

# COLUMBIA BASIN DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE

APRIL 2013 NEWSLETTER  
Volume 3, Issue 3

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## FROM the CHAIR: RECORD of DECISION is GREEN LIGHT

*Milt Johnston, Ellensburg*

At long last, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Pacific Northwest Regional Director Lorri Lee signed the Record of Decision for the Odessa Subarea Special Study Final Environmental Impact Statement (ROD) on April 2. Issuance of the ROD marks the conclusion of the environmental review phase of the effort to extend federal Columbia Basin Project water supplies to replace irrigation water drawn from the deep aquifer, and it gives the “green light” for project development to move forward (subject to availability of funds).

The ROD is a multi-page document providing an overview of the circumstances that led up to Reclamation and their study partner, the Washington Department of Ecology-Office of the Columbia River, initiating the study to address the depletion of the Odessa Subarea aquifer by replacing deep wells with water from the Reclamation project. The ROD summarizes the process used to identify alternative methods for water delivery that were studied and the results of those efforts. It explains the reasoning for the selection of the Preferred Alternative (the Modified Partial-Replacement Action Alternative) which is a plan to deliver Project water to over 70,000 acres currently irrigated from deep wells.

Environmental impacts of plan implementation are discussed and actions to mitigate or reduce impacts as the plan progresses are identified. The responsibilities of the Bureau of Reclamation are detailed as is their plan for compliance related to the National Historic Preservation Act, Tribal Consultation, Endangered Species Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

With this green light, Reclamation will now apply for a secondary permit from the Washington Department of Ecology for water from the Project storage right, to implement the plan.

Implementation of the Record of Decision is described in the final sections. The State of Washington and irrigators anticipate moving forward with non-Federal funding for the Project.

View the full Record of Decision [here](#).

## CAREER EDUCATION FOR HS STUDENTS

We know agriculture is big business. This is why the League partners with Washington Business Week and ag industries to create Agri-Business Week. High school students from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska will learn what it takes to operate a vertically integrated farm, feed the world and make a profit. It's a week full of ag exploration, hands-on activities, and learning about careers from potential future employers – current agricultural industry professionals.

Agri-Business Week is held at Central Washington University, July 21-27. Students live on campus and form company teams of 10-12 students led by an ag professional called the “Company Adviser” (CA). Teams compete in ag-related activities and scenarios designed to teach students about the food supply chain, technology, global competition, water management, and much more. Academic rigor is rewarded as students can earn two college credits.

Modeled on the Business Week program started in 1976 by the Association of Washington Business, Agri-Business Week is the fourth pathway introduced in recent years joining Healthcare Week, Manufacturing Week, and Energy Week. The goals are to encourage the pursuit of agricultural careers, education, and show students the important role of business in every industry regardless of career choice.

The week is transformational. Students report they will work harder in school because of this experience. It's personal and professional development at its best...for all involved.

The organizers of the week are seeking help to recruit the kids; they'll take care of the education. To learn more about how you can be a part of the Agri-Business Week program or register students, go to: [www.wbw.org](http://www.wbw.org) or call 253-815-6900.



## **LEGISLATIVE SESSION MOVES TO CONCLUSION**

*Mike Schwisow, Government Relations*

As this update is being written the Legislature is concluding action on policy bills that have worked their way through the process and preparing for the final negotiations on Operating and Capital Budgets. The primary policy bill the CBDL has supported this session, 2SHB 1416, updating irrigation district LID provisions has been passed by the House of Representatives. The bill was subsequently amended and passed by the Senate. The amendment was requested by the Water Resources Association to add a section that was part of another bill that didn't make it through the House. The Senate's action will require a return to the House for a concurrence vote on the amendment.

The Senate Ways & Means Committee and House Capital Budget Committee have both produced and voted out of Committee differing versions of a Capital Budget. The CBDL has worked to support the \$74M appropriation request made by Governor Gregoire last December for the Ecology Columbia River Water Management Program. The project list includes a number of projects important to the Columbia Basin Project including, \$31.7M for Odessa Early Action implementation, \$6M for CBP Irrigation District Coordinated Conservation Plan and \$2M for Groundwater Rules Development.

The Senate Capital Budget version funds the entire project list at \$74.5M. The House version funds the program at \$40M and identifies the specific projects that are funded in proviso language. Included in the House version is \$32M for the Odessa Early Action implementation, but the Coordinated Conservation Plan is left out.

Negotiations on the Capital Budget to work out these differences and many other significant differences will get underway following the final cutoff for policy bill consideration on

April 17<sup>th</sup>. Major differences also exist in the Operating Budgets passed by the House and Senate. Most long time legislative watchers think a Special Session is in the works. Stay tuned.

## **LEAGUE PLANS D.C. TRIP**

With the Record of Decision signed, the League will head to DC to make the rounds to the Washington Congressional Delegation and to the Department of Interior. Representatives will include the Potato Commission, Department of Ecology, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District and the League.

