

VOICE OF THE PROJECT

Supporting the Columbia Basin Project since 1964.



OUR MISSION

Serving as the voice of the Columbia Basin Project – advocating for completion and sustainable maintenance.



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THE VALUE OF THE COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT

By Madi Moore, Agricultural Economist, Washington State Department of Agriculture

Water is a major contributor to agricultural productivity and economic development in the American West. The late 1940's saw the expansion of irrigation projects as public investment increased and lowered the financing costs of shared infrastructure. At the same time, the development of dams, water storage and on-farm irrigation infrastructure enhanced the economic viability of utilizing water for irrigated crop production. By the late 1970s, a mere 30 years later, irrigated acreage in the American West had more than doubled. Today less than 25% of U.S. farmland is irrigated but this same land accounts for over 50% of all agricultural production value.

The Columbia Basin provides an example of the impacts of water on agricultural productivity and the critical role it plays in economic growth.

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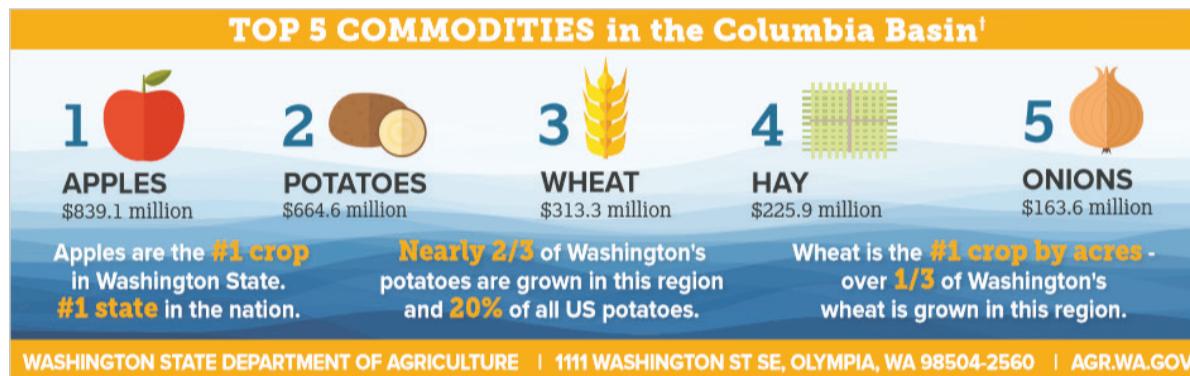
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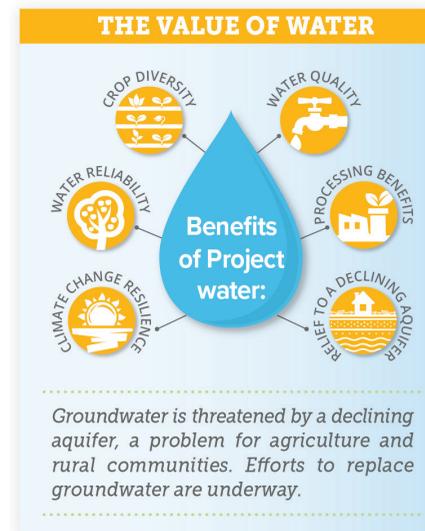
When Columbia Basin Project water was first introduced in 1952, this led to the conversion of dry land to irrigated production. Irrigated agricultural production increased not only the profitability but also production reliability of the region. The next few decades experienced a strengthened farm economy, enhanced economic stability in the region and the development of value-added agriculture and food processing. Today, irrigated agriculture is at the center of the Columbia Basin's economy – supporting communities through the production of food and value-added products.

Adams, Grant, Franklin, and Lincoln counties (the four counties in which the Columbia Basin Project lies) generate roughly \$3 billion dollars in agricultural production value (that is one-third of Washington State's \$9 billion agricultural production value). Farms in the region employ over 13,000 people (that is one-in-five employees in the region's total workforce). Add in the number of employees who work in food processing as well as agricultural services and that number doubles or triples. In fact, the percentage of people employed in agriculture (in the region) is seven times the national per capita average.

Agriculture powers a multi-billion-dollar processing industry. Food processing in Grant County alone accounts for over 15% of all wages and over 45% of all employment within the manufacturing subsector. Food processing in the region is also highly specialized. Over two-thirds of Washington's potatoes are grown in the Columbia Basin. These potatoes are specific to the Basin, grown for their long storage life, and used to create products shipped across the

