



Statement of the Sierra Club on the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project 2009 Work Group – July 15, 2009

The process and Task Force membership established by the BuRec and Ecology does not meet basic requirements for public participation.

New dam construction and irrigation water storage projects are national issues, because new dams have significant adverse economic and environmental impacts.

Economic

The final report and EIS issued by the BuRec in December 2008 confirmed the economic reality that Black Rock Dam would only return 13 cents for every taxpayer dollar spent, and that the Wymer Dam and Pump Storage options would only return between 31 cents and 7 cents for every taxpayer dollar spent.

In the BuRec report, the Bumping Lake Enlargement did not even make the first cut for an economic analysis.

In this time of economic hardship across the nation, there is increasing scrutiny by Congress, taxpayers, and the press on wasteful government spending.

Environmental

Efforts to construct Black Rock have raised national concerns regarding groundwater impacts to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Perennial efforts to construct a Bumping Lake Enlargement continue to raise national concerns about loss of old-growth forests, roadless areas, recreational opportunities, and impacts to the William O. Douglas Wilderness Area.

Water Conservation

Any of the other irrigation dam project proposals will also draw national attention to the Yakima Basin regarding:

- * Water and energy subsidies provided to irrigation districts that are not available to dry land farming
- * Repayment of the costs of the existing BuRec Yakima River Basin Project
- * Extent to which irrigation district water conservation plans have or have not been implemented
- * A review of crop selection and water spreading

In conclusion, nothing to date has demonstrated that additional dams in the Yakima River Basin are either cost-effective or environmentally acceptable.