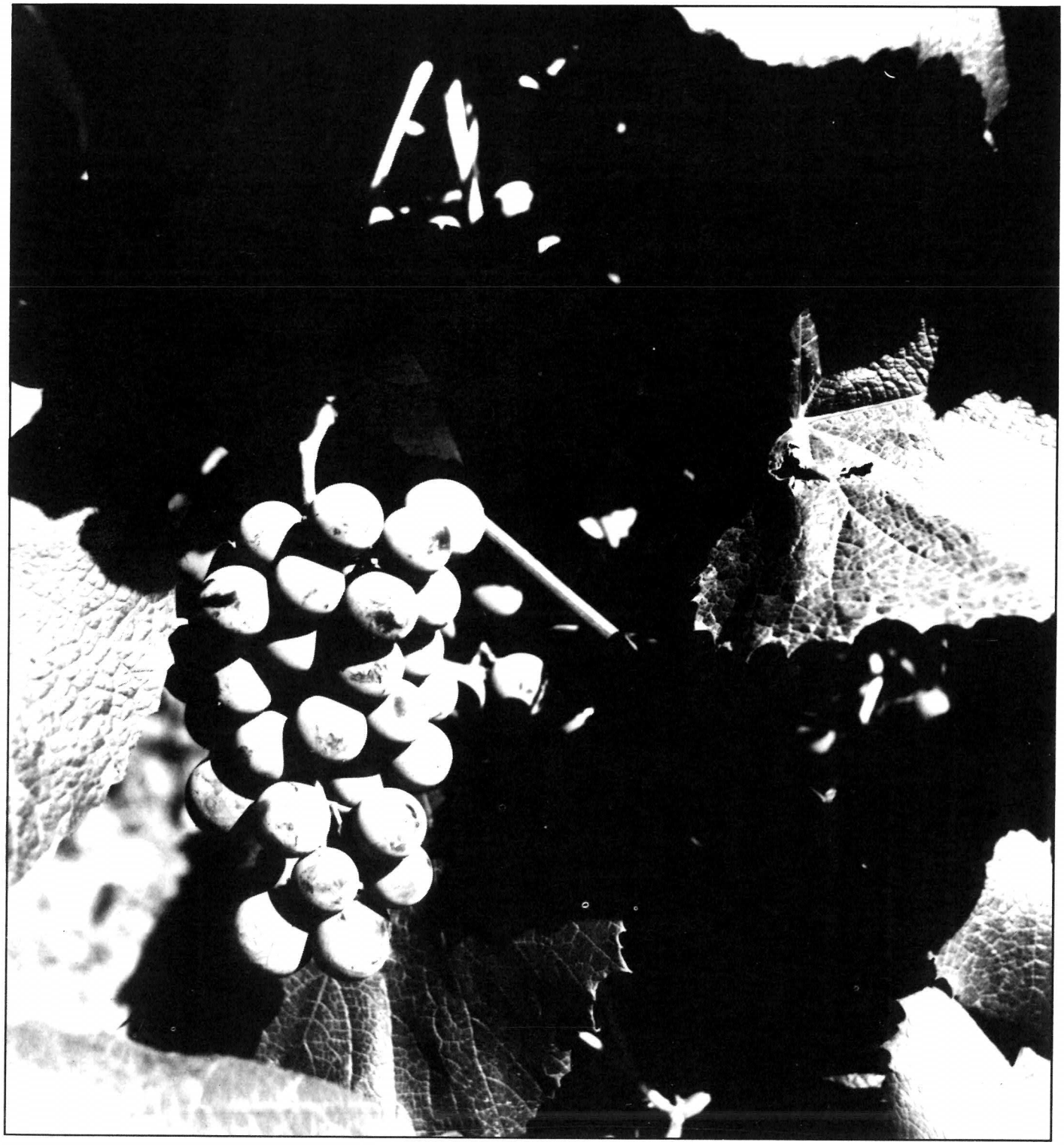
Yakima Basin
RESOURCE NEWS



Summer 1991

Yakima Basin
RESOURCE NEWS

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These publications are designed to provide a forum for natural resource-related news, issues, and events affecting the Yakima Basin and to deliver public information regarding the following programs:

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project-U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Washington State Department of Ecology

Yakima/Klickitat Production Project
Bonneville Power Administration

Yakima River Basin Water Quality Plan
Yakima Valley Conference of Govts

Executive Editor:
Randy Anderson
The Resource Company

News Editor:
Bob Tuck
Yakima Basin Environmental Consultant

RESOURCE NEWS reserves the right to edit articles for clarity and length. Comments from our readers are welcomed. Address correspondence to

Randy Anderson
The Resource Company
510 W. Mill Plain, Suite 2D
Vancouver, WA 98660
(206) 693-4555

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Cover photo courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Water Legislation Introduced

Another attempt is being made to gain Congressional approval of Yakima Basin water legislation. In late July, Rep. Sid Morrison introduced a bill that would begin an ambitious water conservation program in the basin. A similar bill (S. 1609) was introduced by Sen. Gorton in the Senate.