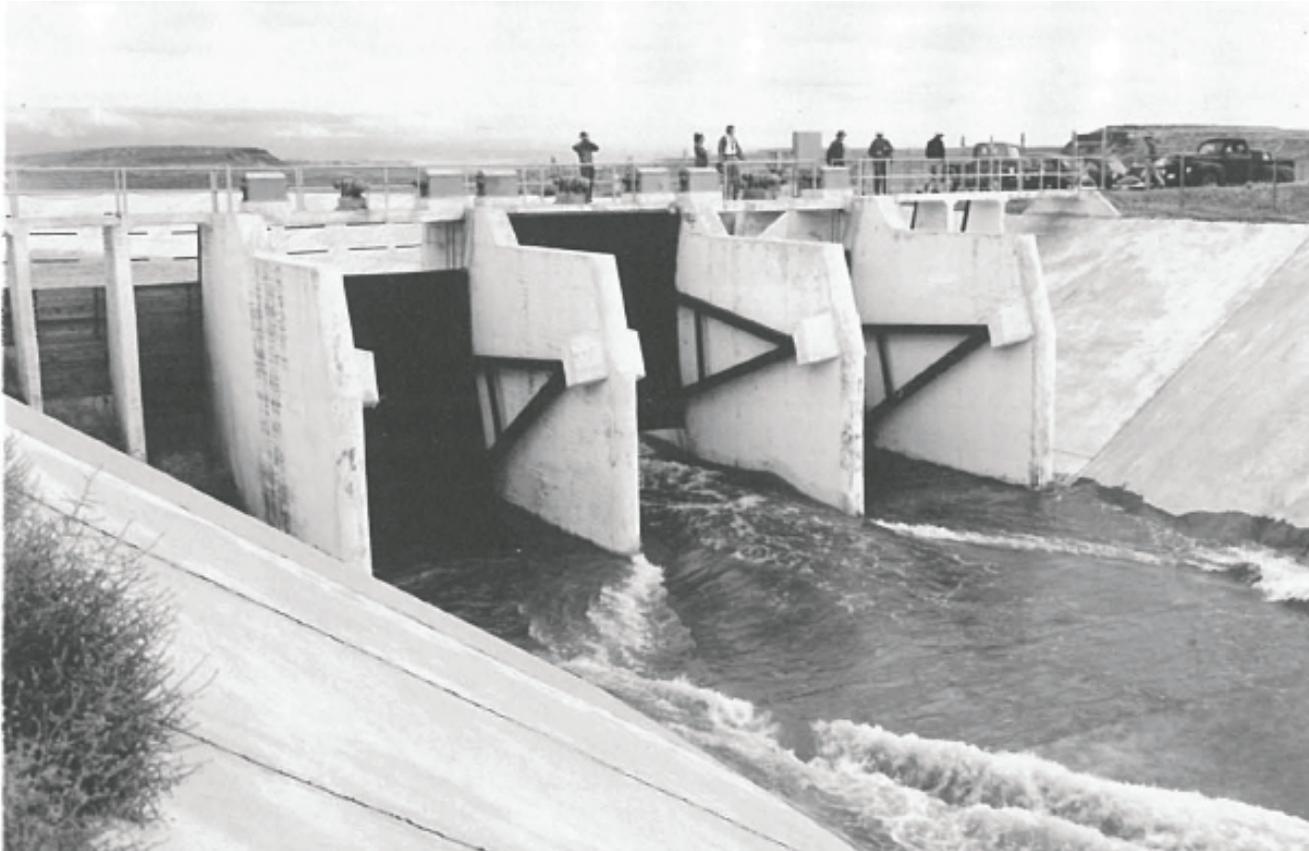
world. Washington State is the fourth largest exporting state in the nation, a significant portion of these exports are derived from the Columbia Basin.

Irrigated agriculture has contributed to the development of one of the most agriculturally productive regions in Washington, if not the U.S., and yet production in this region is threatened. The decline of the Odessa Aquifer continues to decrease the viability of irrigated agricultural production in the Columbia Basin. On-going federal, state, and private support has softened the effects of the declining Odessa Aquifer but continued collaboration is needed to mitigate the impacts of decreased water availability. In the Columbia Basin, irrigated agriculture is the conduit to producing high-valued crops. These crops support thousands of jobs, through on-farm labor and value-added food processing - solidifying the Columbia Basin as one of the top agricultural regions in the U.S.



70TH SEASON OF WATER DELIVERY IN THE COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT

By: Roger Sonnichsen, Secretary-Manager, QCBID



In 2021, Reclamation started filling the West Canal for the 70th season on March 17. The Bifurcation Works were officially opened August 28, 1951 and water was released into the West Canal for the first time. Water reached Quincy by noon on August 29, 1951. These events followed official opening of the Dry Falls Dam gates earlier in the month and two weeks to fill Billy Clapp Reservoir to the outlet gate sills.

“Many major events occurred in 1951 regarding the West Canal. Early in the summer Winston-Utah Company completed and tested the Soap Lake Siphon. Morrison-Knudson Company completed the second section in the spring. J.A. Terteling and Sons, Inc completed the Winchester Wasteway in the spring and the fourth section of the canal and the Columbia River wasteway turnout late in the fall. Marshal Hass and Royce Company completed the third section in mid-summer. The entire West Canal to the Columbia River Wasteway turnout was primed and tested. Some leakage occurred in the unlined section and designs were taken to affect the necessary repair. Excavation for the extension of the West Canal to

the Frenchman Hills Tunnel and for the Frenchman Hills Wasteway was completed by Peter Kiewit Sons. About 4,000 feet of the Frenchman Hills Tunnel had been driven by the United Concrete Pipe Corporation and Ralph A Bell Company by the end of the year. Most of the tunnel was through broken basalt and considerably more steel supports and timber lagging were required than had been expected.” - Excerpt from Columbia Basin Project 1951 Annual Project History Volume XIX

This year, District crews began 2021 deliveries on March 22 following five days needed to fill the West Canal through to the Frenchman Hills Tunnel. The 2021 irrigation season demand has been strong given the dry winter and spring. Deliveries are 60% above the five-year average through April.

