Partnership continues to explore Scoggins Dam options

“Access to water is critical to our families, businesses, and agriculture. Improving the safety and storage capacity of Scoggins Dam will support the growing region and is especially important in a time of sustained drought in western states.”

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici

Clean Water Services (CWS) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) are moving to preliminarily address the seismically at-risk dam and how to potentially develop additional future water supplies. The partnership between the agencies, the first of its kind in the country, is developing a more detailed understanding of various options. This is called the Tualatin Basin Dam Safety and Water Supply Joint Project – or, “Tualatin Basin Joint Project” for short.

According to Tom VanderPlaat, Water Supply Project Manager for Clean Water Services, it takes time to get the information needed for sound decision-making on such a complex project. “We’ve explored the feasibility of many options and are making progress on a wide variety of studies that will help us make a decision on which options to advance,” he said. “This will enable us to confidently select among the best options to complete more detailed environmental impact studies.”

Information Inside

This newsletter provides project progress updates and other project news

Page 2 Three Options
Page 3 What is NEPA?
Back Page Anticipated Next Steps Contact Information
Studies move forward on three options

Scoggins Dam has been classified as a seismically at-risk dam. This means that the dam needs to be modified in order to reduce the hazards downstream in the event of a large earthquake.

The Tualatin Basin Joint Project is currently exploring three options: two at the location of the current dam and one downstream. Additional alternatives may be explored as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process (see next page for NEPA information).

**Options One and Two: Existing location**

Option 1 modifies the existing dam at its current location without raising the dam height. While this option does not provide increased water storage, it provides needed safety improvements to the existing dam so that it could withstand a major earthquake.

Option 2 modifies and raises the dam at its existing location, which would allow for additional water storage. Modifications to the existing dam would allow an additional 17.5 feet of water depth to Hagg Lake. This would provide an additional 21,000 acre-feet of water storage for the region. An acre-foot is the volume of one acre of surface area to a depth of one foot and equals 326,000 gallons.

**Option Three: Proposed new downstream dam**

The third engineering option currently under consideration includes a new dam downstream of the Stimson Mill where the valley is narrower. The dam in this location would stretch approximately 900 feet across the valley compared to 2,700 feet at the location of the existing dam. Because it is downstream, this dam would be able to store more water while not increasing the depth of Hagg Lake. This new concrete dam would provide up to an additional 50,000 acre-feet of storage.
What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to carefully consider the environmental, social, and economic effects of any federal action. The purpose of NEPA is to ensure that decision makers and the public are informed of the environmental and social consequences of a proposed action prior to making a decision and taking action, as well as to provide meaningful opportunity for the public to comment.

As part of NEPA, a federal agency must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) if it is proposing a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. As the lead federal agency, Reclamation has the primary responsibility for compliance with NEPA; Clean Water Services is a cooperating agency.

Clean Water Services and Reclamation have been gathering information on areas of interest and resource concerns that may be analyzed during the NEPA process. We have been working closely with local, federal, and state agencies, tribal governments, and other interested parties on identifying preliminary issues.

What can we expect?

So far, Reclamation and Clean Water Services have focused on the feasibility of three design options from an engineering perspective. The intent of the engineering feasibility study is to determine whether to advance any of the options toward final design and possible implementation.

Once we have identified an engineering preferred alternative, then we can begin the NEPA process.

The first stage of developing an EIS, called “scoping,” is anticipated to begin next year with publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. The NOI will provide a brief description of the proposed action and possible alternatives. It will also describe the scoping process, including any meetings and how the public can get involved.

In accordance with NEPA, Reclamation and Clean Water Services will host public scoping meetings where interested parties can provide input that may shape our analysis. Input will be solicited from the public regarding the scope and issues to address in the EIS, and alternatives to consider in the analysis.

Featured habitats

- We’re studying local wildlife, including habitat used by Roosevelt elk.
- Kincaid’s lupine is critical for the Fender’s blue butterfly. It is found in upland meadows near Hagg Lake.

Hagg Lake at dusk.
Coming up
As the project develops over time, here are some of the anticipated next steps:

• The NEPA process will begin in early 2020.
• Engineering feasibility design is expected to be completed in 2020.
• Permitting and property acquisition planning (if needed) will continue through approximately 2021.
• Construction may begin in 2022 and be complete in 2025 (estimated).

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