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CCA-5700
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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Columbia-Cascades Area Office
1917 Marsh Road
Yakima, Washington 98901-2058



SEP 4 2015

David E. Ortman
7043 22nd Ave N.W.
Seattle, WA 98117

Subject: Response to Email Dated August 9, 2015 Regarding Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Accomplishments

Dear Mr. Ortman,

Thank you for your continued interest in YRBWEP. Your e-mail dated August 9, 2015 to Wendy Christensen, Technical Projects Program Manager, requested a significant amount of information about P.L. 103-434. I hope this letter answers some of your questions and I would direct you to our website at:

<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/index.html> for additional information. We hope to also address some of your questions in future YRBWEP Workgroup meetings so all may benefit from an update on the work already accomplished under this legislation.

As you are aware Reclamation is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act. All environmental compliance will be completed on any projects prior to implementation as part of P.L. 103-434 or any other legislation.

It is important to note that P.L. 103-434 is a voluntary program. That is, any acquisitions of land or water must be made from willing sellers and any conservation actions performed must be with willing participants. Because of this the early targets for water savings were not achieved as envisioned in the legislation, however, all target flows at the Parker and Prosser gauging stations were met and have continued to be met annually. Nine irrigation districts have completed water conservation plans which have been approved by the Secretary. All but two of those districts have installed volumetric water measuring devices as required under the legislation. Without the required measuring devices those two districts are not eligible for implementation funding under P.L. 103-434. You can find a helpful YRBWEP Accomplishments Handout and Presentation which was provided at the March 14, 2012 Workgroup meeting at:
<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/2011integratedplan/2012meetings/index.html>

In 1998 the Conservation Advisory Group published the Basin Conservation Plan (BCP) for the Yakima River Basin Water Conservation Program. YRBWEP has entered into four major water conservation projects with three irrigation districts under the BCP authorized by Section 1203 of P.L. 103-434. Since being enacted the BCP has achieved over 40,000 acre-feet/year of saved water for increased instream flows, with an additional 13,000 acre-feet of water available to enhance irrigation supplies in drought years. The BCP water has increased the target flows at Parker and Prosser gauging stations by 86 cubic feet per second. A diversion reduction agreement is entered into with the irrigation district on each project and the saved water is monitored by the Yakima Project River Operations Group. Three additional feasibility studies have been completed under the BCP with the potential to provide an additional 60,000 acre-feet of saved water.

YRBWEP has also acquired nearly 2,000 acres of important habitat for the purpose of reestablishing floodplains, protecting and creating wetlands, and improving fish habitat along the Yakima River and its tributaries. Associated water rights from these lands have been designated for instream flows.

Under Section 1207 of P.L. 103-434 Reclamation has completed projects to enhanced fish passage and improve instream flows on several Yakima Basin tributaries including Taneum Creek, Cowiche Creek, Manastash Creek, and the Teanaway River. These projects have opened up over 70 miles of previously unreachable critical habitat for anadromous fish. Spawning surveys and tracking of electronically tagged fish have confirmed that steelhead and other anadromous species are naturally recolonizing these creeks.

The Yakama Nation has completed a feasibility investigation on the Wapato Irrigation Project and the Secretary of the Interior has approved construction of the Satus improvements. The Yakima Nation has also submitted a draft Toppenish Creek Corridor Enhancement Plan to the Tribal Council. Once the Council has approved the plan it will be submitted to the Secretary for approval. I suggest you contact Phil Rigdon at the Yakama Nation to get the latest update on plans for the Irrigation Demonstration Project.

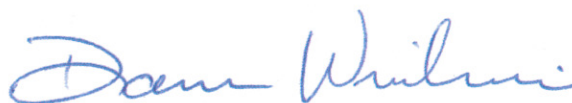
The Kennewick Irrigation District has completed a draft alternatives study on the electrification of the Chandler pumps and the Columbia River pump exchange. Reclamation continues to work with the district to assess the feasibility of the alternatives and to identify the preferred alternative.

In May 1999, the System Operations Advisory Committee submitted their Report on Biologically Based Flows for the Yakima River Basin to the Secretary of the Interior. As part of the Yakima River Basin Study a water needs assessment was completed that provides an updated amount of water for current and future water needs. You can check the following link to the

Yakima River Basin Study, Water Needs for Out-of-Stream Uses, June 2011;
<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/reports/tm/2-1waterneeds.pdf>.

I hope you find this information helpful in understanding the progress we have made under P.L.
103-434.

Sincerely,



Dawn A. Wiedmeier,
Columbia-Cascades Area Office Manager