



Friends of Lake Kachess

I am writing as a resident of North Kittitas County to express my grave concern and opposition to the controversial Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project (YRBWEP). This proposal would transfer water from Lake Keechelus and Lake Kachess to junior water rights holders in the Yakima Basin at a cost approaching \$1 billion. It would drain 200,000 acre feet of water a year from the two lakes and spill it into the Yakima River, to be taken out by irrigators. To be clear, an acre foot of water is one acre, one foot deep in water. Now imagine one acre of water...38 miles high! Or think of it as an acre of water the height of 14 Mt. Rainiers! That is the additional amount of water that would be drained from our two lakes in Kittitas County.

The devastating impacts of such an act on our environment is hard to imagine. However the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) just released on this project acknowledges it will deplete the aquifer, endanger threatened fish species, reduce recreational opportunities for individuals and families, possibly cause wells to fail, and permanently destroy elements of a fragile ecosystem enjoyed by thousands of Washingtonians. Despite the clear risks represented by the project, the DEIS only states that it will “monitor and mitigate” damages after they occur. This is unacceptable and should be opposed by everyone who cares about protecting our environment for future generations.

But the damage to our environment is not even the worst of this controversial project. A study conducted by distinguished scientists from Washington State University and the University of Washington, at the request of the Washington State Legislature, documented it is not only an environmental disaster, it is an economic disaster. A team of scientists and economists conducted a Benefit-to-Cost analysis of the two projects that are now being considered by the Legislature. They showed conclusively that costs would far exceed benefits. In fact one project would lose \$.80 of every taxpayer dollar spent, and the second project would lose \$.54 of every taxpayer's dollar. No private enterprise would consider such a venture, and no public initiative should either. At a time when our State is facing serious challenges with regard to funding critical needs in education and infrastructure, it is unacceptable to waste taxpayer money in such a manner.

In summary, YRBWEP represents an effort by special interests in Yakima Basin to drain water from our aquifer, and even worse to drain dollars from Washington taxpayers for this environmental and economic disaster. In the strongest terms possible, I urge Tribune readers to oppose YRBWEP; neither we nor our environment can afford it.

Bill Campbell, PhD
Friends of Lake Kachess
Easton, WA