This 70th year of irrigation startup has gone well with no major canal issues. The biggest challenge has been weeds and cornstalks being blown into the canals from windy days.

PASCO BASIN GROUNDWATER ISSUE MOVES AHEAD FOLLOWING 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2021 Washington Legislative Session was like none other. Adapting to COVID-19 public health mandate it became the first session to be conducted virtually. Legislative majority leaders, anticipating a greatly slowed process, advised members to limit bill introductions and indicated bills addressing social equity, COVID-19 pandemic response, economic recovery and the global climate crisis would be given priority, and that held true.

While majority Democrats worked to pass elements of their broad policy agenda, CBDL stayed focused on issues related specifically

PROGRESS WAS FINALLY ABLE TO BE MADE ON THE PASCO BASIN GROUNDWATER ISSUE.

to the Columbia Basin Project (CBP). Progress was finally able to be made on the Pasco Basin groundwater issue. Budgets were written this session and sections of both the Operating and Capital Budget had implications for the CBP.

The Pasco Basin, long known as the 508-14 area, is the southern portion of the CBP area. Ecology's predecessor, the Department of Conservation in 1967 adopted administrative rules, WAC 508-14, establishing a ground water management area covering the entire Columbia Basin Project area. The rules under

the authority of the Ground Water Code, RCW 90.44 provided for the management of naturally occurring and artificially stored ground water in the region resulting from CBP operations.

Subsequently, two portions of the region, the Quincy and Odessa subareas were carved off the whole leaving the Pasco Basin. This was done to allow better management of those areas related to their specific characteristics. We know these areas have quite different ground water characteristics. The Quincy Basin has areas with readily accessible shallow ground water resulting from CBP operations while the Odessa subarea aquifer is in serious decline. Reclamation claimed the shallow ground water in the Quincy Basin and jointly establish with Ecology a permitting program allowing access to the Reclamation water. Today over 47,000 acres of farmland is irrigated and over 11,000 ac/ft of water is supplied to food processors and other municipal and industrial water users. Revenue from this water use go to help all Project water users pay to draw water from the Columbia River for the Project service area.

The situation in the Pasco Basin never evolved in the same manner. Representative Mark Schoesler in 2002 recognized the untapped potential and passed a bill that set out legislative finding and intent. The bill recognized the effect that 50 years of region wide irrigation had on ground water resources and directed Ecology to work to develop the resource much like what had been done in the Quincy Basin.

Much work needed to be done to get there. Ground water management requires that hydrogeologic studies be done to characterize the aquifers. It is necessary to differentiate natural occurring ground water from water that exists because of Project operations.

The natural water is a State resource subject to management and permitting by Ecology. Reclamation ground water, while still managed by Ecology under the Ground Water Code, remains a property interest of Reclamation. Another issue to be addressed were certain provisions of the Ground Water Code enacted by the Legislature in 1945 before water deliveries had begun in the CBP. The effects of annual irrigation of what has grown to 1,000 square miles on ground waters in the region was not anticipated.

Slowly over the years impetus to move the issue forward has grown as the demand for new water resources continues to grow. The US Geological Survey was finally contracted to perform the necessary ground water studies and issued their findings in 2016. Reclamation and Ecology continued the discussion on the project but always came back to the need to amend the current code. Just before the 2021 Session they agreed on language to move the issue forward. Senator Perry Dozier, along with Senator Mark Schoesler introduced SB 5230 amending the Columbia Basin Project Act to allow agreements for the allocation of ground water that exist because of the Columbia Basin Project fulfill the requirements of the Groundwater Code for determinations of the availability of public groundwater.

The bill also provides that Ecology will conduct rulemaking to establish a new ground water management area in the portion of the Project that is now the old WAC 508-14. This will allow the creation of a new permitting program that will make new Reclamation ground water available in the region. Ecology and Reclamation are ready to proceed to develop the rules and program guidelines and take them through the formal rule making process.

2021-2023 WASHINGTON STATE CAPITAL BUDGET: COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT SEES FUNDING

One of three Washington state budgets (in addition to the operating and transportation budgets) legislators passed this spring was a \$6 billion capital budget, which included irrigation projects positively impacting the Columbia Basin Project.

Funded projects included the following. Note: the use of “EL” followed by a number refers to a lateral off the East Low Canal. The lateral’s mile marker on the East Low Canal, south from the canal’s origin point, is used to name the lateral.

