determination of Significance on August 21, 2008. The 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 September 19, 2008. 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 early in 2010. 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 60-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.

COMMENT FORM

Odessa Subarea Special Study

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

If you received this form in the mail or attended a public scoping meeting you will be placed on our mailing list. Please indicate your preferred method of contact below:

I prefer to be contacted about Study progress though (CHECK ONE): Post office E-mail.
 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, documentable 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 Odessa Subarea Special Study are:

(Use back of sheet or additional sheets as necessary)

Please mail, fax, or email your comments before SEPTEMBER 19, 2008, to: Ellen Berggren, Study Manager, Bureau of Reclamation, 1150 North Curtis Road, Boise, ID 83706; fax: (208) 378-5102; email: StudyManager@pn.usbr.gov.

