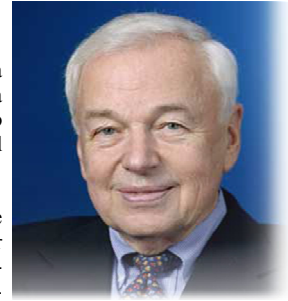


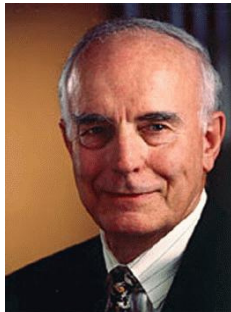
Solving the water shortage in the Yakima Basin.

My name is Sid Morrison and I am writing to you as a friend and most recently as chairman of the Yakima Basin Storage Alliance (YBSA). My purpose for writing this letter is to share information with you about a water storage project we have been studying for the past 30 years. YBSA has used various media types to inform citizens of the importance of water to our daily lives and how we can work to improve its quality and availability.

First, let me provide some historical background on this matter. During my tenure as the U.S. Representative for the 4th congressional district 1981 to 1993 I worked to create more normative flows in the Yakima River by building water storage that would help ease the over appropriation of the river. My visits with many stakeholders and coordination with then Senator Dan Evans allowed us to collaborate on a major piece of legislation in 1988 designed to create improvements in the Yakima River benefiting fish, agriculture and municipal uses. This bill was known as S-2322. In recent years YBSA has used S-2322 as a model to help study ways in which the Yakima River can once again be healthy habitat for fish and wildlife while supporting agriculture needs.



Sid Morrison



Dan Evans

Second, YBSA has worked hard for more than a decade to get organized and secure funding for studies to assess water storage and management options for the Yakima River Basin in a manner similar to that proposed in S-2322. The YBSA initiated the study by seeking authority and funding from congress. Our congressional delegates agreed with us on a series of points about what has led us to a water crisis:

- (1) We have not added any water storage infrastructure in the Yakima Basin since 1933
- (2) Our population has increased more than ten fold during these past 74 years
- (3) Droughts have become more frequent causing reduced water allocations among all users
- (4) The fish and wildlife programs designed for restoration and recovery need clean, cool and abundant water to assure successful reintroduction into their native habitat
- (5) By modifying water management in conjunction with appreciable storage the Yakima River can be returned to a normal flowing river
- (6) Water withdrawals for irrigation from the Yakima River can be reduced by approximately 600,000 acre feet by utilizing an inter-basin transfer of excess water from the Columbia with appropriate storage, and
- (7) The water rights of all can be honored and fulfilled by innovative use of sound decision making.

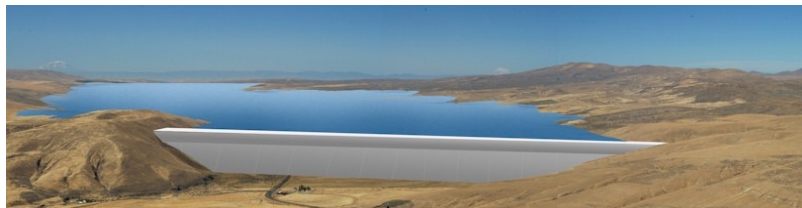
Third, Congress funded the Yakima Basin Water Storage Feasibility Study which is now in its fourth year and is scheduled to be completed in 2008. With more than 30 years of frustrating efforts to combine water storage, river management and future water needs YBSA has again concluded that the Yakima River is past due for major improvements to satisfy everyone's water needs. Our choice for water storage and management improvement is the Black Rock Reservoir. We did not come to agreement on the Black Rock study option among ourselves in a hasty fashion. Our review of alternatives was exhaustive. Most important, was our study of what made S-2322 a bill agreeable to all water users. The governmental coordination witnessed during the deliberations of S-2322 is a spirit of cooperation YBSA seeks as it attempts to deal with the uncertainties of climate change and other yet unknown challenges to sound water supply.

Climate change is a world-wide phenomenon that has caused the disappearance of our mountain snow packs which were once our natural reservoirs and has radically altered the timing of rain and snows. We now experience floods of water that rush out to sea and then we suffer long droughts that dry up water flows and supplies. Water storage like Black Rock can help capture the excessive spring freshets and create timed release of water when needed for fish and wildlife while reducing the irrigation water withdrawals from the Yakima River.

Throughout the U.S. there is a growing concern about rivers, lakes and streams drying up and it includes the loss of vast underground aquifers. Recently, a report titled, "Native Communities and Climate Change" was published by the Natural Resources Law Center at the University of Colorado Law School in conjunction with the Western Water Assessment at the University of Colorado. It states in summary that climate change threatens our way of life. With regard to river systems like the Yakima River, the report states, "In basins where water supply is associated with snowmelt, warmer temperatures often result in an increased ratio of rain to now, earlier snowmelt, decreased summer stream flows and, occasionally, higher winter stream flows." The report further states that a changing climate will affect everyone.

While the past several years have concentrated on the feasibility of the Black Rock Reservoir, the time has come to prepare legislation that deals with what can be done by managing the Yakima River system for fish and wildlife. We invite all interest groups to participate in this process. Please contact yakimabasinstoragealliance@yahoo.com.

At this point we are anticipating that the completion of the Yakima River Water Storage study will help all of us determine what might be the most positive steps to take with regard to meeting our present and future water needs. It is our intention to preserve this gift of nature for our future generations.. During the development of S-2322 an agreement was reached even on difficult issues and it accelerated progress. There were times of disagreement, and no doubt there will be again, but by working together and discussing differences we can expand our understanding of each other and arrive at workable conclusions. If we don't engage in serious discussion we risk environmental consequences for generations to come. It is not easy to construct plans for serving all of the human needs for water and simultaneously respecting all other life forms.



www.ybsa.org

Yakima Basin Storage Alliance • P.O. Box 30 • Prosser, WA 99350

Yakima River Environmental Benefits of Black Rock Reservoir

1. Normative flows that benefit fish and wildlife.
2. Clean, cool and abundant in-stream water suitable for fish and wildlife habitat.
3. Improved wetlands, riparian habitat and inter-connecting channels.
4. Improved fish passage.
5. Improved groundwater supply.
6. A “firmed-up” allocation of water block to meet YN treaty.
7. Reduction in irrigation withdrawals.
8. New irrigation water only for YN consistent with Title XII of PL103-434.

