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Keechelus Dam Repairs Proceed

Repairs at the Keechelus Dam will continue on schedule despite a request by the Yakama nation to halt repairs. The Yakama Nation has withdrawn its earlier request in July for the immediate halt to repairs at Keechelus Dam.

The Yakama Nation and the federal government plan to ask Judge Alan McDonald to decide after a January 9th hearing whether the Bureau of Reclamation failed to consider the Endangered Species Act in pursuing the repairs. In the meantime, repair work begun in May can proceed on schedule.

The nation opted to withdraw the request for an injunction early in September because there is now no urgency to halt construction. The majority of the repairs, in which the middle portion of the dam is to be removed and replaced, won't occur until next summer.

The Yakama Nation wants the project expanded to include fish ladders to open the Yakima River's headwaters to migratory fish. The Nation sued the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Marine Fisheries Service in late July, contending the repair plan ignored the Endangered Species Act and the Nation's 1855 treaty. The Yakima River and its tributaries are home to steelhead and bull trout; two species listed as threatened under the law.

Bureau officials, in adopting a repair plan in January, mitigated a Yakama Nation request supported by a number of conservation groups, that fish ladders be included, by agreeing to study fish passage at all the reservoirs.

The agency said its dam-safety repair program prohibits enhancing an existing dam.



Photo: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Keechelus Dam was built during 1913-1917. The above photo shows the train trestle that was left in place after it was used to deliver soil during the original construction.

The agency has since begun study at all five reservoirs to determine where and what type of passage is best suited. The fish issue is being addressed independently from the structural repairs.

Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District and Roza Irrigation District have joined with a consortium of other irrigation district representatives to intervene to ensure representation for irrigators. The group, known as the Yakima Basin Joint Board, filed a motion on September 6 to join the case as a defendant. Judge McDonald hasn't ruled on that request.

The consortium contends the federal government may not be able to adequately represent their interests in seeing the repairs completed as soon as possible. Their interests are critical since the reservoirs feed the water-delivery system that is the lifeline of the basin's agriculture-based economy.

In affidavits filed with the court, representatives of the 10 irrigation districts contend a halt to dam repairs could cause serious damage to farmers, especially if there is

another water shortage next summer.

The Yakima Basin Joint Board fears a halt to construction could cause a restriction beyond the current 140,000-acre-foot limit which, would further reduce available water. Water storage would be substantially reduced in the current reservoir system that is already inadequate to meet all the water needs of the Yakima River Basin.

Keechelus, located along Interstate 90 near the summit of Snoqualmie Pass, is one of five major reservoirs that serve the Yakima Irrigation Project. The lake represents about 15 percent of the total capacity

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RSBOJC On-Farm Loan Program Continues



The RSBOJC is continuing to accept applications for the On-Farm Loan Program whose deadline was extended until November 9, 2004. The objective of the program is to assist farmers in achieving better utilization of and efficiency in the application of their water resource. The program will help farmers secure funding to upgrade or modify their current systems to further comply with the current RSOJC

water quality policies.

RSBOJC encourages all qualified landowners to take advantage of the loan program. Both irrigation districts are still dispersing funding for the On-Farm Loan Program. "We really want to encourage farmers to take advantage of the remaining funds in this loan program. An additional \$3 million dollars is still available in the program for Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District. If the funds are not used, they will be returned," said Lori Brady, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District Engineer. Currently \$2.7 million has been loaned from SVID benefiting over 4,000 acres.

Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District saw an eighty-percent increase in dollars allotted and a two hundred percent increase in funded acres during the 2001-2002 loan cycle. Currently this year, Roza Irrigation District disbursed approximately \$633,000 on slightly more than 1,000 acres. During 2000-2001 program cycle, SVID allocated \$1.5 million on

slightly less than 2,000 acres and RID allocated \$1.2 million on 2,000+ acres.

The loan program provides a funding source that can help to ease some of the financial burden off the farmers. These projects will ultimately improve the quality of irrigation return flows. The uncertain economic forecast has made many farmers wary of being encumbered by improvement loans.

The basic structure for the On-Farm Loan Program includes the low interest rate of 1% with a four-year repayment cycle. The yearly payments are included in the users annual irrigation assessments. Please note that priority is given on a first come first served basis.

For more information, please contact, Theresa Johnson, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) at (509) 837-6980, or Mark Barnett, Roza Irrigation District (RID) Engineer at (509) 837-5141.