## **NEW P&Gs PROPOSED**

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released their updated Principles and Guidelines (P&G) for the evaluation of water resource development projects. The document has been used since 1983 to aid the Corps, Bureau of Reclamation, TVA and Natural Resources Conservation Service in evaluating and prioritizing major water projects. CEQ coordinates Federal environmental efforts and works with agencies and other White House offices in the development of environmental policies and initiatives. CEQ was established within the Executive Office of the President by Congress as part of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and additional responsibilities were provided by the Environmental Quality Improvement Act of 1970.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 called for new P&Gs that would promote consistency and effective decision-making regarding water projects. CEQ followed up by putting a draft P&G out for public comment in 2009. In their latest iteration, they worked to incorporate many of these comments, and to expedite projects and reduce costs with a focus on economic development and environmental stewardship. The newest version also expands the application of the document to also include EPA and the

Agriculture, Commerce and Homeland Security.

The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association of which the League is a member, will be reviewing the document and submitting comments prior to the May 28 deadline. For more information or to submit your comments click [here](#).

## **TREATY WITH MEXICO DELIVERS WATER SOUTH**

An amendment to a 70-year-old treaty between the U.S. and Mexico, called Minute 319 calls for more water-sharing between the two countries to better meet the needs of cities, farms, industries, and the environment. The amendment, signed last year with the approval of both governments, will guide future management of the Colorado River through 2017.

The amendment provides for a series of joint cooperative actions and encourage conservation improvements, some of which will be paid for by water districts in the U.S. in return for some of Mexico's unused water. Read more on this subject: [U.S. Bureau of Reclamation](#), [The New York Times](#)

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## **IRRIGATION INPUT on COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY**

The Columbia River Treaty--the agreement between the U.S. and Canada that reduces flood risk and supports hydropower generation in the Pacific Northwest—contains provisions that may change treaty implementation in 2024. With 10 years' notice (2014), elements of the treaty may be terminated or renegotiated by either country.

The Treaty's U.S. Entity (Bonneville Power Administration and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) has been engaged in a multi-year regional conversation and review to address broad-range resource management issues related to the Columbia River. The end goal is to enable the U.S. Entity to make an informed recommendation to the U.S. Department of State by the end of 2013 on how best to proceed.

The U.S. Entity has involved the region in the Treaty Review through two approaches: Sovereign Review Team and Stakeholder Listening Sessions.

### o **Sovereign Review Team**

A group of regional sovereigns including representatives of the four Northwest states, 15 tribal governments, and 11 federal agencies meet at least monthly as they work collaboratively with the U.S. Entity including policy and technical analyses and laying the groundwork for the recommendation on the Treaty's future. Derek Sandison of the Washington State Department of Ecology—Office of the Columbia River is a member.

### o **Stakeholder Influence on Treaty Review**

Staff members from the U.S. Entity meet with stakeholder groups around the region including power utilities, navigation, flood risk managers, ecosystem interests, water supply groups, cities and counties. These groups provide technical assistance, background information and an "on the ground" working knowledge of the issues addressed through the Treaty Review process.

Stakeholders have influenced the

Treaty Review process by sharing what they expect as outcomes and offering issues and questions to be studied during development of the first round of alternatives analysis, commenting on results, and providing input for consideration in the second round of analysis. Among those actively participating at stakeholder meetings have been Craig Simpson of East Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Darwin Fales of Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District, David Solem of South Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Tim Culbertson of Grand Coulee Project Hydroelectric Authority, Tom Myrum of Washington State Water Resources Association, and the Columbia Basin Development League's Director of Government Relations, Mike Schwisow.

### **Irrigation Interests**

The next step is to take what has been learned in the first and second phases of Treaty analysis and create a last set of alternatives that capture the essential needs of the region. The U.S. Entity is hosting Open Houses in April and May to gather additional input on modeling development (see dates and locations below).

Some have expressed concern that irrigators' interests have been under-represented through the process. According to an April 11 Capital Press article, Norm Semanko, Executive Director of the Idaho Water Users Association, refers to water supply and irrigation as "almost an afterthought" within the review process.

Beginning in 2024, the existing treaty flood control agreement with Canada could change from the current assured protection plan to a "called upon" plan which introduces more risk to irrigation water supply reliability in the Columbia River Basin. Under a "called upon" plan, before Canada would act, U.S. reservoirs used for irrigation and recreation, like Lake Roosevelt, would first have to be drawn down to make room for excess water to prevent flooding downriver. Refill probability of these projects, and thus, the available water for irrigation, could be affected.

However, the U.S. Entity maintains

that irrigation is not likely to be impacted.