H.R. 3097/S. 1609 is the product of more than two years of discussion, research, examination and revision by the Yakima Basin Water Enhancement Project Policy Roundtable. The bill is delicately crafted in order to gain the support of basin irrigation districts, the Yakima Indian Nation, state of Washington and environmental groups.

Unlike the basin water legislation attempted in 1988, the major emphasis of this new legislation is on water conservation. The bill would establish a Yakima Basin Water Conservation Program for the purposes of:

- developing water conservation plans
- investigating the feasibility of specific potential water conservation measures
- implementing water conservation measures
- conducting post implementation monitoring and evaluation

Water savings resulting from conservation measures would be dedicated to improving instream flows in the Yakima River.

Improvements to the Wapato Irrigation Project are also included in the bill. Water savings resulting from these conservation elements would be available for use on a Tribal irrigation demonstration project, or for fish and wildlife protection. The Yakima Tribal Council would make all decisions pertaining to uses of the saved water.

An additional activity authorized on the Yakima Reservation is the Toppenish Creek Corridor Project. The concept of this proposal is to begin a project that addresses all resources, including fisheries, wildlife, water quality, irrigation, and cultural. Potential elements include fisheries restoration, waterfowl enhancement, water conservation, and cultural identification and protection.

In order to address instream flow problems on tributary streams, the bill also authorizes implementation of water conservation and other actions that will result in water savings or supply that can be dedicated to instream flows.

See ***Legislation****, page 4*

Legislation...*from page 3*

The legislation identifies Taneum Creek as a tributary to be reviewed for purposes of demonstrating what and how this could be accomplished.

Total funding under the proposed legislation is approximately $140 million. Provisions of the legislation require cost sharing with the state of Washington, local entities, and other sources.

The legislation is basically a water conservation bill and does not include any new storage projects, such as enlarging Bumping Lake. Instead, it seeks to begin the process of updating irrigation delivery systems and on-farm delivery and application techniques.

In light of the increasing needs for water for all purposes, the Yakima Basin could be in the forefront of water conservation, fisheries restoration, irrigation system upgrading, improved on-farm irrigation techniques, and integration of irrigation and fisheries resource needs.

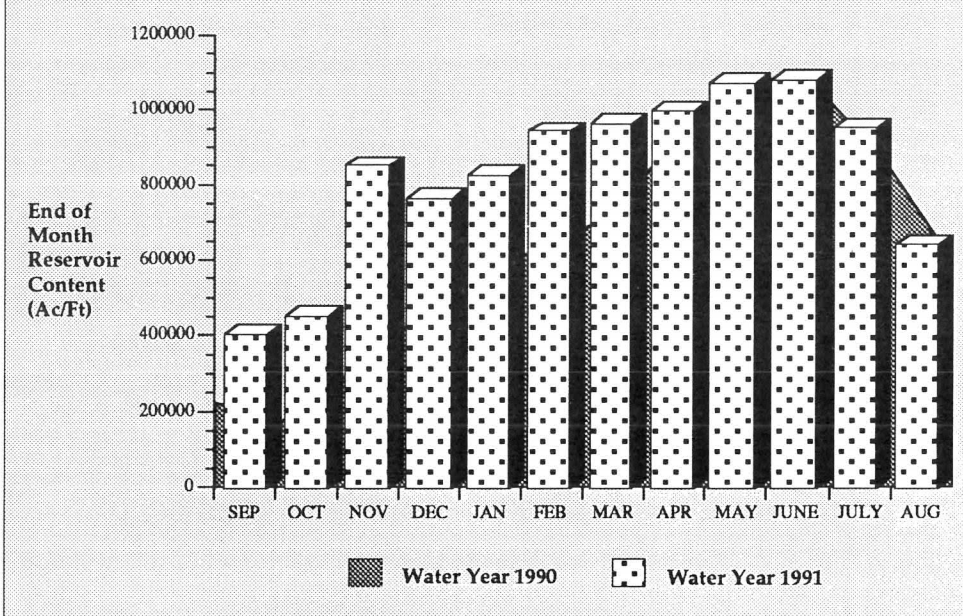
The proposed legislation does not solve all of the Yakima Basin's water problems, nor does it settle or in any way affect the on-going basin water litigation (Acquavella case). The various entities in the basin that are pressing their claims pursuant to this litigation will continue to do so, and it will continue to wind its way through the courts.

