

**28 & 30 July 2020**

## **Watershed Adaptation**

- Whatcom County Drought Contingency Plan: Whatcom County may be the first and only county in Washington as well as Oregon and Idaho to have a drought contingency plan. They used funding from the Bureau of Reclamation to develop this drought contingency plan.
  - Background
  - Plan
  - Whatcom Conservation District has Irrigation Water Use Efficiency and Wildfire Mitigation programs – The district is focused if there is a drought or not. The Whatcom Water Alliance, is a place where all the stakeholders in the county meet and work on recognizing what is happening as far as drought.
    - They have triggers that will start different communication on water use (e.g. the catchment below a certain level). You notice when everyone has turned off their irrigation and then strong rains come in late September. Dry summers transition to heavy rainfall
- Washington: Trading water from senior water right holders to junior water right holders within a watershed (water banks)  
(<https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/press/default.aspx?prID=11230>) Yakima River Basin Integrated Plan <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Water-supply-projects-EW/Yakima-River-Basin-projects/Yakima-integrated-plan>
  - Success in water banking requires early and effective communication to help people choose to participate in banking. Not everyone can benefit, but it's still a useful tool and interest is growing in many basins and states.
- Oregon: Deschutes Groundwater Mitigation Program  
<https://www.oregon.gov/OWRD/programs/WaterRights/Permits/DeschutesGroundwaterMitigation/Pages/default.aspx>
- Idaho: Restoring the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer  
<https://idwr.idaho.gov/files/iwrb/2019/20191210-ESPA-CAMP-Progress-Report-Final.pdf>
- Beaver restoration information for East-side & West-side.
  - <https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northwest/topic/incised-stream-restoration-western-us>
  - NRCS Beaver restoration: <http://beaver.joewheaton.org/nrcs-specific-resources.html>
  - Tulalip Tribes Beaver Project: <https://nr.tulaliptribes.com/Programs/Wildlife/Beaver>
- Aquatic restoration connected to the Northwest Forest Plan aligns with natural hydrology and is process-based. High level of monitoring shows successes. These efforts are location-based and endangered species act driven, which lends to funding opportunities.

- Watershed scale planning context: combination of basin-specific metrics combined with close monitoring helps to reduce a lag time of putting drought strategies into practice.
- Washington modified state drought processes through legislation. New legislation (effective 11 June 2020) aims to allow for spending on long-term drought resiliency regardless of drought status. Goals: improving watershed conditions and these take time to establish. Project examples: fishery focused, alternate water source projects, domestic well dry-out programs (water access/jug filling support).
- Barriers to adaptation: USFS can manage habitat but not animals (i.e. beaver)
  - Example: restoring for beaver but not having the ability to reduce trapping/elimination that counteracts habitat restoration efforts. Support on the fisheries side with state fish and wildlife department, but not the wildlife side.
- Challenges: Working together across state and political boundaries across Northwest states to develop water plans. Administrating water law, especially during shortages and related to social inequity (western water law).
- Challenge: Equitability with water rights is a huge challenge. We cannot make a new system based on old and expect it to be more equitable.
  - Ideas on how to change current water system:
    - Regional lotteries (watershed by watershed), but person may not be able to use water right and senior water right people may be opposed.
    - Rotational agreements, irrigate on certain days, need everyone to work together including senior water rights people, challenge is how to incentivize.
- Challenge: Making a state plan isn't best as local planning is where things will make a difference. Exploring ways to incentivize local planning. One idea is to get state Dept. of Commerce involved to reduce tensions between fishing & tourism with irrigation. Maybe tourism tax dollars can go to support irrigators.
- We need to learn about ways to live within the situational limitations; local agreements through grassroots -local cross boundary/ownership agreements are a good approach