PROJECT UPDATE: Joint Project Analysis Continues

The Tualatin Basin Dam Safety and Water Supply Joint Project (TJP) partners and stakeholders met in February 2020 to review feasibility designs for the three options currently under consideration. Though all three options are technically feasible, due to the cost and complexity of the project, the project team will not select an option to move into detailed engineering design until additional information about costs and risks has been further developed.

“We have made a lot of progress in the last year and have determined all of the options are technically feasible, but there are other critical issues that need more research and work before we can identify the engineering preferred alternative,” said Tom VanderPlaat, Clean Water Services’ water supply project manager. “With a generational investment such as this, it is vital to get it right and make sure we have the best available information before moving ahead.”

Like many of the projects in this region, costs estimates have escalated over time. Current estimates range from $750 million to $1 billion for the three options. Over the next several months, the team will be developing additional information about risks, costs, and other factors. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process activities will begin once these activities have been completed. The NEPA process will evaluate all options and determine the alternative to construct.

The additional information gathered will allow the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and Clean Water Services (CWS) to make important project decisions that could drive future actions and investments. Tualatin Valley Irrigation District, Joint Water Commission, and other agencies also are involved in the planning process.
About the Tualatin Basin Dam Safety and Water Supply Joint Project

The goal of the TJP is to meet Reclamation’s responsibility to address dam safety, continue to deliver water to existing water users, and, if possible, provide additional water to meet future water quality needs for Clean Water Services.

Over the next few decades, increasing population resulting in additional discharge from CWS’ wastewater treatment plants will affect demands on water quality and supply needs in the basin. As a result, the Joint Project team is evaluating options for improving the safety of the dam as well as potentially increasing water storage capacity.

Sustained and recurring droughts in Oregon and other western states underscore the need to address not only seismic issues but also the threat of water shortages.

Milestones

Economic studies and additional technical analyses are underway as each of the options is further examined.

Looking Ahead

Safety is our number one priority. Recognizing the time it takes for a complex project like this, the project team continues to investigate ways to reduce risks in the interim. These short-term risk reduction efforts may include updating local safety plans, performing spillway enhancement work, and continuing community engagement. These actions could begin as early as fall 2020 and continue in 2021. We will ensure that community members are informed if construction or additional drilling activity is anticipated to occur in the Scoggins Dam area.

Many local residents are concerned about how this project may affect the future of their properties. Because all three options are still under review, project outcomes remain difficult to address with certainty. Residential property acquisitions, if needed, would not begin until the NEPA process concludes.

It will take additional time to more fully understand the many project variables to ensure that decisions are in the best interest of the region taxpayers and ratepayers.

The third annual BBQ is tentatively planned for Fall 2020.
Partnership Habitat Restoration Efforts Continue

More than four years of restoration efforts for the Fender’s blue butterfly and its host plant, Kincaid’s lupine, are starting to pay off. These rare species depend on open, prairie grassland habitats such as those at Hagg Lake. To complete its life cycle, the Fender’s blue butterfly requires a diversity of plant species that provide a source of nectar.

Controlling Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, and other invasive species is essential for maintaining Kincaid’s lupine patches. To ensure non-native plants are not encroaching on native prairie habitat, about 30 acres is spot-sprayed each spring and fall, and mowed in the fall. Recent activities include preparing sites for planting to create bare ground for better seed germination and establishment of additional areas to be replanted with native species.

As a result of the partnership between Reclamation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the population of the butterfly has increased, and the density of invasive weeds has been noticeably reduced. Washington County Parks and Sheriff’s Department crews, Institute for Applied Ecology, and CWS all provide vital support for these efforts.

We look forward to continuing this successful partnership in the future!

Fender’s blue butterfly (federally listed as endangered) and Kincaid’s lupine (federally listed as threatened)
Community Provides Input about Future of Recreation at Hagg Lake

Hagg Lake serves as an important regional recreational resource as one of only a few publicly accessible lakes in the greater metropolitan region and the only one fully surrounded by a public park.

In 2019, CWS initiated a recreation-visioning effort in collaboration with Washington County Parks and Reclamation. This effort evaluated existing facilities and assessed the quality of the recreation visitor experience.

Planners collected input from facility users and residents within the park, at nearby farmers markets through an online community survey and multiple focus groups, including birding enthusiasts, Northwest Steelheaders, and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. With the help of Centro Cultural, the team also facilitated focus groups with the Spanish-speaking community.

Key findings include the following:

• Water is the main attraction, whether users are in it, on it, or have a view of it,
• The natural character is highly valued, as is a variety of picnic settings,
• The park is used year-round, including non-developed areas and a popular natural surface trail,
• Improvements to increase accessibility for people with disabilities are needed, and
• Many groups expressed a strong desire for overnight camping facilities.

Approximately 800,000 people use the lake annually, and this number is increasing as the region’s population grows. The extensive input of community members can help inform the future of recreation in the park, regardless of which option moves forward.

For more information

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