



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

March 22, 2010

Bureau of Reclamation
Columbia Cascades Area Office
ATTN: Candace McKinley, Environmental Protection Specialist
1917 Marsh Road
Yakima, WA 98901

To whom it may concern:

I write to provide general comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Cle Elum Dam Fish Passage and Fish Reintroduction Project.

First, it is imperative that any movement forward on fish passage and fish introduction at Cle Elum or the Project's other reservoirs must occur in concert with the broader water effort in the Yakima River Basin. To achieve the consensus and collaboration needed to successfully increase water availability in the Basin, the elements of the preliminary plan (Integrated Water Resource Management Plan) should advance together. As I communicated on June 30, 2009 to the first meeting of the water working group, it is critical that existing storage capacity not be jeopardized prior to additional storage being put in place. For the efforts of the Basin working group to succeed, I believe fish passage should not move ahead of efforts on new water storage – these efforts should be advanced in unison.

In making this first comment, I recognize the repeated statements in the report that the fish passage facilities and operations are being designed to be “water neutral” and to not impact existing water delivery contracts, total water supply available, or flood control operations. However, my second comment is concern over the potential impacts that fish passage, fish reintroduction, and resulting increased fish populations could have on the existing water supply in Cle Elum reservoir, which the draft EIS correctly identifies as having the largest storage capacity in the Basin and serving as the main resource for meeting the large irrigation demands in the lower Basin. It is reasonable to consider the risk posed to water users and economic activity in the Basin. The potential of lawsuits or government agencies changing their views in the future on whether fish rather than water supply management dictates reservoir operation is a

legitimate concern. It may be appropriate to include clear language in authorizing legislation to ensure the reservoir will continue to be operated for water supply and management so that lawsuits or future political appointees do not put irrigation water delivery and the economy of the Basin at risk.

A further comment on water supply relates to Chapter 6 of the draft EIS on "Environmental Consequences – Fish Reintroduction Project." In discussing "Water Resources" related to "Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative", information is provided and broken down for both Water Quality (6.2.2.1 on page 6-1) and Water Supply (6.2.2.2). However, in discussing "Water Resources" relating to "Alternative 2 – Fish Reintroduction Project", there is only one section (6.2.3) and the entirety of the page of information relates to water quality. No discussion or statements are made relating to water supply. This should be corrected and if the determination is anything other than 'fish reintroduction will not impact water supply', then additional public comment may be necessary.

I appreciate these comments being made part of the official record. Please contact Todd Young (Staff Director, House Committee on Natural Resources, 202-225-2761) if there are any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Doc Hastings
Member of Congress