Bureau of Reclamation Celebrates at Centennial Event

Congress created the United States Bureau of Reclamation in 1902 to bring water to the arid West. The agency began a yearlong celebration on June 17; the anniversary of the date President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Reclamation Act into law. The Act required that water users repay construction costs from which they received benefits.

From 1902 to 1907, Reclamation began about 30 projects in Western states. The heyday of Reclamation construction of water facilities occurred during the Depression and the thirty-five years after World War II. The last major authorization for construction projects occurred in the late 1960s while a parallel evolution and development of the American environmental movement began to result in strong opposition to water development projects.

The bureau currently operates 180 water projects serving 10 million acres.

The local observance of the bureau's 100th anniversary was held on Tuesday, September 24 at Sarg Hubbard Park, east of downtown Yakima, with irrigators, former and current Bureau employees, and state and local officials.

Tom Fitzsimmons, director of the Washington Department of Ecology and Bill McDonald, regional director of the Boise USBR office, said the Bureau helped



Ditch rider with wagon and mule team from early 1900's. Photo courtesy of Sunnyside Museum.

turn the West into an oasis and helped fuel an economy. Some of the past success has been due to cooperation between the Bureau and Ecology.

But he said there are new challenges to be faced for environmental protection and conserving water.

"We have to balance the clamor for new storage with conservation goals and improvements to the delivery system," Fitzsimmons said. "We have to land on the viable storage options and make them work."

Several well-known project figures were also in attendance including, former Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District Manager, Elmer McDaniels.

McDaniels, 78, and still managing the

Tumalo Irrigation District in Bend, Ore., described the bureau as a tremendous agency.

"The 17 Western states would not be what they are without it," said McDaniel, who worked for the district for 30 years beginning in 1945. "I'm very proud of the Bureau."

Urban Eberhart a Ellensburg fruit grower and director of the Kittitas Reclamation District, told a crowd of approximately 80 people, the Bureau has had a significant influence on the lives of thousands of people who have made their living growing crops in the project.

"The survival of agriculture and irrigation is just as important now," he said. "There will be challenges and hurdles to overcome as we move through this century and beyond."

Eberhart used the opportunity as a representative of irrigators, to call for new water storage to meet future water needs.

To celebrate the history of the Pacific Northwest Region of the Bureau of Reclamation, a 14-foot quilt was constructed. The quilt was started in 1998 and completed in 2002. It will be on permanent display in Washington, D.C. but will be on temporary display at the Yakima Valley Museum in the fall of 2003.



Introducing RSBOJC's New Water Quality Specialist



The RSBOJC welcomes, Cassandra Strickland, the new RSBOJC Water Quality Specialist.

"I'm looking forward to participating in such a successful program. What we do really does make a difference in the valley."

Cassie was formerly a research scientist for Pacific NW National Lab in Richland. She currently teaches Geology

and Geography at Yakima Valley Community College in Grandview.

Originally from the Midwest, she earned her Bachelor of Science in Geology at the University of Toledo (Ohio) and Masters in Geology from the Kansas State University.

Cassie moved to Prosser about a year ago and lives with her husband, Christopher. They are expecting their first child in February.

In her spare time, she can be found training and competing with her Arabian horses in dressage. In addition, she trains outside horses and provides riding lessons in both English and Western style.

Cassie has varied and interesting hobbies which include photography, mineral and rock collecting, mountain hiking, and mountain riding/packing.

New SVID Technical Writer



Joining SVID in September is Melodie Smith who has assumed the communications duties in the Technical Writer/Publisher position. "I am really enjoying meeting all the wonderful staff and getting a chance to learn more about an industry many of us have taken for granted. I grew up in dryland farming country and I am learning there is definitely an art to moving water."

Melodie grew up in Spokane. She graduated from Eastern Washington University where she studied Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing and Fine Arts minor.

She currently lives in Grandview with her husband, Brad. When not keeping up with their five children, Bryce (17), Megan (16), Aaron (15), Miranda (13), and Kylie (11), Melodie can be found in her flower garden or trying out her new hobby of painting watercolors. She also loves to play with her Conure parrot named Clouseau (named after Inspector Clouseau from the Pink Panther Movies.)

Melodie has worked for several businesses in the valley including Aether Systems/Sunpro and is a co-founder of a Grandview business, SpottedInc Consulting LLC.

