



MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Alyssa Mucken, IWRS Coordinator *AM*

SUBJECT: Agenda Item I, May 20, 2016
Water Resources Commission Meeting

Willamette Basin Review Feasibility Study

I. Introduction

The Department is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to complete a feasibility study examining the current and future use of stored water from the Willamette Valley Project reservoirs. Improving access to built storage, including reallocation of water in federal reservoirs, is a recommended action (10B) of the 2012 Integrated Water Resources Strategy. During this agenda item, staff will update the Commission on recent activities related to the Willamette Basin Review (WBR) Feasibility Study.

II. Background

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation currently holds water right certificates to store 1.64 million acre-feet from the Corps' 11 dams and reservoirs located on the Willamette River and its tributaries. Only a small portion of storage has been contracted for irrigation uses.

A feasibility study to consider reallocation of stored water was initially started in 1996 and postponed in 2000 to allow time for federal consultation under the Endangered Species Act. In recent years, the Department has worked closely with the Corps and local partners to gain state and federal funding to re-initiate this study. The Department received \$1.5 million from the 2013 Oregon Legislature to participate as the non-federal sponsor.

In February 2015, the Corps received approval to re-initiate work under the WBR Feasibility Study, along with funding for Fiscal Year 2015. In August 2015, the two agencies signed a new cost-share agreement.

III. Estimating Current and Future Demands

Since reinitiating the study, several members of the study's project team have been working on estimating current and future demands for municipal and industrial uses, agricultural uses, and fish and wildlife uses. The study team is verifying the quantity of available stored water under different water year scenarios.

The Department and Corps have convened two technical workgroups, consisting of various stakeholders and agency staff, to provide input on the development of estimates of current and future water demands in the Willamette River Basin.

The Municipal and Industrial workgroup met in late December and mid-March to discuss the data and methods used to estimate demands. David Miller and Associates is completing this task under the study, utilizing existing information contained in water management and conservation plans, water system master plans, and water use reports, to the extent possible.

The Fish and Wildlife Technical Workgroup first met in late January. The Corps had initially assumed that instream flow needs contained in the 2008 Biological Opinion (BiOp) were the appropriate and necessary instream flows for the WBR Feasibility Study. As a result of several discussions, however, the Corps recognizes the benefits of looking at data and studies that have been developed since the release of the 2008 BiOp. As a result, the Department and Corps hosted an instream flow workshop of technical experts in mid-April and will continue working throughout the summer to gather information.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) has taken the lead on estimating agricultural water demands in the Willamette Basin. ODA has convened members of the agricultural community on a number of occasions to explain the modeling approach and address questions or concerns. A draft report summarizing ODA's approach with initial results was shared with the Department and Corps on April 1, 2016. The project team agencies have scheduled a technical workshop to discuss the report and map out next steps to further refine the estimates.

IV. Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The Department, for several years now, has convened a broad group of stakeholders to keep them updated on the study and offer an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. The Department held a stakeholder meeting in early March, which that was well attended by a variety of water user groups and interests. Researchers contributing to the Willamette Water 2100 project were also in attendance. As the study progresses, the Department will continue to convene this broader stakeholder group on a regular basis.

An overview of the feasibility study process is provided as Attachment 1. The Corps is required as part of the National Environmental Protection Act to conduct a public scoping process to gather input from state, local and federal agencies, tribal governments and the public to identify concerns, possible reallocation actions, and potential effects. The formal scoping period began on March 2, 2016 and continued through April 16, 2016.

As part of the public scoping effort, the Corps and Department hosted afternoon and evening open houses in Salem and Springfield. The Corps and Department developed outreach materials, which have been posted to a new project website:

<http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/About/Currentprojects/WillametteBasinReview.aspx>

As part of this public scoping phase, the study project team received about a dozen comments. Below is a summary of comments received, grouped by theme.

Climate Change

- Need to address how climate change along with land use/development will affect future water supply.
- Allocation should be made to ameliorate impacts from climate change.
- Fish and wildlife allocations should take into account changes in natural flows due to climate change.

Prioritization of Uses

- How will water uses be prioritized during dry years?
- How will storage contracts be prioritized?
- Allocation for agriculture should be a high priority.

Water Rights

- Corps should work closely with the Water Resources Department during future water rights determinations.
- Allocations for fish and wildlife flows should satisfy conversion of the state's minimum perennial streamflows.
- Need to include future withdrawals/development of existing water rights in the model and evaluation.
- Cost of contract water must be transparent and not prohibitive to small cities.

Fish and Wildlife Flows

- Allocations should be made for environmental flows, not just fish and wildlife species.
- Fish and Wildlife flows should be a high priority.
- Demands should include needs for wildlife refuges.
- Fish and Wildlife flows are not just minimum flows, but should incorporate a full range of flows.

V. Study Timeline and Next Steps

The Corps has set five key milestones for the WBR Feasibility Study. The first milestone, called the “Alternatives Milestone” occurred on April 1, 2016. The project team hosted a meeting with Corps staff from around the country to share the study approach, initial results, and outline next steps for the study. Following this meeting, the study team received concurrence to proceed and continue evaluation of the proposed alternatives.

The project team will continue working over the next several months to further refine the estimates for current and future water demands, working in collaboration with local stakeholders and other agencies. The complete draft alternative assessment is anticipated to be completed in April 2017.

Attachment 1: Study Process Overview

Alyssa Mucken
503-986-0911

Feasibility Study Process Overview

SPRING 2016

FALL 2017

2018

Scoping
Collect information from public, agencies and others on issues to consider in meeting future municipal and industrial water supply, irrigation, and fish and wildlife water needs.



This informs the analysis of potential impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act and development of criteria to evaluate and compare alternatives that help meet project goals.

Public communication continues through the project.



US Army Corps of Engineers
Portland District



Develop & Evaluate Alternatives

- Agree on criteria for evaluating alternatives.
- Develop array of alternatives that meet study purpose, using public input and technical information on current and future water needs.
- Verify that alternatives are consistent with Corps authorities and priorities.

INFORM

Corps will share this information including how public input was considered in development of final criteria and the array of alternatives.

Tentatively Selected Plan

- Identify leading alternative based on analysis and the draft NEPA review.
- TSP advances for more detailed evaluation and public, technical, legal and policy reviews.



The Tentatively Selected Plan and related documents available for public review. The Corps and OWRD will host discussions to share information and receive comments.

Agency Decision
Rigorous senior-level Corps review of cost, engineering, environmental and economic benefits.

Civil Works Review Board
Decides if documentation and Report ready for next required reviews.

Chief's Report

- Signifies completion of Corps' feasibility process. Accompanies documentation for state and federal agency review.
- Sent to Assistant Secretary of the Army and U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Congress
Provides authorization to implement the final recommendation.
No timeline for this final step.

The study process focuses on technically and economically feasible options that meet project objectives while protecting the environment.