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## Meeting Notes

### Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Workgroup

**March 11, 2026**  
**In-person and Teams Virtual Meeting**

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#### Welcome/Introductions and Agenda Overview

Bryan Horsburgh with HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR) welcomed the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP) Workgroup members and other attendees both online and in-person. The following notes summarize the YRBWEP Workgroup presentations and public comments. For more information, please see the full presentations on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP) website: [Yakima Basin Integrated Plan](#).

#### Executive and Implementation Committees Updates

**Presenters:** Chad Stuart, Reclamation; Larry Mattson, Ecology-OCR; Joe Blodgett, Yakama Nation

**Chad Stuart** shared that there are challenges ahead as we enter a fourth year of drought conditions and staffing and budget constraints for Reclamation, but also, that we have many good projects completed or underway. He announced that the Cle Elum Helix can start operating on Monday (3/16). He thanked everyone for their continued commitment to the Integrated Plan.

**Larry Mattson** shared that he is a CWU alumnus and that there are many other alumni in the room. The drought declaration expires on April 7. Ecology will likely renew this declaration, though that decision is not within his purview. Given that the basin is entering a fourth drought year he offered that we should give each other grace as we will all be under stress. He invited all partners to offer creative solutions and thanked everyone for their collaboration.

**Joe Blodgett** highlighted that other basins use our model as an example of successful collaboration and that we must stay united as all parties restrict water use. All the same people and fish that were impacted last year will be impacted again this year. He stressed the need for storage beyond snowpack and the urgency to work together despite disagreements. He expressed gratitude for the group and all the great minds at work on these projects.

#### Water Supply/River Operations Update

**Presenters:** Teresa Hauser, Bureau of Reclamation

**Teresa Hauser** told the Workgroup that she has been with Reclamation for 23 years. As of March 1, the five reservoirs were filled to 127% of average. December's precipitation was 220% but now we are at 51% of average. There are seven snow monitoring locations, and they indicated we were at 33% of

average. The NRCS has more measuring sites and indicated that current snowpack levels are 43% of average. She shared information on reference years and compared our current conditions to earlier years. Teresa showed a graphic that showed how much water was released from the reservoirs and highlighted that Reclamation tried to capture as much water as possible at the reservoirs. She pointed out absorption numbers. Total water supply in the basin as of March 1 was 108,000 AF, or 127% of average. She shared that the basin had accumulated an above-average amount of precipitation for December and is currently experiencing a good amount of snow in the Cascades, but looking to the summer, temperatures are projected to be above average and precipitation below normal. The Cascade mountains were abnormally dry this winter and portions of the valley experienced moderate drought. She shared an “early bird” water supply forecast chart with estimates for 2026. The early-bird total water supply forecast for April through September is 100% for senior users and 44% for junior users. Target flows are on the low end at 300 cfs. The next updates from Teresa’s office will be on April 9, May 7, and June 4 at 10:30 am. She encouraged anyone interested to stop by the Yakima Field Office or tune in for a water supply update on Teams.

**Alex Conley** asked a question about snowpack accumulations on wet snow, soggy ground, and subsequent impacts.

**Teresa** responded that the November-December rain events impact the groundwater table which impacts the base flows in the summer, so once the snow is gone, we will ultimately see the impacts in July.

## **Five Slides x Five Minutes – Short Project Updates**

### **Presenters:**

1. Cle Elum Helix Debut - Andrew Matala, Yakama Nation (verbal update only)
2. Cle Elum Pool Raise - Wade Warner, Bureau of Reclamation and Kelly Clayton, Yakama Nation
3. Springwood Ranch - Urban Eberhart, Kittitas Reclamation District
4. Roza Dam Fish Screens - Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District

**Andrew Matala** shared that the benefits of the Cle Elum Helix are “game changing” for fish. He said that there is good rearing environment and adequate spawning grounds for fish in the Cle Elum reservoir, but the biggest challenges are getting fish out and getting fish back. The helix will help with getting fish out. Previously, many smolts were killed, injured, or disoriented using the previous method (the flume), nor could they get fish out at the appropriate emigration time. With the helix, they can maintain a more normal schedule (fish leaving earlier) and in better water conditions, which increases their chances of getting to the ocean as well as the chances of the fish returning. It’s a very safe and effective method for getting fish out of the reservoir so the team is very happy about the start of helix operations.