Prior to relocating to the Yakima Valley four years ago, Melodie worked for Inland Empire Girl Scout Council in Spokane and an advertising agency.

Waiting For The Rain and Snow

Yakima Basin reservoirs were full and the snow melted slow enough to start off the water season with sufficient water. The summer weather brought lower than average precipitation. The month of September brought only a trace of rain to the mountain reservoirs. Although the current carryover levels are currently above average, the rains have not been replenishing the reservoirs.

"We are estimating we'll have about 350,000 acre feet in storage at the end of this irrigation season available as carryover for use next year," said Don Schramm, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) Assistant Manager-Operations. Schramm stated that this number may be higher or lower depending upon the amount of rainfall that replenishes the reservoirs and supplements the irrigation usage for this fall.

Rain and early snowfall in the mountains help the acre-feet in storage. "Water usage drops when it get colder and starts to rain in the fall. This means we have to adjust the amount of water we request from the reser-

voirs," said SVID Watermaster Del Church.

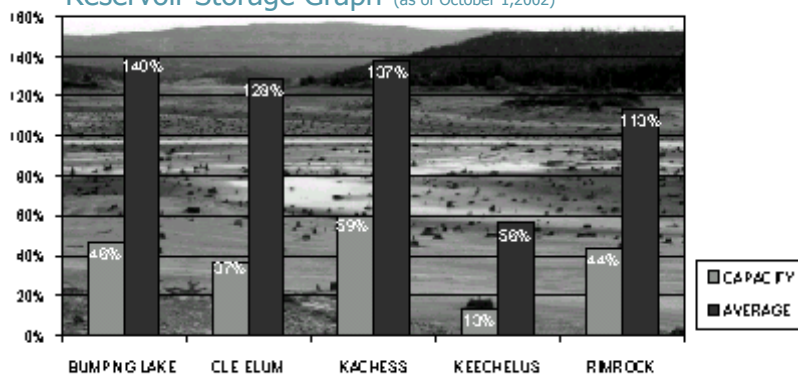
According to Tom Monroe, Roza Irrigation District (Roza) Operations Manager, "Precipitation for the month of October is at about 10% of average. It is still early to get overly concerned about a lack of precipitation, yet weather conditions will be carefully monitored. A positive note is that the reservoirs will have a decent carryover from this irrigation season."

The national weather service is predicting low precipitation and cooler days for the month of October. This will affect the amount of storage and carryover in the five reservoirs that serve the Yakima Basin.

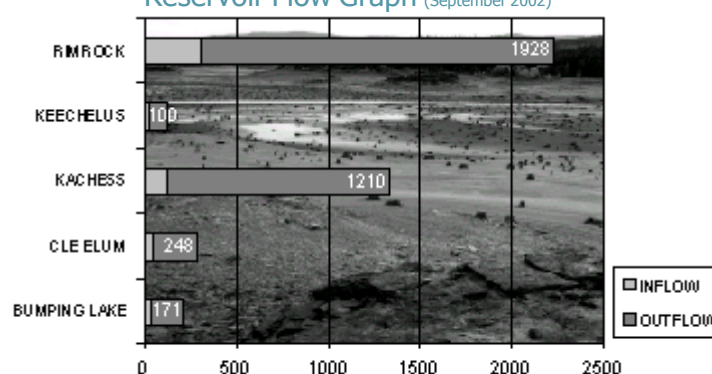
The snowpack can be looked upon as an additional reservoir. "Of course we have no control of the gates or the timing of the release of water. It is all in nature's hands," explained Schramm. This year the runoff timing was almost ideal. Storage control of the reservoirs began the first week of July.

Let's cross our fingers and hope the rain and snow begins soon and continues.

Reservoir Storage Graph (as of October 1, 2002)



Reservoir Flow Graph (September 2002)



Easing the Way for Construction and Maintenance

Beginning the last part of October, the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District and Roza Irrigation District will begin ramping down their irrigation systems. This will be the end of the water delivery and the beginning of the maintenance and improvement operations.

Throughout the year, it is important for SVID and RID personnel to have clear and appropriate access to laterals and drains to perform maintenance or repairs. The general guideline used by SVID concerning easement access is 15 feet from each side of a pipeline or 20 feet from the edge of each side of a canal bank. RID guidelines include 10 to 15 feet from centerline on each side of a pipeline. For an open ditch lateral, Roza requires a minimum of 25 feet from the centerline on the lower bank and 15 feet from the centerline on the upper bank. However, RID and SVID may require more easement if deemed necessary for maintenance access. This space allows repair equipment to access an area needing repairs or general maintenance.

