

White Paper | Columbia Basin Project OGWRP Bridge Funding

as of May 9, 2018

Issue

The federal Columbia Basin Project (CBP) is authorized to irrigate more than one million acres of land in central Washington State, and currently irrigates 680,000 acres. Project development continues with the current phase transferring up to 87,700 acres off unreliable deep well water and onto a secure supply of CBP surface water via the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program (OGWRP).

One element of OGWRP is to expand the carrying capacity of East Low Canal to accommodate delivery of surface water to the potential 87,700 acres. To date, \$28 million in state grants have provided for 43 miles of canal excavation, construction of three (of seven) total siphons and associated control structures, and construction of two (of 12) bridges. The remaining 10 bridges need to be replaced to span the widened canal and complete expansion of East Low Canal.

Impacts on Stakeholders

When East Low Canal was constructed in the 1950's Reclamation built the initial bridge crossings and transferred the bridges to the Counties where they became part of the local transportation system. The Counties were then responsible for future maintenance, operation and replacement. The estimated cost of replacing the 10 bridges for completion of East Low Canal expansion is \$20 million.

Landowners contracting for CBP water supplies via OGWRP will share the funding responsibility of pump station/pipeline distribution systems that will carry water from the expanded East Low Canal. However, construction of County road bridges to cross the Canal is part of the local transportation system used by all citizens. Consequently, they should not be the sole responsibility of OGWRP landowners.

Eight of the ten bridges are in Adams County, an agricultural county considered to be a transportation hub with Interstate 90, U.S. 395, State Routes 17 and 26, Burlington Northern Santa Fe railway and Columbia Basin Railroad all running through. With less than 20,000 people, Adams County Commissioners indicated the county does not have the means to fund bridge construction of this magnitude.

The Washington State Department of Ecology Office of Columbia River, Adams and Grant Counties, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District and the Columbia Basin Development League formed a "Bridges Team" to pursue replacement funding with an initial focus on transportation grant funding.

Failure to successfully implement OGWRP threatens nearly 100,000 acres of productive, irrigated farmland as well as the drinking water supplies for nearly 200,000 people. Approximately 3,600 jobs and \$840 million in annual revenues could be lost if action is not taken.

Action Requested

Support efforts to secure U.S. Department of Transportation BUILD grant funding for 50% of bridge construction costs. The League is asking for letters of support from members of the Washington Congressional Delegation, county commissions, city councils, economic development councils, and ports to demonstrate broad-based support and need for U.S. Department of Transportation BUILD grant funding.