



# USDA Forest Service Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. Fact Sheet

Date: March 6, 2012

## **Topic: Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan—Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. Response to Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**

**Issue:** The Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. was a cooperating agency that responded to a request for comments to the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) in late 2011. The U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and State of Washington Department of Ecology jointly prepared the plan, which would impact the Yakima River Basin in Benton, Kittitas, Klickitat and Yakima Counties.

The two lead agencies released a final PEIS on March 2, 2012. The final PEIS evaluates two alternatives to meet the water supply and ecosystem restoration needs in the Yakima River Basin: a no action alternative and the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan Alternative. The integrated plan is identified as the preferred alternative (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/YBIP.html>).

The U.S. Forest Service's role is to ensure underlying resource issues affecting the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. will be addressed. The national forest encompasses much of the Upper Naches River drainage and the entire area of the existing and proposed enlargement of Bumping Lake. The proposal to enlarge the dam and lake has several potentially-adverse effects on national forest resources. Recreational facilities at Bumping Lake would also be impacted by eliminating shoreline facilities and access to trails.

The current water resources infrastructure of the Yakima River Basin has not been capable of consistently meeting aquatic resource demands for fish and wildlife habitat, dry-year irrigation demands, and municipal water supply demands. The plan includes seven elements: reservoir fish passage, structural and operational changes to existing facilities, surface water storage, groundwater storage, habitat/watershed protection and enhancement, enhanced water conservation, and market reallocation.

## **Questions and Answers:**

### **What role will the U.S. Forest Service have in any decisions related to this project that have potential to affect lands it manages?**

The U.S. Forest Service has been invited to participate as a cooperating agency in the planning report and programmatic environmental review processes. The Bureau of Reclamation has the primary responsibility to ensure environmental commitments are met if any action is implemented. In the three-year period prior to the start of construction, site-specific and detailed environmental review processes would be conducted. The U.S. Forest Service would be involved in these activities.

### **What effect will National Recreation Area (NRA) proposals in project plans have on land the Forest Service manages?**

The Watershed Land Conservation Subcommittee Proposal from January 2012 that is tied to the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan proposes applying NRA designations to lands in the Upper Yakima Basin. The NRA designation is for protected areas often centered on large reservoirs and emphasizing water-based recreation for many people. Congress must establish all NRAs.

The proposal includes creation of the Upper Yakima National Recreation Area on about 100,000 acres managed by the Forest Service. About 21,000 acres within the proposed NRA would be designated as a wilderness area, about 6,000 acres would be designated for backcountry motorized use and about 1,000 acres would be designated for backcountry non-motorized use.

In addition, the proposal includes creation of the Manastash-Taneum NRA on about 41,000 acres managed by the Forest Service. About 35,000 acres within this proposed NRA would be designated for backcountry motorized use.

The NRA designations have potential to increase recreational impacts to ecosystems and affect wildlife corridors that pass through these areas because the designation would likely attract more of the recreating public

**Who operates the Bumping Lake dam and manages the reservoir?**

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation operates the dam and reservoir. Reclamation and the Forest Service have mutual jurisdiction over the land around the reservoir. Reclamation holds the land around the reservoir as “withdrawn land” and it is represented as a strip of land which surrounds the lake one mile in width from the normal high water line. The lands around the lake are jointly managed by both agencies, with Reclamation’s Yakima Field Office operating the dam and reservoir, and the Forest Service managing the recreation and land use around the reservoir.

**How would the plan affect the Bumping Lake ecosystem?**

Enlarging the Bumping Lake dam and raising the water level would flood considerable forest area, some of which may include critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. Removal of this habitat could also have an adverse effect on species dependent upon similar conditions. Deer, elk and numerous other species inhabit this area. Flooding of habitat and wildlife corridors could have adverse impacts on them.

**Deep Creek and the Upper Bumping drainage are two of the few remaining areas that have truly significant old growth. What will happen to these trees? Will they be harvested?**

The mouth of Deep Creek would be inundated with the enlargement and subject to fluctuations. The old growth trees would be harvested in areas where they would be inundated by water or conflict with the location of the new dam and related features. Mitigation measures would be implemented.

**What will happen to the summer homes on Bumping Lake? What about Bumping Lake Marina?**

The PEIS states summer homes would be subject to in-kind exchanges or an offer of a similar lot elsewhere. The marina would be inundated and potentially relocated.

**If the lake is enlarged, what impact will it have on the William O. Douglas Wilderness Area boundary accessibility to the public?**

The enlarged reservoir level would remain outside the wilderness area boundary. But, some access points to the wilderness area might be affected and this could be mitigated by providing replacement access. Such impacts would be identified and evaluated during the site-specific and more detailed environmental reviews that would occur before a decision is made to begin construction of a new dam.

**If a decision is made to expand the dam, what effect will this have on local recreational activities and traffic along SR-410, Chinook Pass? Will construction crews be working during the winter and, if so, what will this do to winter recreation in the area?**

Construction of the new dam would cause increased traffic on roadways with worker traffic and equipment material hauling that could have short-term impacts on SR-410 and Forest Service Road 1800. Construction activities would likely proceed at a lower level during the winter. Traffic would increase on Highway 12. Effects on local recreation, including winter recreation and use of campgrounds along area roads, would be determined and appropriate mitigation measures would be identified during site-specific and environmental analyses conducted before the start of construction. The construction contract would include any identified mitigation measures that may be related to daily construction activities.

**Are there potential ecosystem benefits if Bumping Lake were expanded?**

The PEIS states the integrated plan would contribute to more conditions resembling natural flows and the creation of habitat conditions more capable of supporting fish populations throughout the Yakima River Basin. However, negative effects on habitat could occur because of flooding of some areas such as Deep Creek.

The surface water and groundwater storage elements of the integrated plan would provide greater benefits to riparian and wetland vegetation in comparison to programs that would implement elements separately throughout the Yakima River Basin.

**What would the impacts to cultural resources and recreation be with a Bumping Lake expansion?**

Historic and pre-historic cultural resources would be affected. Most of the recreation residences on the north shore of Bumping Lake were constructed more than 50 years ago and might be suitable for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Other facilities and improvements are within the footprint of the proposed expansion or would have their access cutoff by the lake. Fifteen cabins and the Bumping Lake Marina on the north shore would likely be inundated. It is unlikely a comparable replacement location on Bumping Lake could be provided for these facilities, given their proximity to the William O. Douglas Wilderness Area boundary. The same is true for the Forest Service campgrounds and day use area on the south shore of the lake.

In addition to effects to lakeside facilities, Forest Roads 1800, 1808 and 1809 provide access to popular trailheads that serve hikers and equestrians using the wilderness area.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation would coordinate with the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. to determine appropriate mitigation for impacted recreational facilities. Many of the proposed projects in the integrated plan would improve riparian and fish habitat, according to the PEIS.

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