**Wade Warner and Kelly Clayton** shared updates on the Cle Elum Pool Raise project. They thanked the many partners who supported this project including Ecology, Yakama Nation, WDFW, USACE, USFS, and all the irrigation districts that were involved. Four of six Pool Raise projects are complete and two remain: Sandelin Lane Shoreline (a work in progress) and Speelyi Beach. There were some issues with the now completed projects including resident access with the construction in Timber Cove. Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) helped acquire one of the properties. Remaining projects are set to be awarded in August and completed before Spring, 2027. All trees that were removed were salvaged and reused to create fish spawning habitat. The team created vegetated islands and designed other ecological benefits. Through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Salmon Recovery

Funding Board (SRFB), the Yakama Nation was awarded a riparian grant to fund the floodplain wood placement, plantings, and stewardship with KCT. This project creates 14,600 more acre-feet (AF) of water in the Cle Elum reservoir for fish habitat.

**Urban Eberhart** talked about Springwood Ranch which was purchased by Trust for Public Land (TPL) in March 2023. He thanked TPL and the many partners who worked together to make the transfer of ownership happen. The new owners are Yakama Nation, WDFW, KRD, and Kittitas County. He remarked on the historical and cultural significance of this land for the Yakamas. He highlighted the importance of building more storage as this reservoir could have been filled up by the recent atmospheric river – providing an additional 100,000 AF of water. The feasibility study’s geotechnical Phase 1 was completed in 2025, and Phase 2 will take place between April and November of 2026. Urban stressed that this is a bipartisan supported effort and a 50-50 cost share between Washington State and the federal government. Exploring feasibility includes performing core drilling and analyzing the samples. They don’t have cost estimates yet as they have not yet determined the size of the potential reservoir. Water at this facility will be used for smolt out-migration, so juvenile fish can get to the ocean.

**Scott Revell** first spoke a little about the Roza Diversion Dam which was completed in 1940. He added that fish screens were first implemented in the 1970s, then again in the 1990s. These were massive structures and smolt mortality was at unacceptable levels in the past. He shared several images of the new fish screens which were installed in 2025 and have improved smolt survival at Roza Dam.

## Public Comment

**David Fast** spoke in reference to a comment made at a past Workgroup meeting by a member of the public. The commenter had asked why YRBWEP refers to some bodies of water as reservoirs. David delineated the differences between lakes and reservoirs based on USGS definitions. He stated that a lake is defined as a natural body of water with a basin formed by geological processes such as glaciers and volcanoes. There are fluctuations based on natural systems. A reservoir is defined as an artificial lake caused by damming the river. He highlighted the differences in terms of manmade vs. natural water management, with reservoirs levels managed for human consumption.

**Chris Maykut** shared that he is the president of Friends of Bumping Lake and leader of a coalition of 18 organizations that oppose YRBWEP actions that would affect Bumping Lake. He stated that he will continue to urge legislators and the community to oppose it until it is officially removed from consideration. He urged the Workgroup to choose the most environmentally friendly approach given that cutting down and flooding out over 1000 acres of native forest, including habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl and Bull Trout is not environmentally friendly. He asked that this group make the most cost-effective approach, citing Reclamation’s refusal in 2008 to further study the Bumping Dam project as it had a negative cost/benefit ratio in past studies. He added that the Bumping Lake watershed is not large enough to be useful for storage in consecutive drought years. Chris asked that the group formally remove Bumping Lake from further consideration in its suite of present and future projects.

