



Washington Chapter, 180 Nickerson St., Suite 202, Seattle, WA 98109

TESTIMONY OF THE SIERRA CLUB
To the Capital Budget Committee
House of Representatives
Olympia, WA

January 21, 2013

On

HB 1088 - Concerning state general obligation bonds and related accounts
HB 1089 - Adopting the 2013-2015 capital budget

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity for the Sierra Club to provide testimony on HB 1088 and HB 1089. Both of these bills pertain to capital budget appropriations for controversial dam studies.

HB 1088 - Concerning state general obligation bonds and related accounts

Proposed Section 6 of HB 1088 amends RCW 43.99G.162 and 2006 c 167 s 203 to allow the proceeds from the sale of the bonds authorized in RCW 43.99G.160 to be deposited in the Columbia River Basin water supply development account created in chapter 6, Laws of 2006. The proceeds of any such taxable bonds shall be transferred to the Columbia River Basin taxable bond water supply development account in lieu of any deposit otherwise provided by this section. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. The proceeds shall be used exclusively for the purposes specified in RCW 43.99G.160 and for the payment of expenses incurred in the issuance and sale of the bonds.

Since the mid-1970s, millions of Washington taxpayer dollars have been spent on proposed new dams studies. The Department of Ecology, in particular, has moved from an agency charged with preventing land, air and water pollution to a mini-Bureau of Reclamation spending millions on dam studies such as the Black Rock project east of Yakima,
<http://columbia-institute.org/blackrock/blackrock/Home.html>

the Crab Creek dam, west of Othello,
<http://www.waterplanet.ws/crabcreek/ccrhome/Home.html>

and the Hawk Creek dam, northwest of Davenport.
http://columbia-institute.org/hawkcreek/images/locator_map.html

Each of these proposed dams would have adverse environmental impacts. For example, the Black Rock project, enthusiastically supported by former Governor Gregoire was opposed by the U.S. Department of Energy because of concerns of reservoir water seepage through the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

Approximately 19,000 acres within the Lower Crab Creek watershed is designated as part of the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge or the Washington State Lower Crab Creek Wildlife Area, which is managed cooperatively by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Washington Dep't of Fish & Wildlife.

The creation of the Columbia River Basin water supply development account remains a controversial program. Before handing over more taxpayer dollars to the Department of Ecology to waste on dam studies, the Committee should ask Ecology some hard questions:

Q. How much has Ecology spent on new dam studies in the Columbia River Basin since 2006?

Q. Does Ecology intend to spend any of the Columbia River Basin water supply development account on pump-storage/wind power related studies to provide water from the Columbia River to the Yakima River?

Q. What is Ecology's policy regarding interbasin transfer of water from the Columbia River to the Yakima River?

In summary, the Columbia River Basin water supply development account should receive an audit to determine whether future expenditures from this account are warranted and have a positive benefit/cost ratio.

HB 1089 - Adopting the 2013-2015 capital budget

HB 1089 would adopt several controversial new sections:

Proposed Sec 3016 pertains to the Yakima River Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study (20084026). It would reappropriate \$83,000 for completion of the US Bureau of Reclamation's Yakima Basin storage feasibility study, including the associated joint national environmental policy act, the state environmental policy act, and the environmental impact statement. However, it also states that the reappropriated funds are to be used by the bureau of reclamation and the department of ecology to evaluate potential in basin storage facilities such as the proposed Bumping Lake and Wymer reservoirs and other reasonable alternatives that will enhance water supplies and streamflows in the Yakima Basin. The total costs for this account have now reached nearly \$5 million dollars on studies without a single one of these dollars spent on water conservation. The Green Scissors Campaign, a national coalition, identified both the proposed Bumping and Wymer dams in its 2012 report as wasteful government projects that should not be funded in the Federal Budget. See: <http://greenscissors.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/GS2012-v7E.pdf>

The proposed Bumping Lake and Wymer reservoirs are not cost-effective projects. In 2008, the Bureau evaluated two versions of a new Wymer dam project between Ellensburg and Yakima and a proposed Black Rock dam project east of Yakima:

- Black Rock Alternative – The benefit-cost ratio is 0.13. [Black Rock Dam involves a diversion and partial exchange of Columbia River water for Yakima Project water currently diverted by the

Roza and Sunnyside Divisions (Roza and Sunnyside) of the Yakima Project for irrigation. Roza and Sunnyside have been identified as potential willing water. Columbia River water pumped from Priest Rapids Lake would be stored in a Black Rock reservoir to be constructed in the Black Rock Valley.]

