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Lake Roosevelt Forum

NEWSletter

WINTER 2005

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Lake Operations 2005

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A METEOROLOGIST OR A SKIER TO REALIZE that unseasonably warm temperatures are resulting in a meager snow pack. For the Columbia River Basin, the snow pack is about three quarters of normal.

Ironically, most areas in the Basin are reasonably close to normal precipitation this winter. The problem is abnormally high temperatures high in the mountains. As a result, the River Forecast Center now predicts that the Columbia River's total flow will be 69 percent of average through July.

Researchers at the University of Washington say this year's weather pattern is very close to their temperature modeling for global warming over the next fifty to one hundred years. Their model forecasts peak flows of water coming down the Columbia much earlier in the year, with critical low flow water conditions in the summer.

According to Washington state climatologist Philip Mote, "One year by itself doesn't show what direction we're headed. On the other hand, this is eerily similar to our scenario for a mid-21st century winter."

EFFECTS OF LOW SNOW PACK ON LAKE ROOSEVELT

The effect of low snow pack on Lake Roosevelt is very different than for other reservoirs. As shown in the chart, in a dry year Lake Roosevelt is actually drawn down less during the spring and consistently reaches a lake elevation of 1280' by July. This is because of the lake's flood control function. Specifically, for Lake Roosevelt a good water year means a large draw-down while a poor water year results in a lesser drawdown. The refill by July occurs regardless of seasonal weather conditions.

For the 1.5 million visitors who come to Lake Roosevelt each summer, that's great news. There are a number of reasons for this phenomenon, but the

Please join us at...

OUTLOOK 2005

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23 • 6:00 TO 7:30PM
COMMUNITY COLLEGES OF SPOKANE -
COLVILLE CENTER MONUMENTAL ROOM
985 S. ELM ST., COLVILLE

North on Hwy. 395 to Colville
Right on Hawthorne

*Representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation will
forecast and discuss issues affecting this year's lake
levels.*

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GETTING TO KNOW TERI PIEPER

To know the land, walk the land. That's a philosophy and tradition that many cultures hand down from generation to generation. Teri Pieper, camera and binoculars in hand, brings a modern day sensibility to this tradition.

Raised in the Wenatchee Valley, Teri's father was a reporter for the local paper. In those days, reporters were also photographers. Says Teri, "I tagged along and he introduced me to photography. At seventeen, I got my first thirty five millimeter camera. It's just a part of me."

Like many people, she found ways of bringing her avocations to her career path. Eight years ago Teri started volunteering with the Audubon Society. As other birders know, this region is an oasis for migratory birds that frequent the many lakes, reservoirs and wetlands.

Helping the Audubon Society eventually led Teri to the Coulee Corridor Consortium. This eclectic group of government, tribal and non-profit agencies is dedicated to telling the natural and cultural stories of the Corridor to an ever growing number of visitors. Says Teri, "For area tribes, settlers and today's communities, it's always been a travel corridor. So there are lots of nature and human stories to tell. It's fascinating."

For the past three years Teri has worked on Coulee Corridors projects, including interpretive signs, observational posts and other educational tools. Each project seeks to unlock stories for those passing through.

According to Teri, "The trick is getting people out of their cars. Get them up-close to the coulees, plateaus, lakes, wildflowers, and birds. Let visitors in on the



Looking forward, Teri sees the balancing act between increased development and preserving the natural landscape as an on-going challenge.

drama of ice age floods carving out cubic mile after cubic mile of earth to form coulees; or the excitement of sighting snowy owls in winter. There is so much here, and it's truly unique."

As someone who has lived in the Moses Lake area for the past twenty two years, Teri's seen the region's tourist industry develop first hand. "It's always been popular with boaters, anglers and those who like off road riding," says Teri.

She sees nature or eco-tourism as major sources for new visitation. For instance, Consortium members report a lot more people from around the state, region and foreign countries like Germany making the trek to the Coulee Corridor. What they are here to experience is the unique geology, wildlife and cultures of the area.

Looking forward, Teri sees the balancing act between increased development and preserving the natural landscape as an on-going challenge. Answering questions like "How do we allow development to continue without destroying natural habitat?" or "How do we develop new sites where people can visit and learn while minimizing the human impact of visitation?"

Teri is the first to admit she has no magical, silver bullet answers to these questions. But she also knows that marrying her passion for the landscape with the work she does is her best path forward to help out. So in June she's off to the Rocky Mountain School of Photography. Here, she will be a full time student taking an intensive, five month photography course.