**David Ortman** quoted a Seattle Times editorial from 50 years ago which expressed dismay around the lack of any comprehensive national water policy; declining ground water supplies in dry Western basins; and outdated federal policies including building large dams and channelizing streams. He stressed that new projects should emphasize conservation and that this editorial is still pertinent today. Regarding Roza allotments, he referred to a 2024 Roza Drought Year Water Supply FAQ and expressed that while the irrigation district was upset about dire curtailment during droughts, management had told its district

farmers not to worry. David also referred to two articles from 2024 regarding high yields of cosmic crisp apples and hops despite drought conditions. He added that Ecology does not acknowledge that the Yakima basin is largely desert and that the WSDA drought impact survey includes “abnormally dry” conditions which NIDIS Drought monitor defines as “not” a drought. David asked if the Workgroup intends to truck sockeye salmon from Astoria to Cle Elum if the temperatures in the lower river are so high; what the schedule is for preparing a draft EIS for Springwood; and expressed that the Bateman Island Causeway Removal project was not part of the original plan.

## **Celebrating Chamna (Bateman Island Causeway Removal)**

**Presenters:** Kat Herzog, US Army Corps of Engineers; Joe Blodgett, Yakama Nation; Mike Livingston, WA Department of Fish & Wildlife

**Kat Herzog** shared that construction is complete on the causeway removal, and the contractor completed the work within the in-water work window. USACE is now in the monitoring phase for the next ten years, cost-shared with project sponsors and in partnership with the Yakama Nation. The project was a success thanks to WDFW and Yakama Nation – key partners.

**Joe Blodgett** highlighted that this project is incredibly important culturally for the Yakama Nation and the Umatilla Tribe and is a historically notable site. The causeway created high water temperatures and water quality issues, increased invasive species and stargrass, as it was not natural to have that degree of stagnation. He thanked other partners such as the city of Kennewick, Roza Irrigation District, Trout Unlimited, Ecology, NOAA, and Kat Herzog with the Corps for being a steady partner. The river is now flowing, and it is getting closer to “how it was”. The upcoming celebration on April 24<sup>th</sup> will be an important moment, and reconnecting the tribes that used this area is a huge part of this project.

**Mike Livingston** said that thanks to YBIP, this project was possible. There were so many partners and individuals involved which will be acknowledged fully on April 24<sup>th</sup>, including Plauché & Carr, the city of Richmond, and many others. There were many smaller projects that had to happen before the causeway could be removed, so it was a long process with many iterative steps.

The facilitation team shared a video that Michael David Bushman with Yakama Nation created.

**Joe and Kat** added that the sediment is being monitored pre- and post-construction to determine if any additional actions need to be taken. An estimated 18,000 cubic yards of material were removed from the causeway.

## **YRBWEP Partner Spotlight**

**Presenter:** David Felman, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District

**David Felman** shared that he started at Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) in 2005 and worked as an engineer for about 20 years, then later, as a supervisor. He has experienced six droughts over the course of his time with SVID. SVID is approximately 95% of the Sunnyside Division. They are the fifth largest in the state with a portfolio of roughly 70% senior and 30% proratable rights. The SVID Board of Directors and staff take conservation very seriously and began this work in earnest in 2003, funded by 1994 YRBWEP legislation. Their conservation work is done in partnership with Ecology and Reclamation as there are multiple benefits to fish, farmers, and others. He described the system of automation, data acquisition programs, and other monitoring that is mostly done in-house. Reservoirs

are necessary to regulate the fluctuations in the system. Their ELIPS (Enclosed Lateral Improvements Project) works well for SVID, landowners, and farmers for precision tracking. They are slated to continue conservation work until at least 2043. 38,000 AF of water has been conserved to support in-stream flows and fish habitat. The average federal cost per AF for these efforts is \$2,053. SVID continues to identify ways to operate more efficiently and do conservation work outside the ELIPS program, including improvements to lateral canal lining and main canal lining (to minimize evaporation and seepage losses). They are looking forward to new leasing programs, in partnership with Trout Unlimited and Ecology, to grow this program. There may be between 5,000-8,000 AF available to be leased in 2026.