•Wymer Dam and Reservoir Alternative – The benefit-cost ratio is 0.31.

•Wymer Dam Plus Yakima River Pump Exchange Alternative – The benefit-cost ratio is 0.07.”
BuRec Final Report/EIS, pages 2-43, 2-127.

http://www.washington.sierraclub.org/uppercol/ucr/yakima/water_overview.html

In addition, in 2012 over 1,500 comments opposing new storage dams in the Yakima River Basin were submitted to the Department of Ecology and Bureau of Reclamation’s Draft Programmatic EIS.

We are opposed to proposed Sec 3016 and request that Ecology provide a response to the following:

Q. If this is a Federal BuRec study, why are Washington taxpayers spending money?

Q. How can reappropriation for the funds be used solely for “completion of the United States bureau of reclamation's Yakima basin storage feasibility study, including the associated joint national environmental policy act, the state environmental policy act, and the environmental impact statement,” when it also states the “reappropriated funds are to be used by the bureau of reclamation and the department of ecology to evaluate potential in basin storage facilities such as the proposed Bumping Lake and Wymer reservoirs and other reasonable alternatives”?

Proposed new Sec. 3045 pertains to the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Management Plan Implementation (30000278). It would reappropriate \$142,000 for a total spent of \$2 million, without specifying the purpose of the funds.

Ecology participated in the development of the Yakima Basin Integrated Water Management Plan by a Yakima Workgroup that continues to generate growing local, state-wide, and national opposition.

In an August 2012 op-ed in the Ellensburg (WA) Daily Record, Charlie de la Chappelle, vice-chair of the Yakima Basin Storage Alliance in Yakima (YBSA is a Yakima Workgroup member) and Marlin Rechterman, vice president of the Kittitas Audubon Society, detailed the procedural flaws in the Bureau of Reclamation and Ecology Yakima process. These flaws included

- * limited Workgroup membership;
- * closure of the Workgroup implementation subcommittee meetings to the public and other Workgroup members, such as the YBSA;
- * preparation of a \$20 million “Early Action Implementation Request” prior to release of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS);
- * lack of a range of alternatives in the DPEIS;
- * BuRec and Ecology’s denial of a request from 11 local, state, and national organizations for a DPEIS comment-period extension;
- * after the close of comments on the DPEIS, the inclusion in the Final Programmatic EIS (FPEIS) of the new proposal for NRAs (National Recreation Areas) within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, based on a Workgroup plan for more than 40,000 acres dedicated to off-road vehicle (ORV) use; and
- * failure to respond to 15 local, state and national organizations’ March 2012 comment letter on the FPEIS.

See:

http://www.washington.sierraclub.org/uppercol/ucr/yakima/media/Entries/2012/8/9_Guest_column_Yakima_plan_flawed_from_the_start.html

We are opposed to proposed Sec 3045 and request that Ecology provide an accounting of the prior biennia expenditures of \$1,858,000.

Proposed new Sec. 3061 pertains to the Ground Water Management Yakima Basin (92000061). It would reappropriate \$450,000. Over the last century, Yakima River Basin surface water and ground water have been mismanaged.

We would support proposed new Sec. 3061 if we had confidence that Ecology would use these funds to reduce groundwater withdrawals in the Yakima River Basin.

Proposed new Sec. 3079 pertains to the Yakima River Basin Water Supply (30000373). It would appropriate \$23,613,000 (with a future Bienna projected cost of \$85,000,000 for a total of \$108,613,000). We are opposed to the appropriation of such a large amount of money without an audit of how Ecology has spent funds in the Yakima River Basin since 2006.

The Enacted 2012 Ecology Capital Supplemental Budget included the Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund Program (30000209) and Skagit Mitigation (91000181).

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/services/fs/2012_0503_Enacted_SuppCapBudget.pdf

In summary, the money that Ecology has wasted on dam studies could have been used for much more worthwhile and beneficial capital projects such as those above. The Yakima Basin Plan costs will likely exceed \$5 billion dollars. We request that the Committee carefully review the way Ecology has spent Capital Budget funds in the Yakima Basin before appropriating additional funds.