

## **Letter to the Editor**

*(submitted to Yakima Herald 2/2016)*

Kenneth A. Hammond

Ellensburg

The Feb. 6, guest editorial on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (IP) deserves comment. Leita laments that we no longer can “assume a stable and dependable water supply” and implies that, with reservoirs and snowpack we could do so “for more than 90 years.” Not so. In my 53 years of experience, irrigation water has often been rationed. With proper concern for salmon in earlier years, it probably would have happened more frequently.

The five existing, publicly subsidized dams were constructed at considerable economic and environmental cost and did not resolve the periodic demand/supply imbalance. The costly and subsidized dams proposed in the IP are unlikely to do any better.

Any water supply has ultimate physical limits and those limits are variable over time. In contrast to variable supplies, annual irrigation water demand is fairly constant. Further supply management with dams and reservoirs is not economically feasible. Consecutive years of low flow can totally defeat the effort.

The public deserves to see a dollar cost figure for one acre-foot of needed water when delivered from each proposed IP project. The least-cost, long-term solutions lie with improved demand management. Rotation fallow and pressurized delivery systems deserve serious consideration.

---

***Kenneth Hammond***, raised in rural eastern Washington, taught in the geography department at Central Washington University, 1962-1997, and has been engaged for much of his life with water policy. Hammond is also a Yakima Basin irrigator.