When she comes back to the area, Teri wants to share her views of nature as a professional photographer. "For me," says Teri "it's the next step on the landscape." ✨

Columbia River Initiative Hearings Held in Grand Coulee and Colville

THE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY HELD seven public hearings on a proposed rule making for the Columbia River Initiative (CRI). The Forum attended and listened to the comments of concerned citizens at the final hearing, which was held in Colville Washington.

The CRI is a Washington State led initiative to develop a water-management program for the Columbia. As described in their web site, the CRI:

- Allows the basin's economy to grow, diversify and be sustained.
- Reflects scientifically sound information.
- Reduces the risks to fish and maintains healthy watersheds.

Gerry O'Keefe opened the hearing with a PowerPoint presentation describing the purpose and benefits of the initiative. He noted that it addresses "fifteen years of inaction on Columbia River water rights that occurred because of the Biological Opinion."

The biggest beneficiaries would be downstream municipal, industrial and irrigation users who would be able to attain water rights for the first time, or whose current wa-

ter rights would become non-interruptible. Currently, there are about three hundred pending applications on the river.

In principle, the other big beneficiary would be fish. Of the additional water sent downstream, one third would be devoted to improving water flows for fish.

Water for the CRI would be secured from four primary sources:

- 1) Drawing Lake Roosevelt down by an additional six to eighteen inches from April through September.
- 2) Purchasing water from Canadian reservoirs to meet April through September needs.
- 3) Developing additional off-site water storage along the Columbia.
- 4) Securing existing water rights and putting them into state trust.

PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM COLVILLE

Questions and comments showed deep concern and lack of support for the CRI and the State's process for developing it.

A Farm Bureau representative and others took issue with the perception that "new" water is being found for the Columbia. In reality, they say, water is being reallocated from Lake Roosevelt and Canadian sources to provide

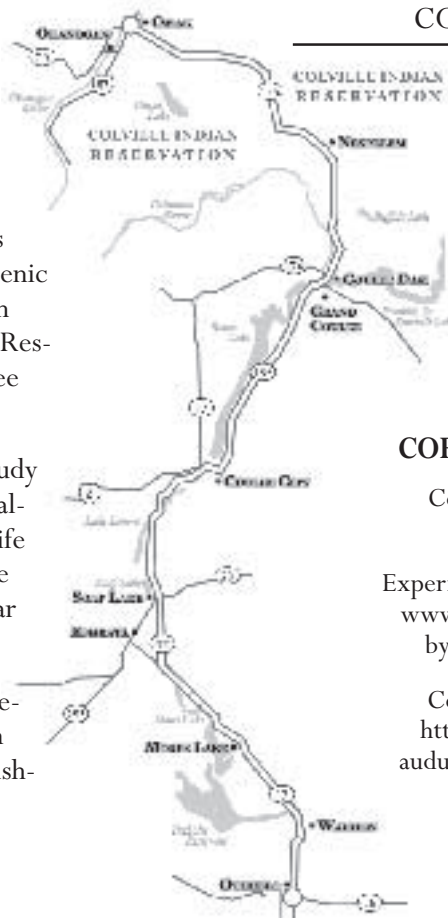
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Coulee Corridor Gains in Popularity

AN OPEN AIR MUSEUM PUNCTUATED BY SAGEBRUSH, plateaus, coulees, waterways, rolling green farm lands, and ice age rock formations stretches from Othello to Omak. Called the Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway, State Highways 17 and 155 take you on this high desert journey through Grant County and the Colville Reservation. The Corridor brushes up against Grand Coulee Dam just before entering the Colville Reservation.

In Washington State, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study found that wildlife watchers (primarily birders) spend almost one billion dollars each year on "watchable" wildlife trip related expenses such as fuel, food and lodging. The Coulee Corridor is emerging as one of the most popular destinations for these nature lovers.

With state parks, dozens of lakes, seven wildlife management areas and the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, there are numerous opportunities for camping, fishing, hiking, canoeing and bird watching. *



FOR MORE COULEE CORRIDOR INFORMATION

Coulee Corridor Consortium
www.couleecorridor.org

Experience Washington Scenic Byways
www.experiencewashington.com/byways/Byway.aspx?bwid=16

Coulee Corridor Birding Trail
<http://wa.audubon.org/new/audubon/default.cfm?pageID=199>

National Recreation Area Management Planning Updates

LAKE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL RECREATION AREA (LRNRA) HAS REACHED IMPORTANT MILESTONES for their Livestock Management and Fire Management plans.

