

EXPERTS CALL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REINVESTMENT

The largest Reclamation project in the nation, still expanding after 70 years, needs to meet the needs of those who live, work, farm, and recreate in the Columbia Basin. Reinvesting in Reclamation's infrastructure was a common theme at a Conference in Moses Lake yesterday held by the Columbia Basin Development League.

Jennifer Adam, a PhD at WSU and Water Research Center Assistant Director for the State of Washington lead off a lineup of water and irrigation experts and leaders by forecasting Columbia River Basin supply and demand. She pinpointed climate change and economic drivers as key factors.

Lorri Lee, US Bureau of Reclamation Pacific Northwest Regional Director shared the immense scale of resources needed to keep water delivery going by replacing aging infrastructure and bring water to remaining (undeveloped) acres. Lee emphasized that the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program would not be where it is today without the collaborative efforts of public and private partners. She specifically applauded the three irrigation district managers whose daily focus is to champion landowner needs.

Staff from East, South, and Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts plus Clint Wertz of the Bureau of Reclamation Ephrata Field Office shed light on the complex, multi-faceted systems to keep the Project functioning. The operations and maintenance of Project infrastructure from power plants and pump stations to canals and gates require hundreds of staff with a wide array of expertise from accountants and engineers to ditch riders and mechanics, working collectively to bring water to the Basin.

Ian Lyle, the League's Washington D.C. lobbyist discussed the role of politics and the options for federal financing of infrastructure. Lyle highlighted traditional, new, and proposed funding sources.

Tom Tebb, Department of Ecology's Office of the Columbia River Director reviewed their work of the past 10 years highlighting success of the Odessa which is a top priority. Tebb discussed the challenges of finding and keeping funding with limitations of construction timelines, all while racing against a declining Odessa Aquifer.

Senator Judy Warnick was joined by Mike Schwisow, League Government Relations Director and Nate Andreini, of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District to discuss construction, state funding and bonds, as well as federal funding and financing of the Odessa program.

Gary Chandler, Vice President of the Association of Washington Business, wrapped up the event by emphasizing the collaborative effort necessary to complete the Columbia Basin Project.

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Additional Resources:

[CBDL Conference Speaker Presentations](#)

[CBDL 2016 Conference Program](#)

[US Bureau of Reclamation – Pacific Northwest Region](#)

[US Bureau of Reclamation – Lorri Lee Bio](#)

[Office of the Columbia River](#)

[OCR Water Projects Map](#)

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.