Craig Simpson, Darwin Fales, David Solem and Tom Myrum, Executive Director of the Washington State Water Resources Association (of which the Columbia Basin Development League is a member), will attend Open Houses. The following points will be represented:

- Current irrigation water supplies should not be put at risk to provide flood control benefits for the lower Columbia/Portland area
- There should be a treaty mechanism that allows U.S. interests to access Canadian storage for increased consumptive use diversions post 2024
- Using Canadian storage to achieve higher spring flows that are actually shown to help recover listed fish should be considered where they don't impact consumptive use water supplies and don't significantly increase flood risk

For more information on the Columbia River Treaty Review:

- ◇ [CRT Review website](#), managed through a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Administration
- ◇ [CRT Review Update](#)
- ◇ [Capital Press April 11 article](#)
- ◇ CRT Review Open House sessions (Washington only)

- April 23, 4-7pm  
Community Center, Wenatchee
- April 24\*, 4-7pm  
Quality Inn, Clarkston
- April 25\*, 4-7pm  
City Hall, Coulee Dam
- May 1, 4-7pm  
Arboretum, Yakima
- May 2, 3-6pm  
Town Hall, Seattle
- May 7, 4-7pm  
Holiday Inn Express, Pasco

\* *The Corps and BPA will host a special session on Recreation after the second presentation at the Clarkston and Coulee Dam meetings.*

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## **HOTLINKS**

- [2013 Membership](#)
- [Odessa Special Study-Ecology](#)
- [Odessa Special Study-Reclamation](#)
- [Record of Decision](#)
- [Columbia River Treaty Review](#)
- [Washington Agri-business Week](#)

“Saints are sinners who kept on going.”

--Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish novelist, poet and essayist

## **CBDL ROAD TRIPS**

Beginning in February, the Columbia Basin Development League initiated a concerted outreach effort to update local communities on Columbia Basin Project development and the Odessa Subarea Special Study. As of last month, League representatives had the opportunity to meet with a number of banks that do business within the Columbia Basin Project. This month the effort continued with visits to Lincoln, Grant, Adams, and Franklin County Commissioners as well as having a booth at the annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival. At time of print, upcoming meetings include the Grant County Economic Development Council, Sterling Bank, Bank of America, and a presentation at the Washington Bankers Association. Additionally, the League is working to schedule visits with a number of port commissioners, chambers, and associations.

## **CBDL BOARD MEMBERS RECOGNIZED**

The Lincoln County Conservation District held its awards banquet in March to recognize the conservation efforts of area residents. League Board member Clark Kagele received an award for his community service and the District's public service award went to retired Lincoln County Commissioner, Dennis Bly. Jeff Schibel received one of two "Farmer of the Year" awards.

## **YOUR MEMBERSHIP DRIVES OUR ADVOCACY**

Your membership has a direct impact on the League's ability to advocate at the local, regional and national level for the Columbia Basin Project. Not a 2013 member? Join today, and help us advocate for the Project! For a 2013 membership form or more information [click here](#). You can now support the League with a credit card payment!

## **SAVE THE DATE: 2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Mark your calendar for the 2013 Columbia Basin Development League annual conference, Thursday, November 7. If you have suggestions for conference topics, let us know: [sara@cbd.org](mailto:sara@cbd.org)

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **CRT Review Meetings**

April 23, 4-7pm, Wenatchee  
April 24, 4-7pm, Clarkston  
April 25, 4-7pm, Coulee Dam  
May 1, 4-7pm, Yakima  
May 2, 3-6pm, Seattle  
May 7, 4-7pm, Pasco

### **April 24, 6-8pm**

CBDL Board of Trustees mtg  
(rescheduled from 4/17),  
Moses Lake

### **May 8**

CBDL at Washington Bankers  
Association Ag Conference,  
Airway Heights

### **May 15**

CBDL Executive Committee mtg,  
Moses Lake

### **May 19-22**

CBDL to Washington D.C.

### **November 7**

2013 CBDL Annual Conference,  
Moses Lake

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Franz Ranch Inc

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Friehe Farms

Gavilon Grain dba Union Elevator

Glen Bair Farms

Grange Supply Company of Odessa

Grant County PUD

Haricot Farms Inc

HDR Engineering Inc

Hendrix Farms LLC

Horning Bros LLC

Hovde Orchards LLC

Irrigation Specialists

Irrigators Inc

J&E Schafer Farms Inc

J&S Myers Inc

Janett & Associates LLC

Jay & Kathy Scrupps JV

Jon & Sharon Fink

JTE Farms

J-U-B Engineers Inc

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Port of Warden/Grant County District #8

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Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District

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Representative Joe Schmick

Representative Susan Fagan

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Richard Erickson

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South Columbia Basin Irrigation District

Spectrum Communications Inc

State Senator Mark Schoesler

Su-Co Land & Cattle Inc

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Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers

Washington Fruit & Produce

Washington State Water Resources Association

William Johns

William Riley

Windy Prairie Inc

### **Partner Members**

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Grand Coulee Dam Area Chamber of Commerce

Greater Connell Area Chamber of Commerce

Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce

Pasco Chamber of Commerce

Ritzville Area Chamber of Commerce