LIVESTOCK

On February 15th, LRNRA announced approval of the Livestock Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. The plan brings into balance grazing activities authorized by federal law in 2001 with National Park Service mission, policies and practices.

The selected action will renew the livestock grazing special use permits with revised terms and conditions for the seven permittees that currently use grazing privileges within Lake Roosevelt NRA. The management document can be downloaded via LRNRA's web site: www.nps.gov/laro/home.htm.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

A Draft Fire Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (FMPEA) is available for public review and comment through March 27, 2005. To download the document, go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>.

LRNRA says the purpose of the plan is to supplement the existing EA "by adding additional project areas for hazard fuel reduction and to revise the operating guidelines for project implementation to expand the use of mechanical methods and the continued use of prescribed fire to accomplish park management objectives."

Issues such as possible impacts to adjacent lands, smoke management, and advance notification of adjoining landowners are addressed in the plan.

For more information, contact Jerald L. Weaver, LRNA Chief of Compliance and Natural Resource Management, 1008 Crest Drive, Coulee Dam, 509-633-9441 ext 128. *

Columbia River Initiative Hearings

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

additional water downstream. To do this requires both new legislation and additions to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). In several instances, adoption of the CRI would conflict with current law and the WAC.

Former senator Scott Barr picked up on these concerns when he noted that the Washington legislature historically uses a much more rigorous and lengthy process before adopting broad changes to water law. Barr agreed with several speakers that going through rule making before the legislature has acted is highly inappropriate, effectively "putting the cart before the horse." He summarized his thinking by saying "Do it right, or don't do it at all."

Others noted their belief that until Ecology fully adjudicates water rights, there remains a poor understanding of "actual use" and availability. They see the CRI as taking a "short cut" to resolving water accounting issues. They noted as well that the CRI is suppose to be based on "good science," yet they questioned the veracity of whether additional water for fish flows will actually help salmon.

Commissioners from Stevens and Ferry County noted the irony of northeastern Washington being asked to send water downstream while basins in their counties remain closed to further water right permitting. Further, Ecology's rules prohibit development of water storage while under closure rules in their counties, but the CRI embraces the concept to resolve downstream needs. While the counties would welcome the possibility of devel-

oping additional storage and modifying current water law, they see it as something that must be applied to all water users and water right holders. One person wondered whether the real purpose of the CRI was to "break western water law."

Greg Abrahamson, council member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, asked someone to read concerns into the record. The Spokane tribe does not believe it has been consulted in a meaningful way and has not made a decision regarding their support, a requirement of the CRI MOU signed between the Bureau of Reclamation and the State.

Debbie Bird, superintendent of the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area (LRNA), also asked someone to express concerns about lack of consultation with the Park Service, and not considering effects on LRNA's ability to deliver services.

Cathy LeBret from Congresswoman Cathy McMoriss' office asked a number of questions. These included whether the Spokane Indian Tribe, Park Service and other concessionaires would, like the MOU signed with the Colville Tribe, receive financial mitigation for economic losses caused by CRI draw downs; whether lost revenue to the communities that is generated by the 1.5 million visitors each year was calculated into the State's cost/benefit analysis of the CRI; and why the Lake Roosevelt Cooperative Management Agreement (signed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, the Colville Confederated Tribes, the

Colville Watershed Planning, a Model of Effective Citizen Action

Linda Kiefer, WRIA 59 Watershed Planning Coordinator

FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS, local citizens together with local, state, and federal agencies worked together to develop a sustainable watershed plan for the Colville River Basin. The goal was to develop a long-range sustainable Watershed Plan that locally directs management and implementation of the Plan, addresses current and future water needs, and helps protect and improve water resources.

During the past five years, over 460 public meetings were held and over 22,600 volunteer hours were contributed to help bring the planning phase of the watershed planning & implementation project to completion. On November 30, 2004, the Stevens County Commissioners adopted the WRIA 59 Colville River Watershed Management Plan, which brought closure to the WRIA 59 Phase 2 & 3 Watershed Planning Project.

The next step, Phase 4 – Implementation will begin this spring, once the Phase 4 Grant application is approved. This phase involves the development of a Detailed

Implementation Plan to guide the implementation process for accomplishing the recommendations and obligations laid out in the WRIA 59 Watershed Management Plan.

Local residents are encouraged to become involved in the local watershed-planning and implementation project. For more information on upcoming meeting dates, times, and locations, contact Linda Kiefer, WRIA 59 Watershed Coordinator, Stevens County, 215 S. Oak St., Colville, (509) 685-2832. *



Images of the Colville River Basin, a 1,007 square mile area.