If you are planning improvements or new construction within or near an easement such as digging new fence posts or modifying an existing fence line please contact the Engineering Department at SVID or RID. Engineering staff will help locate an underground pipeline or assist with recommendations for appropriate location of a new or modified fence or structure.

Why Should You Call Before You Dig?

1. IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE! Many things lie buried beneath the ground. Power lines and gas lines are two of the most deadly.

2. IT COULD SAVE YOUR PROPERTY! Fire or explosion from a damaged gas line, erosion from a broken water line, disease from a broken sewer line, or simply the inconvenience of losing your phone or cable TV service due to a cut line.

3. IT COULD SAVE YOU MONEY! It doesn't cost anything to call in a locate request. With one quick telephone call, all utilities in your area will be notified to come and mark the location of their lines. However, if you damage a utility line and did NOT call for a locate, you may be liable for up to **three times** the actual amount of the damage. Some high-capacity telephone lines carry up to **one million dollars per minute** in calls!

4. IT'S THE LAW! According to RCW 19.122, anyone digging deeper than twelve inches must call for locates two business days before they dig. This holds true for private property, city, county, state or federal lands, and railroad right-of-way. In addition to damages and civil penalties, anyone who ignores this law may also be subject to penalties from the Department of Labor and industries.

Keechelus

continued from cover
of more than 1 million acre-feet of water.

Repairs were prompted by the 1998 discovery of a series of cavities within the 128-foot-tall earthen dam. The cavities were caused by construction timbers left in the dam that later rotted. Repairs are expected to cost almost \$32 million. Irrigators will pay 15 percent of the cost.

Water Quality Deadline Nears



In 1996, the Washington State Department of Ecology submitted a list including several tributary segments in the lower Yakima River basin that did not meet state water quality standards.

Agricultural practice wastes, irrigation drain returns, city and industrial treatment plant discharges, as well as poorly managed forest and range practices, were cited as the major pollutant sources. More specifically, agricultural return drain flow as a result of irrigation practices has been identified as the single most significant source of pollutants to the lower Yakima River.

Of major concern was the amount of suspended sediment (turbidity) and dissolved chemical materials (DDT, fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides) being discharged into the lower Yakima River, thereby contaminating river water.

The measure of suspended sediment in a sample is called turbidity and is measured in "nephelometric turbidity units" or "NTU".

Drains of the Sunnyside sub-basin, especially Sulphur Creek and Granger Drain, were found to be one of the greatest sources of sediment pollution to the lower Yakima River basin during the irrigation season.

In response, the Department of Ecology established and the Environmental Protection Agency affirmed a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirement for allowable % of suspended sediment and DDT re-entering the lower Yakima River and tributaries.

By the year 2002, all drains and tributaries should comply with a turbidity target of 25 NTU at their mouths. "We're keeping on track," said Don Schramm, SVID Assistant Manager/Operations. The RSBOJC interprets the year 2002 reference to mean by the end of the year 2002 irrigation season.

Almost all of the joint drains are in compliance. "Granger Drain needs to improve a bit more," said Ron Van Gundy, RID Consultant. "But we believe it can be done and remain optimistic."

Cassandra Strickland, RSBOJC Water Quality Specialist, adds, "We have made unbelievable progress in the past few years. We are at the TMDL goal for all the drainage outlets except the Granger Drain. However even there we are very close and will continue to make progress until we reach the 25 NTU goal."

The Roza-Sunnyside Board of Joint Control (RSBOJC) publishes the **RSBOJC UPDATE** biannually for landowners. All articles, letters and other items submitted to RSBOJC for use in its landowner newsletter become the property of RSBOJC which is authorized to use any item submitted, without payment or compensation to the person submitting the item, in any newsletter or other publication of RSBOJC. RSBOJC reserves the right to edit all items submitted. Doug Simpson, Chairman; Mike Miller, Vice-Chairman; Robert Golob, Ric Valicoff, Larry Haak, Dave Michels, David Minick, John Newhouse, Cus Arteaga, Douglas Vining, Dave Olsen, Jim Willard, Directors. Officers: Ron Van Gundy, Secretary; Patricia Bailey, Treasurer. Address comments to: Melodie Smith, Editor, P.O. Box 239, Sunnyside, WA 98944.