- \$16,000,000 to assist in planning, designing, engineering, development coordination, and construction of pump stations or other improvements at the EL 79.2 or associated stations serving the same area that expand the delivery systems of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP), sufficient to irrigate at least 13,000 acres.
- \$400,000 to assist the Grant county conservation district in applying for support from the United States department of agriculture-natural resource conservation service to secure federal funding for surface water delivery systems on the Columbia Basin Project.
- \$150,000 for improvements at EL 85, including radial arm gates.
- \$5,000,000 for the continued development and building of the EL 22.1 OGWRP surface water irrigation system including a canal pump station, an electrical power substation, booster pump stations, and a large diameter full-sized pipeline sufficient to irrigate 16,000 acres.

Othello also received \$515,000 from the infrastructure fund for a long-term project to conserve water and to find ways to increase the city’s water supply. The project is in its second phase, with the goal of using outside water, in this case from an East Columbia Basin Irrigation District Canal, to help replenish the city’s aquifer. The irrigation water will be treated and pumped into the aquifer.

The 2022-23 biennium operating budget also provided \$1,000,000 for the Department of Ecology to make preparation and filing of adjudications of state water rights in the Nooksack, Lake Roosevelt, and middle tributaries watersheds. The department will not file an adjudication in water resource inventory area 1 prior to June 1, 2023.



QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

Everything good needs time. Don’t do work in a hurry. Go into details; it pays in every way. Time means power for your work. Mediocrity is always in a rush; but whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing with consideration. For genius is nothing more nor less than doing well what anyone can do badly.

- Teacher & Novelist, Amelia Barr



EFFORTS UNDERWAY TO FIX CROSSINGS OVER THE POTHoles CANAL

There are efforts underway, thanks to the leadership and initiative taken by the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District (SCBID) – to move sewer lines that currently cross over the Potholes East Canal (Potholes). Potholes supplies irrigation water to approximately 225,000 acres of irrigated farmland within the Columbia River Basin and should one of these sewer lines leak into the canal during the irrigation season, farmers will not be able to use that water. Any fruit that comes into contact with contaminated water would be considered unfit for human consumption, threatening entire orchards, livelihoods of growers, and potentially consumer health. The impacts to food safety were not as recognized when the permits to allow above-canal crossings were authorized. Since then, more attention has been focused on food safety.

Relocating these sewer lines is critical but funding is needed to do so. The City of Othello has taken proactive steps necessary to minimize the risk and submitted a request to Senator Murray for congressionally-directed funding to replace the above-canal sewer crossings and is awaiting response.

LEAGUE SUBMITS FY22 APPROPRIATIONS REQUESTS

Working with multiple partners to identify priorities and strategies for Columbia Basin Project (CBP) and Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program (OGWRP) federal appropriations requests, the League completed the process of submitting requests to key members of the Washington Congressional delegation in May.

Direct appropriations for the CBP and OGWRP are one of multiple possible funding mechanisms being pursued this year, as interest in infrastructure and the potential return of what used to be considered earmarks are debated in Congress. A CBP account exists in the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's budget, although there is no specific line item for OGWRP.

The League's process started with meetings with Columbia Basin Project irrigation districts to clarify priority projects ready to be addressed during fiscal year 2022. There are over \$443 million worth of potential water infrastructure projects in need of federal funding, but not all are ready to be addressed next year. The League also worked to confirm priorities with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Ephrata Field Office, Department of Ecology's Office of Columbia River, and League board members representing various stakeholder interests. Among factors contributing to prioritization included funding sources for other projects also in play.

A departure from smaller requests in past years, the FY22 requests include both overall CBP and OGWRP priorities in need of federal funding:

- \$7 million: Upgrade SCADA, the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System. Critical to Columbia Basin Project operations, SCADA is used for monitoring the irrigation system and controlling

automated components of Columbia Basin Project Infrastructure. Certain components and technology are outdated and need updating to both ensure compliance with the Federal Information Security Management Act requirements and maintain smooth operations associated with adjusting flow rates in canals, responding to hydropower plant and pump outages, monitoring canal levels, and managing three project reservoirs.

- \$3.8 million: Replace Trail Lake Project failing concrete infrastructure in Main Canal. By replacing failing infrastructure, this effort reduces likelihood of damage or failure to the overall canal system, improves reliability, and reduces operation and maintenance costs.
- \$31 million for OGWRP—construction of EL 79.2 Delivery System
- \$70 million for OGWRP—construction of EL 22.1 Delivery System
- \$1.6 million for OGWRP—East Low Canal Headgate Automation to adjust for fluctuations resulting from operation of new pump plant diversions. The automated gates will create consistent lateral flows regardless of canal fluctuations, reducing waste and labor, and result in water conservation and safe operations.
- \$23 million for OGWRP—replace 10 county road bridges across East Low Canal widened for OGWRP. Although widening of the canal to accommodate additional OGWRP water is complete, it cannot function to its new capacity until the bottleneck of existing bridge crossings are expanded to the new width.

