

GROUNDWORK LAID FOR NEW PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION

The groundwork is laid and construction plans are in progress for pump stations and pipelines to carry irrigation water from the Columbia Basin Project to those farmers--who are eligible--pumping ground water from the Odessa subarea.

The work is being done by the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) as part of the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program (OGWRP). Along with landowners, the program is a partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of Ecology's Office of Columbia (OCR), and ECBID, to reduce the depletion of the Odessa aquifer by moving 87,000 acres of irrigated agricultural lands from ground water to Columbia Basin Project water.

"Washington State has a major stake in protecting the remaining ground water for those in the area who don't have other water supply options and in maintaining existing agricultural production," said Tom Tebb, Director of Ecology's Office of Columbia.

ECBID is working on East Low Canal (ELC) expansion using a \$26,000,000 grant provided in 2013 by the state legislature and administered by Ecology. Expansion of the canal increases capacity to make water available to landowners who have ground water rights they can exchange for Columbia Basin Project water supplies.

ECBID's board of directors authorized their staff to begin the process of developing an initial pump and pipeline system that will carry water from the ELC to farmers' lands. This system is just south of where ELC crosses under I-90 and will serve 10,000 acres.

Craig Simpson, ECBID Manager said, "Construction of similar private pump and pipeline systems is usually pretty straight forward, but when you're expanding on Federal Reclamation infrastructure there are a lot of boxes to check that we don't have in a private project."

In recent weeks, the ECBID board contracted the work necessary to meet Federal requirements. Consultants are currently on the pipeline route doing a cultural resources survey and an environmental review checking for things like forgotten underground storage tanks. A local title company is preparing title reports for pipeline route easements. Electrical engineers and surge analysis engineers are working on pump station designs.

Washington State's grant is the major contributor for the water supply side of the project and ECBID will finance the water distribution side. The ECBID board also engaged a bond underwriting firm to market the tax exempt municipal revenue bonds that ECBID will issue to finance pump and pipeline construction. The bonds will be secured and repaid through water service contracts with landowners receiving the water.

"ECBID is moving very deliberately on OGWRP," said Boe Clausen, ECBID board president, "A landowner's decision to accept CBP water has major and long term ramifications. The board recognizes that wells are going dry in the area; but we need to get it right."

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Since 1964, the Columbia Basin Development League has supported the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project and its future development. We protect its water rights and educate the public on the renewable resource and multiple-purpose benefits of the project.