The proposed legislation, however, would be a tremendous step in the right direction for the Yakima Basin.

The legislation would begin the necessary process of water conservation and irrigation system improvements. The bill would also improve instream flows in the Yakima River, which would complement fisheries restoration activities currently in progress in the Yakima Basin.

Through these actions, the legislation would significantly assist the Yakima Basin in meeting the challenges of water supply for all purposes in the 21st century.

Yakima Basin Reservoir Content

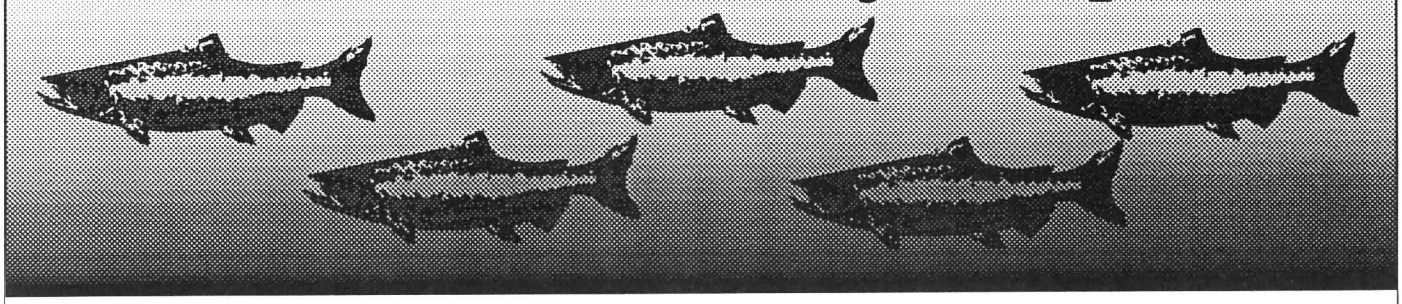


Yakima Basin irrigators received abundant water supplies during the 1991 irrigation season. Precipitation for the 1991 water year was 123 percent of normal. Peak reservoir content was 1,057,529 acre/feet on July 4.

The Yakima Project went on storage on July 7, the latest date in seven years. All irrigation districts received a full water supply.

Carry-over should be average or above average at the end of the irrigation season in October. This will provide a good starting point for the 1992 irrigation season. But, as always, water supplies for next season will largely depend on winter precipitation.

Yakima/Klickitat Project Update



EIS Scoping Comments Focus on Genetic Risks and Resident Trout

The EIS scoping process for the Yakima River Basin Fisheries Project generated more than 500 comments and questions regarding the proposed project. Approximately 200 of these comments were obtained through six public scoping meetings held in February 1991. The remaining comments were contained in 95 letters sent to Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) during the February to March scoping period.

Comment Summary

Comments received during the EIS scoping process represented a wide range of opinions regarding the proposed project. Many individuals expressed strong support for the project goals and felt that the project would succeed in rebuilding the basin's fish runs. Many commenters also identified a number of issues that need to be addressed prior to project implementation.

The two issues which received the most direct and extensive comment during the scoping process were (1) the genetic risks to the existing wild fish populations; and (2) potential impacts to the resident trout fishery above Roza Dam. Many commenters also provided extensive remarks regarding possible project alternatives, the supplementation concept, water rights and claims, straying fish, and the potential impacts to other ecological resources.

Genetic Risks. The primary concern is what impact the proposed project would have on the genetic diversity of wild fish stocks both in and outside the Yakima River Basin. Commenters outlined a wide range of genetic concerns that should be addressed in the EIS.

Impacts to Resident Trout Fishery. Many commenters indicated that the EIS should evaluate the full range of project impacts to the resident trout fishery above Roza Dam.

Several commenters felt that supplementation fish would have a negative impact on resident trout as a result of competition for food and space. Other issues of concern were genetic risk, disease transfer, and the impacts resulting from an increase in the number of salmon and steelhead anglers.