ECBID CELEBRATES MILESTONE: FIRST OGWRP LATERAL DELIVERS WATER

On May 27, the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) celebrated water delivery at the EL 47.5 pump station alongside individuals from the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Ecology, Department of Ag; state legislators and regional federal legislative staff; and landowners. This is a major accomplishment and milestone for ECBID, Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP), and the greater Columbia Basin Project, as the first of the OGWRP laterals is finally delivering water. The first of the deep wells have been taken off the aquifer and decades of hard work is finally being realized. Partnerships and collaboration amongst all stakeholders, including legislators, made this work come to fruition.

WHY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT MATTERS

In North Central Washington, the Columbia River is the cornerstone of life. But even more important is the infrastructure that makes up the Columbia Basin Project. Grand Coulee dam provides electricity, flood control, and recreation and the ditches and canals deliver water to fields—all critical to the economic vitality of our communities.

In the 1930's, President Roosevelt had the vision. The Columbia Basin Project would bring

The unique growing region, plus the water delivery, provides the perfect environment to grow everything from tree fruit and wheat, to potatoes, alfalfa, timothy, canola, sunflowers, and dozens of other crops that contribute \$5 billion to the economy.

Water infrastructure isn't just for farmers. The need to invest in water infrastructure stretches beyond irrigated agriculture to transportation, food processing, trade, national security, and

But more needs to be done! 300,000 acres still need to receive water in order for project completion. The key to this is funding for the infrastructure development. One of the priorities for increased funding is for the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program. This program seeks to build-out Project infrastructure so local farmers have access to secure and reliable water. Without this investment, farmers are left pumping water from deep wells that are beginning to run dry

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE ISN'T JUST FOR FARMERS. THE NEED TO INVEST IN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE STRETCHES BEYOND IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE TO TRANSPORTATION, FOOD PROCESSING, TRADE, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND RECREATION.

families to settle the land, make it productive, and supply the country with food. At the same time our country needed more electricity to power factories producing supplies for the war. Americans were hungry for manufacturing and industrial achievements to demonstrate our domestic strength. With the advent of large-scale and affordable hydropower, the 550-foot Grand Coulee Dam stood to meet the needs of irrigated agriculture, domestic manufacturing, and served as a tool for national security.

Fast forward more than 80 years and nearly 700,000 acres have been developed to provide a reliable source of irrigation water to farmers.

recreation. The Columbia Basin Project plays host to 3 million recreationalists a year with the outdoor industry growing to become a leading economic engine in the area in and around the Project. Banks Lake provides boating and fishing and is home to Steamboat Rock State Park. Lake Roosevelt is the largest lake created by the water infrastructure and stretches 151 miles with beaches, campgrounds, boat ramps, and fishing. A portion of the lake is designated as a National Recreation Area ensuring activities like boating, fishing, and swimming continue for generations. Even the Grand Coulee Dam sees nearly 300,000 tourists a year.

creating a crisis for local cities and towns that rely on the same water. The infrastructure must be built to give farmers access to surface water and save the ground water for those that have no other source of water.

LEAGUE LEVERAGES THE RETURN OF EARMARKS

2021 is shaping up to be a landmark year as both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate have developed a process to allow members to recommend community projects to appropriations subcommittees for FY22 funding. Earmarks appear to be making a return, although they come with a strict new set of criteria, significant funding limitations, and several, yet, unknowns as to how the process will fully play out. These requests are meant to restore Congress's Article I powers by ensuring that federal funding is directly targeted toward projects that benefit surrounding communities and the district as a whole. This process is different than annual appropriations requests

Some members of Congress, like Representative Newhouse, established an Advisory Board to review submittals and evaluate them against a list of requirements and criteria—including community engagement and support—and determine which projects would have the most impact in their District. Representative Newhouse's board was comprised of one representative from each county and tribe in Washington's 4th Congressional District. Community engagement and support are crucial in determining which projects are worthy of federal funding. Only projects with demonstrated community support are considered.

water supplies will be reserved for domestic and municipal uses while preserving highly productive irrigated lands that drive thousands of jobs in the region. A series of pumping plant and pipeline systems are being built along East Low Canal to serve land now irrigated from deep wells. Funds requested would be directed to the design process and align with implementation of Reclamation's preferred alternative for the program. System designs at the 30% completion level are required to provide landowners with the information necessary to determine participation. This request also includes \$200,000 to automate East Low Canal gravity-delivery head gates to adjust for fluctuations resulting from conveyance of new pump plant diversions, reduce waste and labor, and result in water conservation and safe operations."

EARMARKS APPEAR TO BE MAKING A RETURN, ALTHOUGH THEY COME WITH A STRICT NEW SET OF CRITERIA, SIGNIFICANT FUNDING LIMITATIONS, AND SEVERAL, YET, UNKNOWN AS TO HOW THE PROCESS WILL FULLY PLAY OUT.

constituents have been able to make in recent year--and which the League has regularly submitted—to simply raise awareness of needs. This process creates a means by which Congress will actually consider requests.

