

3/12/10

Dear Wendy and Derek:

The December 2009 Final Report “Preliminary Integrated Water Resource Management Plan for the Yakima River Basin” (Integrated Plan) includes a summary of the scope of work of the Basin Study during year 2010. Task 3 is “to quantify instream resource needs by major reach, by season.” This is a critical activity of the Basin Study. The Yakima Basin Storage Alliance is fully supportive of these efforts.

We are hopeful the end result of this task will be a matrix of instream water needs of flows and volumes by major reaches, seasons, and priorities by type of water years (dry, average, and wet) synthesized for the mainstem Yakima and Naches rivers including tributaries regulated by Yakima Project reservoirs. We see this being “backed up” with the biological criteria supporting the flow levels necessary to achieve full utilization of available fisheries habitat, including side channels and the Lower Yakima River. It is our opinion such a document would facilitate greater understanding by the stakeholders and other publics, as well as being essential when seeking Congressional and State legislative authorization of an Integrated Plan.

We also are hopeful this information will be prepared based on the vision of developing and maintaining greatly increased salmon and steelhead populations in conjunction with a sustainable and vigorous agricultural economy in the Yakima basin. In other words, reflecting instream needs unconstrained by volumes of water which to date have been estimated that may be available from water supply elements of the preliminary Integrated Plan. The assessment of what can be accomplished with implementation of potential plan elements and estimated fishery production/escapement would be a subsequent step or task.

We believe it would be desirable as a part of Task 3 to establish a “link” to the May 1999 “report on Biologically Based Flows for the Yakima River basin” prepared by the System Operations Advisory Committee, and we do not understand why all nine recommendations have not been fully utilized in this process. This report was prepared and submitted to the Secretary of the Interior and the Congress in accordance Title XII of the Act of October 31, 1994.

We believe that there is no better place in the lower 48 states for salmon recovery than the Yakima River Basin. Therefore, we look forward to working with the Instream Flow Needs

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