EIS Scope. Several commenters stated that a programmatic EIS for the entire Columbia River Basin should be prepared first, and then tiered down to focus on individual subbasin-specific projects. Some commenters suggested that the EIS include an analysis of the indirect and cumulative impacts of all hatchery and supplementation releases throughout the Columbia River Basin.

Other commenters indicated that the EIS needs to evaluate impacts at several levels: streams within the Yakima Basin, the Yakima Basin itself, and the Columbia Basin.

Economic Analysis. Commenters suggested the EIS address a number of economic factors, including (1) total project costs, (2) benefit-cost analysis, (3) cost-effectiveness in relation to other fishery projects in the Columbia system, and (4) local economic impacts.

EIS Process. Commenters requested information regarding the project decision-making process, particularly what factors will make the final decision if this project should continue and who will make that decision.

*See **EIS**, page 11*

ADOPT - A - STREAM

W O R K S H O P

Since 1981, the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation (AASF) has worked to (1) increase public sensitivity to the importance of the Northwest's waterways and water bodies, and (2) restore to health those that have been damaged by man or nature. The long-term goal of the Foundation is to have every Northwest stream adopted by schools, community groups, sports clubs, civic organizations and/or individuals.

"Adoption" of a stream means that the parent group will provide long-term care for the stream and establish basin-wide stream restoration and environmental education activities.

The Adopt-A-Stream Foundation's program is successful because it promotes environmental conservation and responsibility by providing a means for participants to become ACTIVELY involved in projects that directly benefit their local communities.

Through this program, participants become acutely aware of local problem areas. They also see the direct and concrete results that come from their work. The people that have become involved in stream programs have developed a sense of ownership and pride in the work that they have accomplished.

The Adopt-A-Stream Foundation is conducting a series of free workshops across Washington State. The workshop for Yakima, Kittitas and Klickitat counties is scheduled for November 2, 1991 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Ahtanum Youth Park Activities Building in Yakima.

Local experts will cover the five basic steps of adopting a stream (or drainage ditch, lake, wetland or aquifer). At these workshops, participants will look at:

- A historical perspective on local watersheds.
- What is a watershed?
- The complete process of adopting a stream from the initial investigation to becoming a streamkeeper.
- A complete menu of "How To" stream enhancement activities ranging from monitoring a stream's water quality, fish and bugs, to organizing a cleanup, raising fish, or developing watershed education projects.
- Governmental rules affecting waterways, and effecting change through politics.
- How to get your story told with the help of media experts.

The workshop will be open to everyone: teachers, fishing enthusiasts, community activists, school children, parents...anyone with an interest in adopting a stream.

For teachers and representatives of groups interested in initiating a long-term project, a follow-up field training session is scheduled for the day after the workshop. This training session is limited to 20 participants.

See Workshop, page 7

Details

What: **Adopt-A-Stream Workshop**

When: **November 2, 1991**
9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Where: **Yakima, WA**
Ahtanum Youth Park Activities Building

Fee: **None**

Who: **Workshop is open to everyone**

A follow-up Field Training Session is scheduled for November 3, 1991. This field training is limited to 20 participants. Applications may be requested on the registration form.

Workshop...from page 6

Participants in the field training session must agree to conduct a base-line watershed assessment, monitor their stream for two years, and submit their data to EPA's data base. A highlight of this training program is that the data will actually be used!

College credit is available from Eastern Washington University for individuals who complete both the Adopt-A-Stream workshop and the field training session.

This Adopt-A-Stream program is the sixth in a series of twelve workshops being held around the state.