As an example, the House process began with the Committee on Appropriations announcing acceptance of Community Project Funding requests from Members of Congress, designed to help deliver additional, targeted federal funding to select projects in districts across the country.

The following is a summary of the League's request to Representatives Newhouse and McMorris Rodgers and Senator Murray:

"\$2,000,000 – In the form of a grant to East Columbia Basin Irrigation District through the Bureau of Reclamation, for the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program (OGWRP), an environmental and regional economy rescue program focused on replacing deep well irrigation from the depleting Odessa Ground Water Management Subarea aquifer within the Columbia Basin Project service area with Project water supplies. Remaining ground

The League's request was accompanied by numerous stakeholder letters of support from area counties, ports, municipalities, and others. As of the writing of this article, the League was notified that Representative Newhouse and McMorris Rodgers accepted the request and submitted it to the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee for consideration. The Senate process is operating on a slightly different timeline, so no notice as to the status of the League's request has yet been made.

If the Subcommittee accepts a request, it would be included in the draft appropriations bill when the Subcommittee releases their bill later this year. The full Committee is scheduled to markup all 12 appropriations bills in June and pass them off the House floor by the end of July, but that timeline is likely to be pushed later based on historical trends.

MOVING FORWARD WITH NOMINATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE 117TH CONGRESS

By: Kate Walker, Legislative Assistant, Water Strategies, LLC

Since being sworn in on January 20, 2021, President Biden has nominated a number of individuals to positions in a number of agencies. As nominations have been made, the Senate Committees have been holding nomination hearings and confirming the nominees. Below is an updated list of nominated and confirmed positions within the Administration relevant to water users.

- **Secretary of the Interior:** Deb Haaland (D-NM) – confirmed by full Senate March 15
- **Bureau of Reclamation Deputy Commissioner:** Maria (Camille) Touton
- **Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science:** Tanya Trujillo – officially nominated April 14 and awaits further consideration
- **Environmental Protection Agency Administrator:** Michael Regan – confirmed by the full Senate March 10
- **Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator:** Janet McCabe – confirmed April 27
- **Environmental Protection Agency Assistant Administrator in the Office of Water:** Radhika Fox
- **Secretary of Energy:** Jennifer Granholm – confirmed January 27
- **Secretary of Agriculture:** Tom Vilsack – confirmed February 24
- **Deputy Secretary of Agriculture:** Jewel H. Bronaugh – hearing was held April 22 and awaits further consideration by the Senate
- **Secretary of State:** Antony Blinken – confirmed January 26
- **Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works:** Mike Connor – nominated on April 27

In addition to nominations, the Biden Administration has been working on a comprehensive budget for FY2021. On April 9, 2021, President Biden released his Discretionary Spending Request. Unlike previous funding requests, the “skinny budget” does not include a breakdown of detailed spending numbers. Below is a breakdown of the request and spending numbers for the FY 2021.

Specific funding numbers for the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) were not included in the budget. However, BOR was mentioned and copied in the statement below:

“Conserve Western Water. The Bureau of Reclamation supports the development, conservation, management, and restoration of water and related natural resources in the 17 western states and on tribal lands while balancing competing water uses. The discretionary request provides funding for programs, such as WaterSMART grants, to improve water conservation and efficiency. Reclamation investments address challenges resulting from climate change and shifting demographics to support: reliable water and hydropower deliveries; help maintain healthy ecosystems; protect federally-listed species; and manage risks from droughts, floods, and fires.”

It is expected that a more detailed spending request will be released by the Administration by the release of this newsletter. The League continues to work with the Washington delegation to request ample funding for the Columbia Basin Project.

Request and spending numbers for the FY 2021

	FY2021 PRESIDENT’S REQUEST	FY2021 ENACTED LEVEL
Bureau of Reclamation	\$1.1 B	\$1.69 B
Water & Related Resources	\$979 M	\$1.5 B
WaterSMART	\$18.2 M	\$55 M

WESTERN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE COALITION ON A MISSION

A national coalition of over 200 agricultural organizations and urban and rural water districts is urging the federal government to bolster investment in the nation's aging and inadequate (agricultural) water facilities. Washington State and the Columbia Basin Development League (League) are active members.

Led by the [Family Farm Alliance](#) and the [National Water Resources Association](#), as well as the Western Growers, California Farm Bureau, and the Association of California Water Agencies, the coalition includes organizations from 15 states that collectively represent \$120 billion in agricultural production—nearly one-third of all agricultural production in the country—and tens of millions of urban and rural water users.

In January, the coalition called on the administration and congressional leaders to invest in a diversified water management portfolio that enhances water supply and quality for urban and environmental uses, while keeping water flowing to Western farms and rural communities.

