

# ***Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association Technical Memorandum***

DATE: April 24, 2008  
TO: Informal YBSA-CSRIA Black Rock/Storage Discussion Group  
FROM: Darryll Olsen, Ph.D., CSRIA Principal Consultant  
SUBJECT: Notes/Comments from Black Rock Discussion

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The following reflect my own notes/observations from the meeting yesterday on Black Rock/storage—including one agreed-upon action item for implementation.

## Historical Perspective—the “YBSA Autopsy Review” of Past Efforts:

- 1970s—the original Columbia River pipeline approach did not work—or receive adequate political support, per post 1976-77 drought conditions.
- 1980s—Bumping enlargement proposal killed by Tribe/enviros; sacred berries and “critical habitat” concerns.
- Mid-1990s—initial discussion on reservoir storage per Black Rock—concern wanes until 2001 drought.
- 2002-present—modern Black Rock reservoir storage proposal--meeting pro-rationing (70%), municipal, and fish water needs.

## Today's YBSA Objective/Observations:

- Obtain at least 70% pro-rationing for Rosa, et al., every year, including multiple low water years (along with municipal-fish water).
- An ability to meet a 60-70% pro-rationing objective in only a single, low water year period is rejected—even if the storage or water project(s):
  - Are much less costly than Black Rock.
  - Obtain a positive state b/c ratio (state-local funded project).
  - Have a much shorter development schedule than Black Rock (5-6 years versus 10-20 years).
- The only viable YBSA alternative—for the objective--is Black Rock.
- If/when built, Black Rock would meet the current state flow objectives (RCW 90.90) for mitigation water, for new Columbia River water rights (Horse Heaven Hills area).
- Use the fish flow enhancement argument to secure political support for the project.
- The YBSA time/effort is better spent convincing others to support Black Rock than to focus on other storage/operations alternatives.

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### CSRIA General Perspective:

- The state will use large storage projects as an excuse to do nothing, in the wake of more studies, need for consensus, funding, etc.
- The economic viability of the project is everything—where is the funding viability? Technical justification and political support/will?
- Why not support “doable” projects that cost at or below \$1 billion (primarily state/local /funding) and can be built within 5-6 years, and partially meet YBSA objectives?
- Enviros will oppose any large-scale reservoir project (with the exception of Canadian storage); the Tribe is an issue—may require carrot and stick approach.

### Alternatives:

- Alternatives will not meet fully the current YBSA objective—So?
- Wymer and/or Bumping Enhancement(?) or re-regulation—appears to have some support from the Tribes and at least someone in Rosa Dist.
  - The Bumping piece is a Tribal 180 degree turn-around from previous position.
- Black Rock pipeline approach—must oppose the state’s current “no net loss” policy and NOAA Fisheries flow targets.
  - Mentioned by the Tribe in their 1/2007 comments—hummmm?

### The Economics/Funding Issue—Meeting Comments:

- Is, or is not, the funding available for Black Rock (\$6-8 Billion)? What evidence?
- Politics will triumph over economics. If so, what politics? Fish or environmental-recreation benefits are disputed, if not vague?
- Where is the money coming from? Is the State really going to spend billions on irrigation infrastructure, when the dominant focus is in billions for roads/transp.?
- Does the YBSA have a written business plan for Black Rock?
- There is real regional/state concern over the dollars.

### Action Item for CSRIA July 10, 2008, Business Meeting:

- It would appear fair and reasonable—if not a necessity--for the YBSA to prepare (now) and present a formal business plan for Black Rock, dealing with:
  - Development schedule (funding, engineering, construction).
  - Funding sources and allocations (state, federal, private); and written documentation/confirmation (encouragement?) from funding sources.
  - Economic benefits and costs—state-level B/C perspective; what would pass a state funding test?
  - Quantify non-quantified economic benefits to date (such as new irrigation water rights for the Columbia River mainstem; fish existence values?).
- As part of its July 10, 2008, business meeting, the CSRIA will host the YBSA for a presentation of its (initial) business plan, and/or a revised perspective on storage alternatives--if so desired by YBSA representatives.



Filename: CSRIA-4-2008-Black Rock Discussion  
Directory: C:\Documents and Settings\CHP\Local Settings\Temporary  
Internet Files\OLK11  
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\CHP\Application  
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot  
Title: Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association  
Subject:  
Author: Darrell  
Keywords:  
Comments:  
Creation Date: 4/24/2008 8:50:00 AM  
Change Number: 13  
Last Saved On: 4/24/2008 10:07:00 AM  
Last Saved By: Darrell  
Total Editing Time: 78 Minutes  
Last Printed On: 10/7/2008 9:18:00 AM  
As of Last Complete Printing  
Number of Pages: 3  
Number of Words: 688 (approx.)  
Number of Characters: 3,923 (approx.)