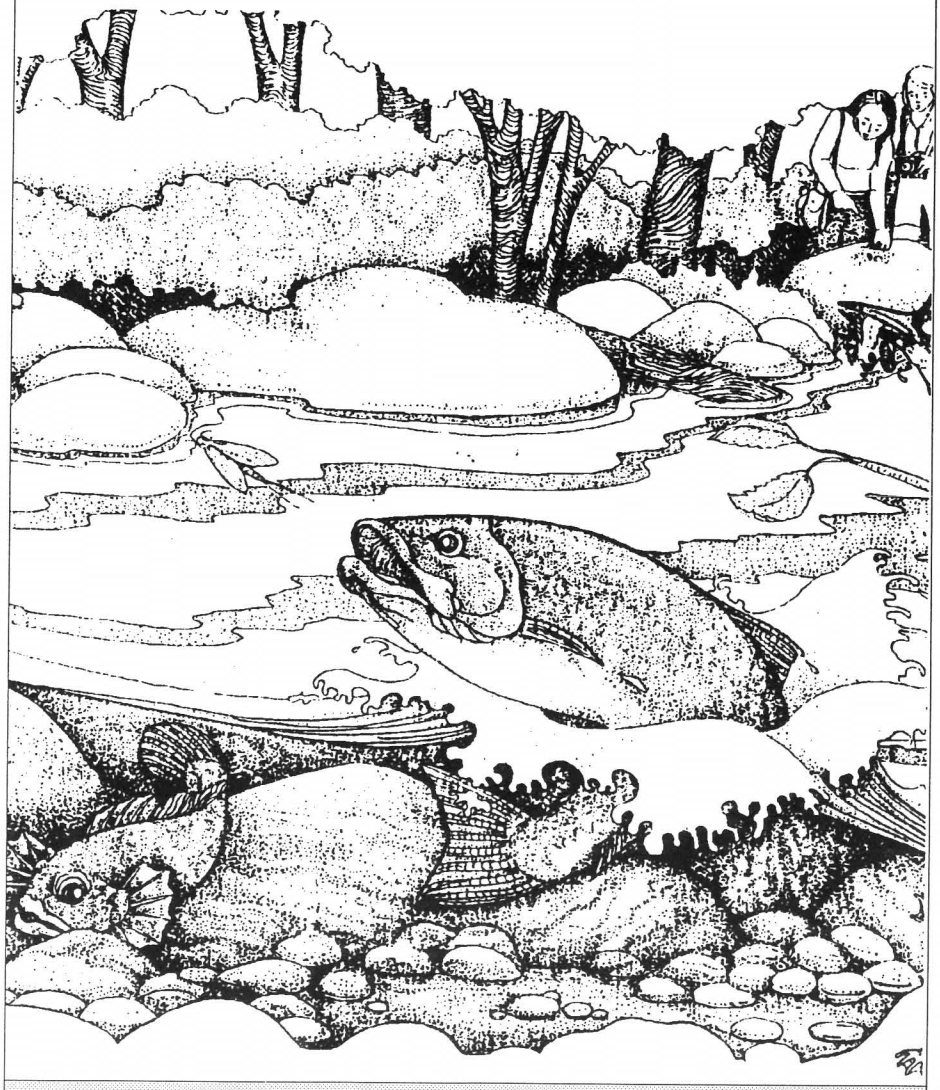
The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments is a local sponsor of the workshop. Registration fees are being covered by the Department of Ecology's Centennial Clean Water Fund, the Environmental Protection Agency, Snohomish County, and the Bullitt Foundation.

You can pre-register for the workshop and the field training by completing the attached registration form and sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to AASF Workshops, Box 5558, Everett, WA 98206.

You can also pre-register, or get additional information, by calling AASF at (206) 388-3487 or the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments at (509) 575-4372.

Pre-registration is encouraged as it will help plan for workshop supplies and refreshments.

Registration



Please register me for the Adopt-A-Stream Workshop on November 2, 1991 in Yakima, Washington

Name _____ **Phone #** _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

Would you like an application for the Field Training Session? ___ Yes ___ No

Please enclose a self-addressed envelope for confirmation and directions.
Mail to: Adopt-A-Stream Workshops, Box 5558, Everett, WA 98206

Yakima River Basin Water Quality Plan Update

USGS Reports Approved for Publication

By **Elaine Taylor**
Yakima Valley
Conference of Governments

Stuart McKenzie, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), reports that the USGS Director has approved two studies for publication: an analysis of available water quality data (through the 1985 water year), and an *E. coli* report.

These will be the first in a series of reports summarizing the data collected as part of the USGS National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) for the Yakima River Basin. Publication of both reports is anticipated in the spring of 1992.

Future USGS reports will focus on trace elements in bottom sediments (planned for publication in 1992), organics, nutrients, suspended sediments, dissolved oxygen, and water temperature.

In the three-year, intensive sampling phase of the study, scientists visited selected sites along rivers, streams, canals, and drains. At these locations, the researchers measured water flows, water temperatures, dissolved oxygen levels, and bacteria content.

Two types of sampling were used. To help define seasonal changes in water quality, information was collected monthly over the three-year period at seven stations. To get a "snapshot" of water quality conditions over a broad area, samples also were collected at more than 100 locations in one week.