## Recognizing Wendy Christensen

**Candy Carmack, Reclamation**, kicked off a series of thanks, followed by Derek Sandison, former Ecology/OCR director and several other Workgroup members. Candy highlighted Wendy's dedication and her hard work and described how Wendy came to Reclamation through the construction and technical programs and then made her way to YRBWEP. Once the project was started, Wendy jumped on board working late hours, making many phone calls, and "got things done". Candy expressed appreciation for her collaborative style and treasures their time as colleagues and now as friends. She presented Wendy with a framed photo.

**Derek Sandison** talked about the feasibility study and many other projects, and how difficult it was to move forward. Wendy helped advance the projects with her dedication, along with her colleagues at Reclamation. Derek thanked Wendy for her service to the Integrated Plan.

Tom Tebb, Scott Revell, Urban Eberhart, Sean Gross, Joe Blodgett, Danielle Squeochs, Jeff Tayer, Arden Thomas, Mike Livingston, and several other Workgroup members shared their gratitude for Wendy. Kelly Clayton also expressed her gratitude for helping her complete the Cle Elum Pool Raise project. Wendy shared that it was a privilege to work with this group and she is continually in awe of the collective dedication to the project. Contributing to the Integrated Plan was the highlight of her career.

## Closing Thoughts (Workgroup Members)

**Chad, Joe**, and others expressed their dismay for current drought conditions but gratitude for the group and hope that we will get through it as a group. **Alex Conley** thanked Wendy for her service. **Sean Gross** thanked David Felman for SVID's commitment to conservation that has helped the irrigators and fish over the years. **Commissioner Cory Wright** thanked Arden for her work and acknowledged that the county is paying more attention to water issues than ever before. **Jaelyn Hancock** shared that Wendy was a role model for her leadership and that we need to push towards more storage beyond snowpack. **Scott Revell** shared that the prorationing date is uncertain and that makes system operations difficult. **Mike Livingston and Danielle Squeochs** expressed appreciation for the many years of work that have gone into the Integrated Plan. **Jason McShane** added that we must act today. **Arden Thomas and David Felman** thanked the group for their collaboration and hard work.

## **Attendance (\*Denotes online participation)**

### **Workgroup Members and Alternates:**

Alex Conley, Yakama Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board  
Amanda McKinley, Yakima County  
Bill Gale, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service\*  
Candy Carmack, Bureau of Reclamation  
Chad Stuart, Bureau of Reclamation  
Charlie de la Chapelle, Yakima Basin Storage Alliance  
Cory Wright, Kittitas County  
Daniel Tiliano, City of Yakima  
Danielle Squeochs, Groundwater and Storage Subcommittee Chair, Yakama Nation  
David Blodgett III, Yakama Nation Fisheries\*  
David Felman, Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District  
Jaclyn Hancock, Washington State Department of Agriculture  
Jason McShane, Lower River Subgroup Co-Chair, Kennewick Irrigation District  
Jeff Tayer, Habitat Subcommittee Chair, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Jim Milton, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District\*  
Joe Blodgett, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Larry Leach, Washington State Department of Natural Resources  
Larry Mattson, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Melissa Downes, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Mike Livingston, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Peter Dykstra, Watershed Lands Conservation Subcommittee Chair\*  
Sage Park, Roza Irrigation District\*  
Sarah Ehmer, Yakima County  
Scott McFarland, Washington State Department of Natural Resources\*  
Scott Revell, Roza Irrigation District  
Sean Gross, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service  
Seth Defoe, Kennewick Irrigation District\*  
Shane Leonard, Kennewick Irrigation District\*  
Theo Burgoon, Trout Unlimited\*  
Urban Eberhart, Outreach Committee Co-Chair, Kittitas Reclamation District  
Vanessa Pepi, US Army Corps of Engineers\*

