

Delivering water for Columbia River irrigators, communities and endangered salmon

The Columbia Basin needs water

Irrigators dependent on the Odessa aquifer east of Moses Lake have seen the aquifer drop an average of 7 feet per year for decades. In some parts of the aquifer, potato farmers have been forced to deepen their wells to more than 2,000 feet to sustain their fields.

Other examples of rapidly diminishing water supplies in the Columbia Basin include:

- Hundreds of irrigators face interruption of their water rights during years of extreme drought, such as in 2001. Without intervention, millions of dollars in crops are in jeopardy.
- Many Columbia Basin cities are in need of water to support their growing communities and economies. In the next 20 years the region expects a 20 percent growth in population, about 350,000 new basin residents.
- Fish runs in the Columbia and its tributaries have declined to less than 10 percent of historic levels, due in part to low flows in the basin

To boost water supplies in the basin, Washington State has arranged for the release of millions of gallons of stored water from Lake Roosevelt behind Grand Coulee Dam to help meet the water needs of irrigators, provide water for cities and support stream flows for endangered fish.

In partnership with The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, The Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Gov. Chris Gregoire has signed agreements to manage the Lake Roosevelt withdrawals. The Tribes are key partners because their



A center pivot irrigation system delivers water in Eastern Washington where the Lake Roosevelt agreements hold the promise of reducing farmers' reliance on the Odessa aquifer which is dropping rapidly each year.



An aerial photo shows some of the Eastern Washington farmland that will get new irrigation water from Lake Roosevelt under agreements signed with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

reservations include large portions of Lake Roosevelt, and Grand Coulee Dam is within the Colville Reservation. In addition, environmental review is under way inviting public input on the program.

Signing agreements with the Tribes, Gov. Gregoire is fulfilling key goals outlined in historic legislation enacted in 2006 “to pursue new water supplies in the Columbia Basin that benefits the state’s economy, communities and natural environment.” A provision of the bill calls for two-thirds of stored water to be made available for new out of stream uses, and one-third dedicated to in stream values. The Legislature approved funding of the agreements in the 2008 session.

Benefits to water users

Up to 132,500-acre feet of water will be available each year from Lake Roosevelt behind Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River. Water users who will benefit include:

- Irrigators of 10,000 acres of land in the Odessa sub-area. They will receive surface water and lessen their reliance on the rapidly depleting aquifer.
- As many as 379 holders of “interruptible” water rights, most of whom are irrigators. The addition of 33,000 acre-feet of water for use in dry years will create a “drought insurance” program for these water users. They will be less at risk of having their water supply cut off in drought years.
- As many as 128 municipal and industrial water right applicants located within 1 mile of the Columbia River (See list of Municipal and Industrial water right applicants) and potentially some applicants even further from the river.
- 27,500 acre feet of water will be available each year and an additional 17,000 acre feet will be available during critical drought years to increase water held instream to benefit endangered salmon and improve the health of the Columbia River.

Cities, water districts seeking water rights in the Columbia Basin

A total of 128 applicants are seeking municipal or industrial water rights within one mile of the Columbia River. Up to two-thirds of the applicants may receive water under the Lake Roosevelt agreements.

City, county and water district applicants for water right permits include:

- Alderdale Water Association
- Beverly Water District
- City of Brewster
- City of Camas
- Carrolls Water Association
- Chelan County Public Utility District 1
- Clark County PUD 1
- East Wenatchee Water District
- Hanson Harbor Homeowners Association
- Harrison-Ray Water Company
- City of Kettle Falls
- Klickitat County Port District 1
- Klickitat County PUD 1
- Laguna Vista Improvement Association
- Malaga Water District
- Martin Creek Community Association
- Maryhill Museum of Art
- WA Parks & Recreation Commission
- City of Pateros

Benefits to Washington and its citizens

- Delivering new irrigation water from Lake Roosevelt and avoiding further depletion of the Odessa aquifer will protect \$600 million a year in revenue and 7,500 jobs provided by agriculture.
- Fisheries enhancement funds and the water to be released for fish during the low flow season will support the Columbia River’s \$50 million per year fisheries economy (\$3 million commercial fishing; \$47 million recreational fishing.)
- The agreements avoid the outright purchase of a similar quantity of water from willing sellers that would severely impact some local economies to benefit others.
- At current market rates it would be cost-prohibitive for the state to acquire a similar quantity of water by purchasing water rights.

Addressing impacts, sharing benefits with the tribes

The agreements recognize that the Colville and Spokane tribes have cultural, historic, archaeological, environmental and natural resource interests on and near their reservations that have been affected by the construction of Grand Coulee Dam and operations at Lake Roosevelt. Most of the economic benefit of the reservoir has gone to parties other than the Tribes, while impacts to the Tribes have not been mitigated. In addition, the tribes are concerned about the impacts of current and future river operations and heavy metals pollution from upstream mines in Canada.

The Legislature approved funding for the tribes to be used for:

- Fisheries enhancement
- Cultural resources protection
- Recreation improvements
- Reservation water program planning
- Education and economic development
- Governmental infrastructure

- Riverwood Water Association
- Three Lakes Water District
- WA Fish & Wildlife Department
- WA Parks - Maryhill State Park
- WA State Parks & Recreation
- Walla Walla Port District
- City of Washougal

Others who may benefit:

- Municipal water right applicants proposing withdrawal sources further than one mile from the Columbia include the cities of White Salmon and Wenatchee.
- Existing permit holders like the Quad Cities could use Lake Roosevelt water to meet unfulfilled mitigation requirements.