Additional Testing for Pesticides and Nutrients in Progress

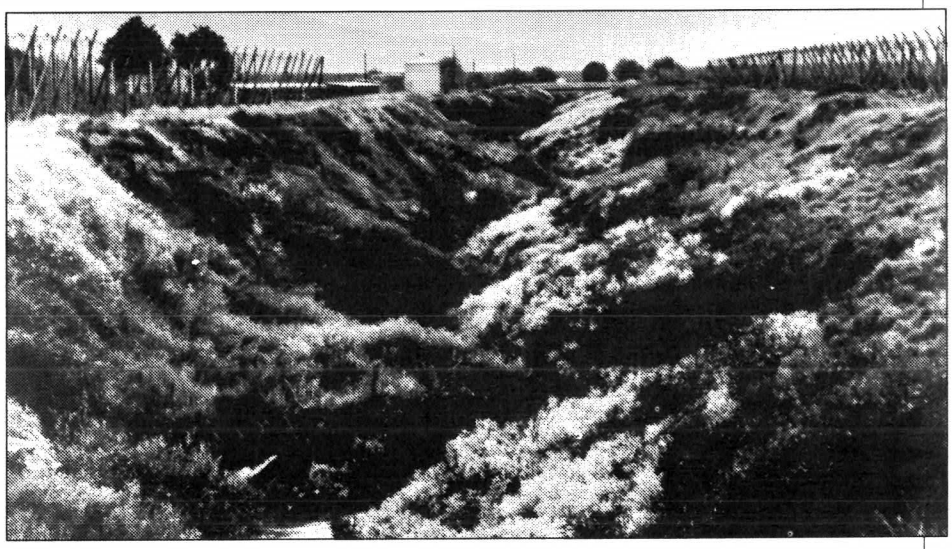
Initial sampling identified the need for additional data. The Moxee, Granger and Sulfur Creek basins are being sampled to quantify levels of suspended sediments, nutrients, and organochlorine and organophosphorus pesticides leaving the three basins.

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has provided supplemental funding to monitor for suspended sediments, nutrients, and pesticides in the Yakima River at Kiona.

BPA has also funded sampling for pesticides at Buckskin Creek and Chandler Canal--two of the sites proposed for fish production facilities as part the Yakima River Basin Fisheries Project.

The Yakima River Basin study is one of seven pilot projects that the USGS is conducting throughout the United States to test and refine assessment methods for the National Water Quality Assessment program.

The USGS initiated NAWQA studies in the Pacific Northwest in 1991. These studies include the Upper Snake River Basin, Central Columbia Plateau, and the Willamette Basin.



Yakima Herald Republic

The Moxee Basin is one area where the U.S. Geological Survery is conducting additional testing for pesticides and nutrients.

YAKIMA RIVER CANYON

BLM Expands Efforts to Meet Increasing Recreational Demands

By **Gary Yeager**
Bureau of Land Management

Washington's Yakima River Canyon (YRC) stretches nearly 24 miles from Ellensburg south to Selah. It is one of the Northwest's most unique areas. Its high canyon walls and rather slow, meandering river, combine to provide a variety of wildlife habitats and recreational activities. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the agency that administers much of this area.

