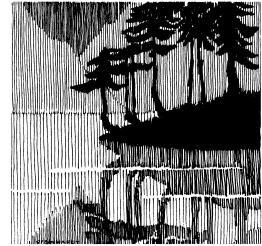




Founded in 1957
P.O. Box 95980, University Station
Seattle, WA 98145-2980

alpine lakes protection society

alps



By default the Alpine Lakes are here... by design they will remain.

P.O. Box 27646
Seattle, WA 98165

TESTIMONY OF THE NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL
AND ALPINE LAKES PROTECTION SOCIETY
before the Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Olympia, WA

January 26, 2015
On S-0544.4/15

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity for North Cascades Conservation Council (NCCC) and the Alpine Lakes Protection Society (ALPS) to provide testimony on S-0544.4/15. The NCCC and ALPS are opposed to passage of this version of the bill.

This bill would establish a water infrastructure account funded by a new property tax, with exemptions for private forest land and agricultural land in counties without irrigation districts. We are concerned because the bill would provide funding for water projects, such as a new Bumping Lake dam, part of Ecology's controversial Yakima Plan that would destroy ancient forest and endangered species habitat within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Ecology received more than 1,500 comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement from citizens around the country objecting to the Yakima Plan. We are also concerned that proposed Sec. 105 requires the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to create ranked lists for projects, yet also tells Ecology to give preference to the Yakima Plan without any specific mention other than an RCW citation.

We are also concerned with proposed Sec. 102, which defines "Project sponsor" to include a federal agency and Sec. 105, which allows federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Reclamation, to apply for state taxpayer funds.

We do agree that no taxpayer funds should be spent on land condemnation for water projects, as this would be the federal Bureau of Reclamation method for acquiring private land for a new Wymer Dam if the current land owner is not a willing selling.

In addition, the Department of Ecology is proposing to expand water supply projects within the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area to service the Icicle irrigation districts (see attachment). While proposed Section 104 permits the Department of Ecology to establish advisory groups, over the past five years, the Department of Ecology has abused this process by self-selecting a group of project supporters as part of workgroups for the Yakima and Icicle River Basins, with limited participation for opposing views and

limited public participation. We note, for example that the Department of Ecology's Office of Columbia River Policy Advisory Group meeting agenda's do not even have public comment listed as an agenda item.

In an August 2012 op-ed in the *Ellensburg 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 failures in the Bureau and Ecology's Yakima planning process:

- * limited Workgroup membership;
- * closure of the Workgroup implementation committee 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;
- * Bureau's and Ecology's denials 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 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.

The proposed legislation does nothing to correct these abuses by the Department of Ecology.

We supported the 2013 Legislature's request that the Washington Water Research Council prepare a benefit/cost (B/C) report on the individual water storage projects in the Yakima Plan. This report, prepared by a team of experts from the University of Washington and WSU, identifies those projects in the Yakima Plan that are not economically sustainable and should be dropped from further consideration:

"Based on moderate climate and market outcomes, storage infrastructure projects implemented alone and without proposed IP instream flow augmentation result in the following estimated out-of-stream net present value and B/C ratios, none of which passes a B-C test":

- * *Bumping Lake Expansion: Benefit/Cost (B/C) ratio of **0.18*** [i.e. a return of 18 cents on the dollar]
- * *Wymer Dam and Reservoir: B/C ratio of **0.09*** [i.e. a return of nine cents on the dollar]
- * *Cle Elum Pool raise: B/C ratio of **0.62*** [i.e. a return of 62 cents on the dollar]
- * *Keechelus to Kachess Conveyance: B/C ratio of **0.20*** [i.e. a return of 20 cents on the dollar]
- * *Kachess Drought Relief Pumping Plant: B/C ratio of **0.46*** [i.e. a return of 46 cents on the dollar]

WRC Report, pages iii and iv.

http://swwrc.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/ybip_bca_swwrc_dec2014.pdf

The State Legislature should not ask the citizens of Washington to vote to raise property taxes to fund water storage projects that are not cost-effective.

In summary, we are here to alert the Senate Ways and Means Committee that opposition to the controversial Yakima Plan will continue to grow at the local, state and national level so long as the Yakima Plan calls for uneconomical environmentally damaging irrigation dams and adverse impacts to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.