### **Other Attendees:**

Alan Chapman, Whatcom Conservation District\*  
Anna Marandi, HDR Engineering Inc.\*  
Art Davtian, US Forest Service  
Bailey Draper, South Yakima Conservation District\*  
Brian Schmidt, Bureau of Reclamation  
Bruce Sully, Bureau of Reclamation  
Bryan Horsburgh, HDR Engineering, Inc.  
Cathy Baker, The Nature Conservancy\*  
Chris Frederiksen, Yakama Nation\*  
Chris Maykut, Friend of Bumping Lake\*  
Chris Perra, Yakama Nation\*  
Cynthia Carlstad, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants



— BUREAU OF —  
RECLAMATION



David Child, Bureau of Reclamation\*  
David Fisher, Consultant, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
David Lind, Wakish\*  
David McKenzie, Kennewick Irrigation District\*  
David Ortman\*  
David Reavill, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife\*  
Devin Stoker, Anchor QEA  
Diani Taylor, Plauché & Carr\*  
Emily Oberhoffer, Washington State Department of Agriculture  
Everett Isaac, Yakama Nation\*  
Glenn Grette, Kennewick Irrigation District\*  
Graysen Squeochs, Yakama Nation\*  
Heather Hadsel, Naches-Selah Irrigation District\*  
Jean Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek\*  
Jeff Dermond, Ecology, OCR  
Joe Amend, Columbia Irrigation District\*  
Joel Hubble, Consultant, Yakima Basin Joint Board\*  
John Crotty, Western Legal PLLC\*  
John Reeves, Save Lake Kachess\*  
Jon Culp, Washington State Conservation Commission\*  
Justin Bezold, Trout Unlimited\*  
Justin Harter, Naches-Selah Irrigation District  
Kat Herzog, US Army Corps of Engineers\*  
Keith Wolf, Yakima County\*  
Kelly Clayton, Yakama Nation Fisheries  
Kelsey Green, Consultant, Yakima Basin Joint Board  
Kevin Eslinger, Kittitas Reclamation District\*  
Kevin Haydon, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Kyle Hill, Washington Water Trust\*  
Leif Krapas, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Lily Sadataki, HDR Engineering, Inc.\*  
Mark Johnston, Yakama Nation  
Mel Babik, Kittitas Conservation Trust  
Merritt Mitchell, Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group\*  
Michael Coffey, Department of the Interior\*  
Michael Horner, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Mike Bromund, Rubicon Water  
Mitch Long, Kittitas Conservation Trust  
Nathan Cultler, EKI Environment & Water\*  
Norman Semanko, Parsons Behle & Latimer\*  
Paul Tabayoyon, APIC-Yakima  
Rebecca Gutshall, Bureau of Reclamation  
Sam Dossa\*  
Sara Vickers, Kittitas Reclamation District  
Scott Turner, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Shawna Warehime, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR  
Shubha Pandit, Yakama Nation\*  
Stuart Crane, Yakama Nation Water Resources  
Susan Woodward, American Rivers\*

Teresa Hauser, Bureau of Reclamation  
Tim Poppleton, Washington State Department of Ecology, OCR\*  
Tom Tebb, Tebb & Associates  
Trevor Hutton, Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Tyler Carpenter, Carpenter Ranches\*  
Wade Warner, Bureau of Reclamation  
Walt Larrick, Consultant, Yakima Basin Joint Board\*  
Wendy Christensen, Retired

## **Where to Find Workgroup Information**

Meeting materials, notes, presentations, and materials submitted during public comment for each Workgroup meeting will be posted on Reclamation's project website:

<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/programs/yrbwep/2011integratedplan/index.html>

A list of information sources, many available online, is also posted on the website.

If you need help finding an information source, please contact those listed at the top of page 1 of these notes or Anna Marandi at HDR Engineering, Inc. [anna.marandi@hdrinc.com](mailto:anna.marandi@hdrinc.com)