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Under the agreements, the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Spokane Tribe of Indians will receive an annual payment of approximately \$3.75 million and \$2.25 million respectively, adjusted for inflation. The agreements do not affect either tribe's water rights or future water right claims.

Support for the agreements

The Lake Roosevelt agreements to replenish the water supply in the Columbia Basin are supported by:

- American Rivers
- Association of Washington Business
- Association of Washington Cities
- Columbia Basin Development League
- East, Quincy, and South Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts
- Northwest Food Processors Association
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Farm Bureau
- Washington State Potato Commission
- Washington Water Policy Alliance

What's next?

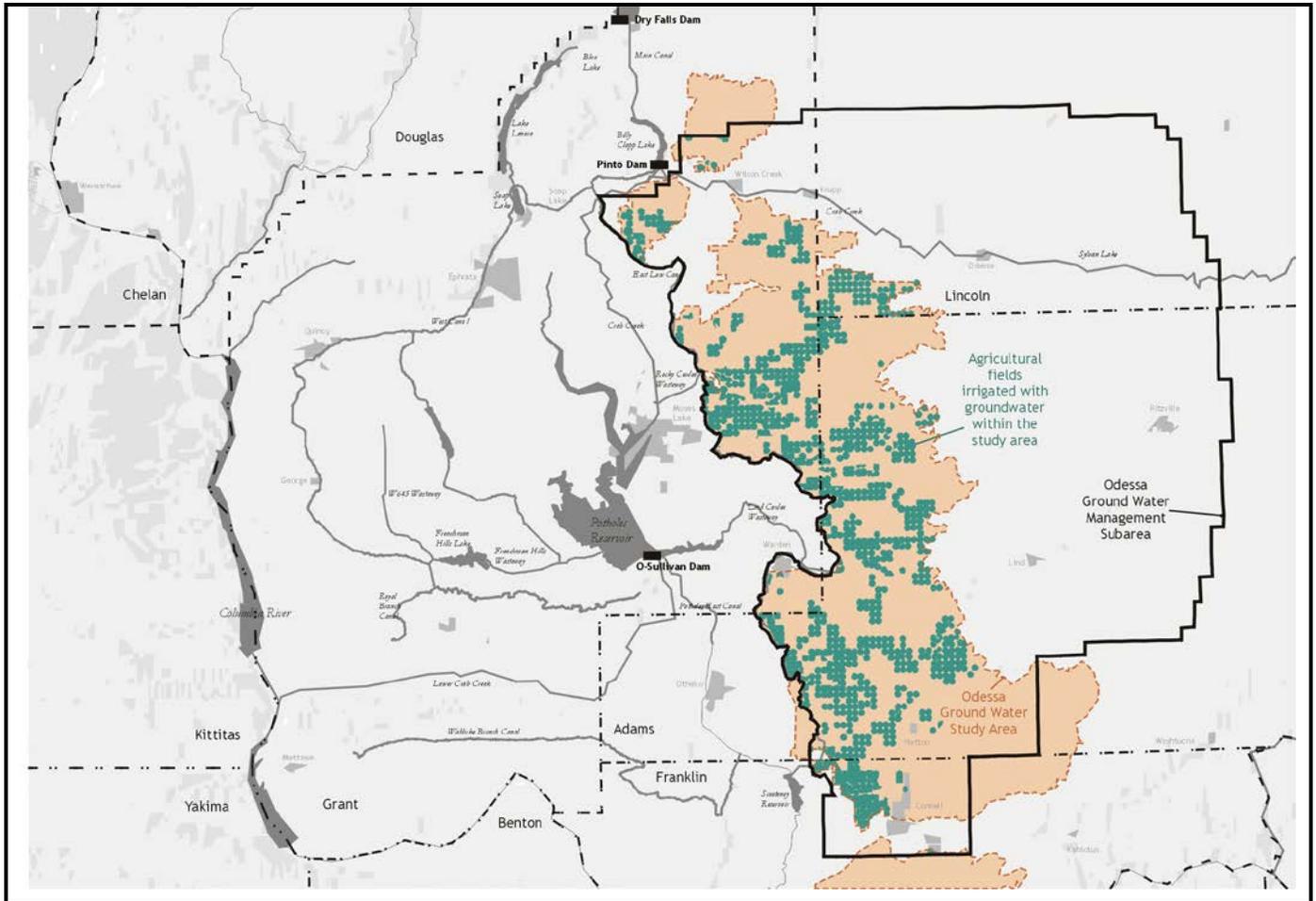
The agreements with the Colville and Spokane Tribes are a critical step toward meeting the water supply challenges in Eastern Washington. At the direction of Gov. Gregoire, the Department of Ecology is continuing to pursue other promising opportunities to improve water supply for the region including:

1. Conservation and efficiency;
2. Use of existing storage infrastructure;
3. Market-based water right transfers;
4. Aquifer storage and recovery;
5. Construction of new surface storage.

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New water for irrigation in the Columbia Basin



Irrigators of 10,000 acres who now rely on the Odessa aquifer will receive surface water under the Lake Roosevelt agreements and end their reliance on the rapidly depleting aquifer.