Then, coalition members went to work identifying specific water infrastructure needs in anticipation of Biden's infrastructure proposal released in March. Representing Washington State, the Washington State Water Resources Association (WSWRA), Yakima Joint Board (YJB), and the League identified over \$1.7 billion in Washington State water infrastructure needs in the next five years. Working with the Columbia Basin Project (CBP) irrigation districts, the League identified over \$443 million in CBP infrastructure needs, alone, and priority CBP projects were also identified for a FY 22 funding request.

Washington State partners began generating awareness about these figures in March. Information was shared with the Washington State Department of Ecology—Office of the Columbia River (OCR) which used the figures in an appeal to Governor Inslee's office for federal advocacy. OCR also used the figures to inform OCR federal FY22 appropriations requests.

The League also met with Washington congressional offices in March. Those meetings focused on:

- Appreciation for FY21 appropriations
- FY22 priorities
- The discrepancy between current appropriations and the actual water infrastructure funding need

In April, Washington State partners set to work on submitting joint water infrastructure request letters. Informed by messaging developed in regular coalition meetings, WSWRA, YJB, and the League sent jointly signed letters to members of the Washington congressional delegation urging inclusion of agriculture water supply infrastructure in any future infrastructure or recovery package, and noting that:

"The stakeholders represented through WSWRA, YJB and CSDL are doing what they can to advance infrastructure construction and improvement projects like those in the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan or the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program. But, these projects and many more like them are failing to keep up with need due to inadequate funding. This vital work could be completed more quickly and benefit agriculture, the environment, our rural communities, state and

national economies with the aid of a broad-based infrastructure funding program."

"The need for immediate and long-term investment is significant and of a magnitude only the federal government can provide."

WSWRA, YJB, and the League also coordinated a similar joint letter to the Washington congressional delegation signed by multiple agricultural stakeholder groups. And, together, the Washington partners coordinated the publication of guest editorials in various community newspapers highlighting the need for agricultural water infrastructure to be included in the infrastructure package being debated in Congress.

Simultaneously, similar efforts were underway in the 15 other Western coalition states. Participating in the Western Water Infrastructure Coalition unified Washington State efforts and Western States effort and resulted in greater awareness of the need to address aging and inadequate water infrastructure. But the work is not done. While Senator Murray and Representatives Newhouse and McMorris Rodgers are responding favorably to Washington State efforts, funding is ultimately dependent on Congress as a whole. The coalition has more work ahead.

In May the Coalition sent a second letter to the chair and ranking member of the Senate and Natural Resources Committee urging action to address the shortcomings of our aging Western agricultural, municipal, industrial and rural water infrastructure. Stakeholder support is growing. Those signing exceeded the 200 threshold of the first letter.

AN UPDATE ON THE NRCS REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM PROPOSAL

By: Harold Crose, Resource Conservationist, Grant County Conservation District

The Grant County Conservation District (GCCD) was recently notified that the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposal that was submitted last November, including a \$10 million request for part of the 79.2 lateral and on-farm buildouts was not funded this round. While this is disappointing, it is not surprising. Only 47% of the proposals were funded, many of which were a continuation of previously funded RCPP projects, and it is rare for first-time RCPP proposals to receive funding.

Feedback on the RCPP proposal indicated two main reasons the 79.2 project wasn't selected. First, partner contributions were not confirmed

at the time of application. Thankfully, legislators were successful in securing substantial funds for the 79.2 during this most recent legislative session. These dollars will fulfill the partner contributions needed for a future, successful RCPP application. Secondly, the NRCS PL-566 process for watershed/public works projects has not been completed, including NRCS's watershed planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review that is needed for the OGWRP pump stations and laterals. RCPP applications, like the one submitted for the 79.2, are more competitive following initiation of the PL-566 watershed planning and NEPA analysis process.

In recent conversations with NRCS staff,

the PLL-566 process has been clarified, and recommended next steps for pursuing NRCS RCPP and PL-566 funding for the 79.2 and greater OGWRP are clear. PL-566 funding could cover 75% of the project cost, however projects requesting over \$25 million will require congressional authorizations. There hasn't been a PL-566 project in Washington for 15-20 years and certainly not under the current Farm Bill, but the timing is right to change that.

Thanks are extended to the 79.2 landowners and partners—including the Office of the Columbia River and state legislators-- for help in developing the first RCPP proposal. Their leadership and contributions will greatly contribute to the next RCPP proposal this fall.

If you have any questions or suggestions, contact Harold Crose at harold-crose@conservewa.net.

WIND STORM IMPACTS ON CANALS

By: John O'Callaghan, Assistant Director, SCBID

After a promising start in March, operations in the month of April turned out to be all about the wind – or more specifically – the weeds the wind brought. Typically, the prevailing winds come out of the west and after a few wind storms, the wind-blown weed load may start to diminish.

The year brought a significant load of weeds into District canals. Before crews could really dig out from those wind storms, just for good measure the wind decided to turn around and come out of the east for a while as well. Along with giving weeds a second chance to hit the canal, the wind blew weeds already removed from the canals but not yet disposed of back into canals.



Most of the wind-blown weed issues faced by the District are related to tumbleweeds and wild mustard, however there can be problems with crop residue as well. One lateral filled almost completely up with debris from an asparagus field which had been mulched last fall.

