Methow River Basin Mitigation Policy Issues

Columbia River Policy Advisory Group
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Presented by
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Office of Columbia River
Methow River Basin
WRIA 48
Issue a new water right to Town of Twisp with a consumptive use not to exceed 52.31 acre-feet

OCR holds an existing trust water right with a consumptive use of 52.31 acre-feet located 18 miles downstream of Twisp (water budget neutral to Columbia River)
OCR funds a package of instream flow improvement projects in the Methow Basin that offsets the imperfect location and timing of the trust water right relative to the new Twisp appropriation.

Twisp enters into a water service contract with OCR for long-term repayment of the trust water acquisition costs.

Ecology uses OCPI as the permitting vehicle to balance project impacts and benefits.
Town of Twisp
New Water Right

Seasonal Benefits and Impacts - OCR Trust Water Right
Town of Twisp, Washington

Graph: Courtesy of Aspect Consulting
General Policy Question(s)

Does the investment of four (4) instream flow improvement projects (MVID West, Chewuch, Barkley and IEGP) provide sufficient instream flow benefits that outweigh the seasonal instream impacts of a new, reliable, municipal appropriation for Twisp that is water budget neutral on the Columbia River to meet the Overriding Consideration of the Public Interest (OCPI) criteria in WAC 173–548–020(5) and WAC 173–563–080?
Is out-of-kind or alternative mitigation an option in the Methow Basin?

Do the benefits of the retired irrigation water right in combination with the fish benefits of the Greater Methow improvement package, outweigh seasonal impacts of a new appropriation?

Need an OCPI determination to waive interruptibility (WAC 173–548 & WAC 173–563)
Questions?

Acknowledgements

- Town of Twisp
- Aspect Consulting
- WA Dept of Fish and Wildlife
- Methow Watershed Council
- Trout Unlimited