



Columbia River Water Resource Management Program

Objectives

Create a water-management program for the Columbia River that:

- Invests in storage, conservation and improved water management practices on the Columbia River.
- Distributes water to both out-of-stream and in-stream needs, getting it to the right place at the right time.
- Allows for creativity and flexibility in achieving water resource solutions through regional agreements.
- Sustains growing communities and a healthy economy, and meets the needs of fish and healthy watersheds.

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WHY ACTION IS NECESSARY NOW

Competition for water continues to escalate. There are hundreds of pending applications in Washington for new water rights from the Columbia, and there has been little agreement on the stream flows needed to support salmon. Historically water policy on the Columbia River has been driven by litigation, only to result in additional gridlock. The Columbia River Water Resource Management Program represents a break-through designed to allow access to the river's water resources while providing adequate protection for endangered salmon and other species.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Gathering Ideas and Comments

Building on the Columbia River Initiative, Governor Gregoire empanelled a legislative Task Force to work with affected parties to explore creative solutions on the Columbia River. Legislators and stakeholders met over the last year to develop an outline of the water management program for the 2006 legislative session. The effort included outreach to tribal governments, county commissioners, public utility and irrigation districts, federal agencies, and the environmental community.

Legislative Break-Through

During the 2006 legislative session, Governor Gregoire brokered a solution designed to provide water for out-of-stream use while also enhancing instream flows. The agreement was built upon a common recognition that water can be stored during the winter for use in the summer, and a new determination to pursue cost-effective conservation projects in the basin.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS

Immediately following the enactment of the new law Ecology will begin to pursue new water resources in Eastern Washington. These efforts will include:

- Developing an alternative feed route for the Potholes Reservoir
- Making modifications to Pinto Dam
- Developing water conveyance facilities to the Odessa Subarea
- Providing mitigation for the drawdown of Lake Roosevelt under the Agreement in Principle with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Completing Appraisal and Feasibility reviews of storage sites identified by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Initiating conservation projects identified in cooperation with the Washington Conservation Commission and other local partner.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

- Study and development of new storage facilities on the mainstem of the Columbia River in a manner that provides water resources of out-of-stream use while resulting in benefits to endangered species.
- Study and implementation of improved water management operations of facilities on the Columbia River
- Ongoing pursuit of water conservation projects
- Other efforts designed to reduce barriers to efficient allocation of valuable water resources.