Outlook 2005

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

biggest is the lake's geographic position in the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS).

Lake Roosevelt is the northern-most storage project in the United States on the main stem of the Columbia River. Every drop of water coming from the Columbia's headwaters in Canada and Montana pass through the lake and Grand Coulee Dam. Hence, as snow pack melts, Lake Roosevelt refills rapidly.

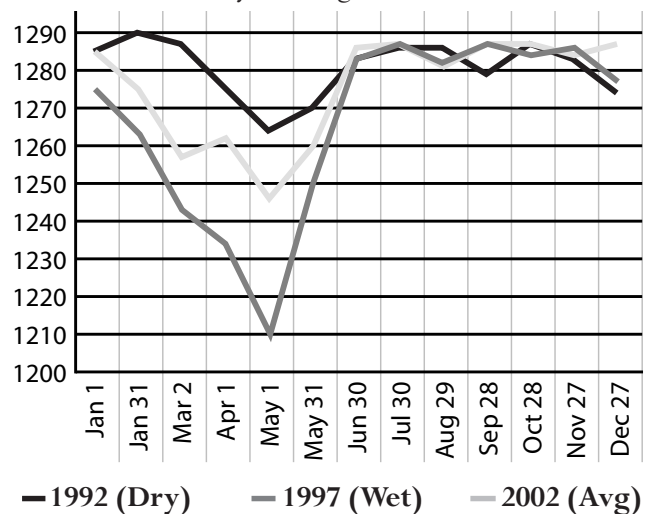
Indeed, water flow and storage releases from Canada, Montana and Idaho are normally enough to refill the lake about seven times a year. Compare that to Hungry Horse (a large headwaters reservoir upstream from Lake Roosevelt in Montana), which can not refill in the same year if it were emptied.

The net result is Roosevelt can, regardless of weather conditions, be drawn down in the spring to minimize flood conditions as far south as Portland, then be refilled by summer. However, reaching lake levels of 1280' by July 4th (and it usually happens by mid-June), is under the control of the Bureau of Reclamation, discounting Mother Nature.

Reclamation maintains these levels to meet the desires of government agencies and community members, but is

LAKE ROOSEVELT WATER ELEVATIONS

Wet - Dry - Average Water Years



not required to do so by statute. If the Columbia River Initiative (see page 3) is fully implemented, the end-of-August water level would be one foot lower in a non-drought year and 1.6 feet lower in a drought year. A drought year is defined as a year where the March water supply forecast at the Dalles is 60 million acre feet or less.

2005 LAKE LEVEL FORECAST

For the first six weeks of the year, lake levels fluctuated

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Lake Roosevelt Forum

2206 S. Sherman St.
Spokane, WA 99203
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OUTLOOK 2005, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

between 1282 and 1288 feet above sea level. The lake is now being gradually lowered to 1260' by mid March and 1255' by April 1.

Because of necessary maintenance work on the spillway gates at the dam, Reclamation expects to maintain this elevation until mid-May.

The lake level is then expected to rise to 1280' or above by July 4th. Historically, this level is most often reached in mid-June.

The lake level is then likely to remain fairly constant until mid-August, when it could be lowered to 1278'. This occurs when drought or poor snow pack conditions create critical low flow conditions in the Columbia. As called for in the Biological Opinion, Lake Roosevelt is lowered to provide flows for endangered downstream salmon.

By October, look for the lake to rise to 1283 feet or above. Although not mandated, there is an effort to maintain the lake level between 1283' and 1285' in October to assist Lake Roosevelt's kokanee fishery.

CHECK DAILY LAKE LEVELS

To check daily lake levels, visit www.lrf.org and click on "Lake Levels," or call 1-800-824-4916. *

INITIATIVE HEARINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs) was being ignored. She also asked if the proposed draw downs of Lake Roosevelt would be implemented if water from Canada, off-site storage and other aspects of the CRI did not materialize.

Lastly, there were several comments wondering how the State could afford an ambitious and risky multi-million dollar initiative when the State is struggling to meet its current budgetary needs.

PUBLIC COMMENT STILL BEING SOUGHT

The Department of Ecology has an extensive CRI web page that includes the draft rule, background information, reports, studies, MOUs and press releases. To comment on the CRI, click on the Rule Making icon and then use the online form in the "Comments" section. The CRI web site can be found at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cri/crihome.html . *

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THE LAKE ROOSEVELT FORUM

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