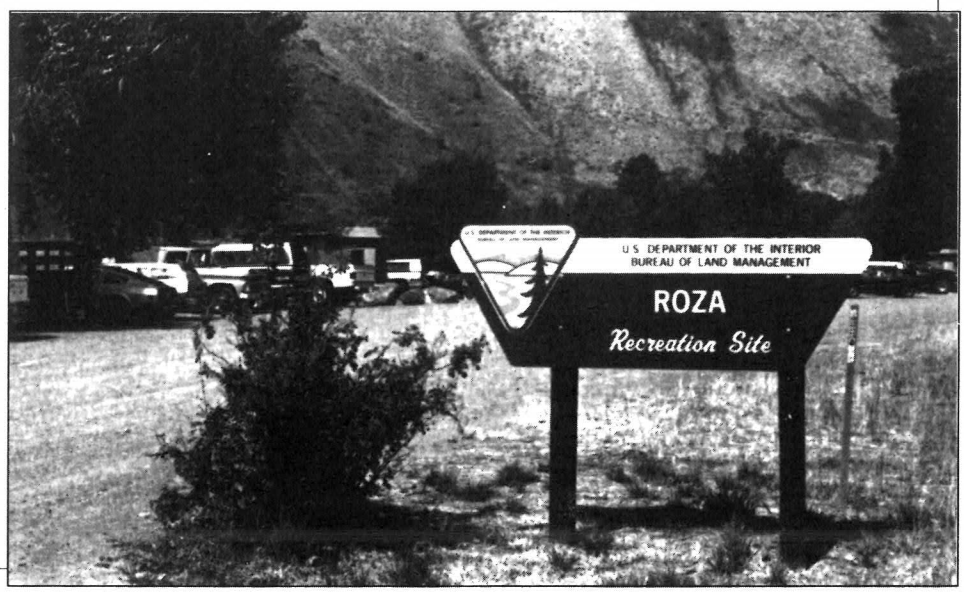
Several recent BLM studies have revealed that the Yakima River Canyon is even more unique than has been previously thought. For example, there is evidence that in prehistoric times, the Native Americans used the area from a few days to extended periods of time. Research indicated that it was also used as a travel corridor for Native Americans and fur trappers. This past summer, an archaeological field school was conducted in the YRC to study these prehistoric uses.

Wildlife habitat inventories indicate that the YRC compares favorably to the Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area in terms of density of nesting raptors and variety of species present. In addition to the raptors, over 120 other different species have also been observed utilizing the canyon at one time or another throughout the year. In addition to the avian species, bighorn sheep, mule deer, and occasional elk or bear have also been sighted in the canyon.

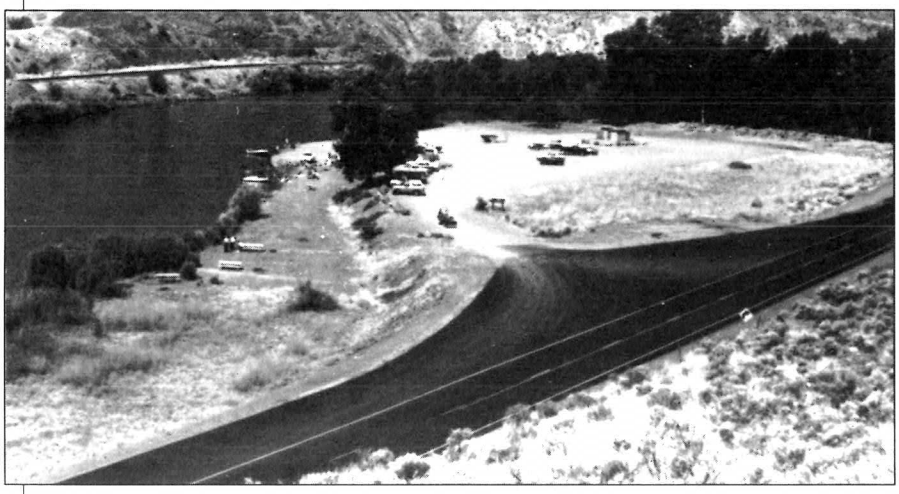
It is no secret that the YRC is an excellent place to fish, hunt and hike. In more recent years, it has also become an increasingly important recreation area as visitors from around the state come to raft, boat, sightsee, camp and picnic.

*See **River**, page 10*

Roza is one of three BLM recreation sites in the Yakima River Canyon.



River...from page 9



The Roza Recreation Site was the first to be upgraded as part of BLM's recreation plan for the Yakima River Canyon.

The BLM administers over 4,000 acres of public land in the canyon. The Washington Department of Wildlife manages much of the land on the west side of the river.

This is not to say that there are no private lands in the canyon. In fact, much of the eastern shoreline is under private ownership. With the canyon's increasing popularity, this rather complex ownership pattern has resulted in some problems with river access. Visitor use estimates indicate that over three quarters of a million people now visit the canyon each year.

Facilities provided to the general public in the canyon are rather scarce. Included are three semi-developed recreation sites located on BLM lands: Roza, Squaw Creek, and Umtanum Creek.

These recreation sites were developed many years ago to accommodate the fishing and hunting activities. However, these activities now account for only a fraction of the current recreational activity.

In 1988, after two years of work, the Bureau of Land Management completed a recreation management plan to address the changing recreational uses. Because of needs identified in the public scoping meetings, it was decided that a two-phased approach would be the best means of addressing the land issues. The first phase was to address the immediate problem of upgrading the recreation sites.