The primary problem caused by these wind events is that the weeds plug up weed racks, check structures, pipe entrances and other canal features. When a canal or lateral plugs up, the water doesn't stop coming and it has to go somewhere, which in these cases means it flows over the banks and potentially causes a washout. This can result in damaged facilities and interruptions of water delivery service.

Wind storms mean a lot of extra work for District crew, and they generally seem to occur after hours and on weekends. While a variety of machinery is utilized to assist in the work, much of it still relies on old-fashioned pulling of weeds by hand with a weed fork, which is a strenuous job.

CALL TO ACTION!

CONTACT YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO REQUEST FUNDS FOR WESTERN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS TODAY

When you want a glass of water, you likely turn on the kitchen faucet or put a glass under the water dispenser in your refrigerator, and the water is simply there. But what if it wasn't?

What many of us take for granted is that there is a complex system of water infrastructure in place to get that water to your tap. BUT our water infrastructure is aging, deteriorating and in desperate need of the kind of financial investment that only the federal government can provide. We need support from our federal leaders to modernize our water supply system for everyone – including the Columbia Basin Project.

Existing Western water infrastructure is in desperate need of rehabilitation and improvement. Most of the federal water projects in the West were built more than 50 years ago and were not designed with present and future population demands and climate conditions in mind. Without immediate attention, the Western water system will quickly prove inadequate to meet the needs of all water users!

CALL TO ACTION! We need your help to contact your Member of Congress and urge them to invest in a diversified water management portfolio that enhances water supply and quality for urban, rural and environmental uses while keeping water flowing to our farms. In addition to financial support, we need you to ask Congress to ensure the timely construction of water projects by wisely streamlining the regulatory and permitting processes. Do not let Congress pass another infrastructure without including significant investments in improving current infrastructure while supporting innovative technology for new infrastructure efforts.

DEADLINE? The U.S. House claims it will have an infrastructure package on the House floor by July 4. So, advocacy efforts in the Western states are ramping up. Reach out before it is too late and let Congress know that you support investments in water infrastructure, specifically the Columbia Basin Project, as its existing infrastructure serving about 680,000 acres is aging and, in some instances, over 70 years old.



Here is a sample email you can use:

Dear Representative/Senator,

I am a constituent that is concerned about the existing water infrastructure in the West. These projects – like the Columbia Basin Project – were developed more than 50 years ago and were not designed to meet the demands of future populations. The projects also did not consider the ever-changing climate conditions. Without immediate attention, the system will quickly become inadequate and no longer meet the needs of both the rural and urban communities that you serve in Congress.

I am writing to you today to invest in a diversified water management portfolio that enhances our water supply and water quality to benefit urban and rural communities, while benefiting the environment.

Specific recommendations to be included in the next infrastructure package include:

- Water conservation.
- Water augmentation, recycling, reuse, and desalination projects.
- New water storage facilities, both surface and groundwater.
- Watershed management, fish passage and recovery, and habitat restoration.
- Federal financing mechanisms for water projects.
- Loans for local districts operating and maintaining federally owned irrigation projects.
- Water quality improvement for rural communities.
- Thank you for representing me in Congress. I look forward to seeing you vote for additional funding and quick distribution of this funding to support water infrastructure in the West.

Find contact info for your member of Congress at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).

VOICES FOR WATER



Most of Central Washington is arid – a desert. Moving water from Lake Roosevelt behind Grand Coulee Dam to the small rural communities throughout the Columbia Basin takes massive and complex infrastructure: Canals, laterals, pumps, bridges, ditches. Infrastructure that feeds businesses, processors, towns, farmers, and elected officials. Thousands depend on infrastructure and recognize what we stand to lose without it.

The current water infrastructure of the Columbia Basin Project is aging and its incomplete portion is still waiting for water. In both instances, there is desperate need for financial investment that only the federal government can provide. Many will benefit if we succeed – agriculture, local businesses, recreation, municipalities, fish, and more – many will lose if we don't. Water is running out.

Our job – our sole purpose – is to give voice to the Columbia Basin Project. We need voices loud enough for our federal leaders to hear us. To hear our calls to modernize water supply infrastructure now.

If you recognize what we stand to lose, please support us:

- ✓ **YES!** I'll contribute to amplify the message to our federal leaders: www.cbdl.org
- ✓ **YES!** I'll call or write my elected officials to add my voice to why we need to invest in Columbia Basin Project infrastructure.



The Odessa Aquifer is declining	Wells are failing	Switching to surface water is complicated	Jobs are at risk	Cities and towns have no "Plan B"

Our message is simple:
Replace ground water with renewable surface water

We need your help to push harder and speak out!
 This is local water and local livelihoods. Local voices matter.

- ✓ Protect the water supply for 180,000 people in our small rural communities
- ✓ Protect \$5 billion in economic activity
- ✓ Ensure food security
- ✓ Protect the environment
- ✓ Promote wildlife habitat



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