The BLM began implementing Phase 1 of this plan almost immediately. A Recreation Technician is now stationed in the canyon during the high use periods to provide visitor use information, attend to the recreation sites, and assist with any other problems that may arise. A Ranger with law enforcement authority has been added to the staff and will assist in managing the area as well.

Of the three recreation sites in the canyon, the Roza Recreation Site is the most popular and receives the greatest use. Therefore, BLM decided to upgrade this site first.

Improvements to the Roza site included construction of permanent toilet facilities, and placement of picnic tables, grills, boat mooring posts, and traffic control structures. Signs have been placed at strategic locations throughout the canyon identifying the public lands and access points. BLM has started pursuing land exchange opportunities to acquire important wildlife habitat and to improve public access to the river. Additional actions will be implemented as funding permits.

BLM intends to begin phase 2 during the next year. The intent of this second phase is to develop a more comprehensive plan that will address various aspects of river management. Because of the complex nature of visitor use and pattern of land ownership, this plan would have to consider the existing and future trends of visitor use on the river both north and south of the canyon.

"The intent of this second phase is to develop a more comprehensive plan that will address... river management."

The BLM foresees an even greater increase in visitors to the canyon in the years ahead. Therefore, BLM's role will continue to increase in both visibility and importance.

EIS...*from page 5*

Supplementation. Commenters questioned how supplementation would differ from traditional hatchery programs. Several commenters suggested that the EIS provide information on how the proposed supplementation efforts will differ from, or complement, existing research and supplementation efforts.

Suggested Alternatives. A large number of commenters suggested the EIS evaluate a full range of project alternatives, including:

- no action
- a mixed alternative consisting of hatchery outplantings only for those runs extinct, and relying on habitat improvements for other runs
- an alternative that includes additional steelhead production above Roza Dam
- a smaller-scale supplementation alternative
- non-hatchery alternatives
- full production

The non-hatchery alternatives received the greatest number of comments in this section. Commenters advocated that the EIS needs to evaluate a variety of non-hatchery measures as an alternative and/or supplement to the proposed project.

Some of the suggestions included (1) reducing predation by squawfish and other resident fish; (2) protecting and improving important fish habitat; (3) improving water quality and flow conditions; (4) improving fish migration and passage conditions; and (5) evaluating alternative harvest strategies.

Water Rights and Claims. Commenters felt that despite previous statements that the project has no intent to affect private landowners, the issue of water rights and claims remains an important project issue.

Straying Fish. Commenters felt that the problem of straying fish poses several concerns that need to be addressed. One area of concern is how straying fish could affect endangered or petitioned stocks in other basins. Another concern is that fish may stray into waters that will ultimately affect water rights.

Other Ecological Resources. Commenters expressed concern over what long term effects this project would have on the ecosystem, particularly the aquatic food base. Potential impacts to wildlife and resident fish were also identified as an important concern.

Draft EIS Implementation Plan

The comments outlined above were used for the next step in the EIS process--development of an implementation plan to guide the actual environmental analysis. The draft implementation plan has proposed that the following alternatives be addressed in the EIS:

- eight-stock supplementation
- five-stock supplementation
- three-stock supplementation
- non-supplementation alternatives
- no action

Eight-Stock Supplementation Alternative will consider the potential environmental impacts from the supplementation of all fish stocks identified in the Preliminary Design Report, plus upper Yakima River summer steelhead. A total of 8.3 million fish would be released under this alternative, including up to 500,000 juvenile steelhead above Roza Dam.

Five-Stock Supplementation Alternative will include an analysis of fewer stocks than originally proposed. It reflects concerns expressed for potential genetic and harvest impacts on the American River substock of spring chinook. This alternative also includes release of summer steelhead above Roza.

Three-Stock Supplementation Alternative would include an analysis of fall chinook, upper Yakima spring chinook, and Naches summer steelhead. These stocks have the highest priority for rebuilding in the Yakima Basin.

Non-Supplementation Alternative will include an analysis of several activities related to fisheries enhancement in the Yakima River, including (1) increased flows through increased water storage; (2) water quality improvements; (3) buying water rights/claims; (4) harvest management; (5) habitat enhancement; and (6) predator control.

The No-Action Alternative will discuss the current status of Yakima Basin salmonid populations.

Once the final implementation plan is completed, a more detailed explanation of the various alternatives will be published in a future issue of the *Yakima Basin Resource News*.

Yakima Basin
RESOURCE NEWS

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