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June 5, 2018

### DECISION MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** John Fazio, Senior Systems Analyst  
Tina Jayaweera, Senior Energy Analyst

**SUBJECT:** Response to Comments and Final Version of the Council's White Paper  
on the Power-System Value of Conserved Irrigation Diversions

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Council decision to approve response to comments and approve  
release of the final version of this white paper

#### SIGNIFICANCE:

- This work is in response to the Council's Seventh Power Plan Action item ANLYS-9, which is to conduct research to improve understanding of electric savings in water and wastewater facilities from reduction in water use.
- The added power-system value for conserved water that stays in the system may be used by the RTF and others to more fully capture the benefits of these conservation measures.

#### BUDGETARY/ECONOMIC IMPACTS:

There are no effects on the Council's budget. Analysis supporting the assessment of the power-system value of conserved water was performed by Council staff, using data from the Bonneville Power Administration's "2000 Level Modified Streamflow" report. There is no anticipated contract work to complete this task.

#### BACKGROUND:

Irrigation withdrawals in the Columbia River Basin result in a net annual reduction in streamflow volume of about 14.4 million acre-feet (Maf) at McNary of which about 8.4 Maf is due to withdrawals in the Snake River Basin. For perspective, the annual average streamflow volume for the Columbia River is about 135 Maf (as measured at

The Dalles Dam). Most irrigation withdrawals are made in late spring and summer, with a portion of withdrawn water returning to the river at downstream locations and at later dates.

The Regional Technical Forum has developed savings estimates for measures to reduce water usage for irrigation. These measures will not only save electricity but also water that in some cases will stay in the river and produce additional hydroelectric generation. The white paper describes methods used to assess the added power system benefit and provides results for various locations in the basin both in terms of gained energy and revenue.

In March 2018, the Council released the draft white paper for comment. Comments were received from two parties: Yakama Nation and Scott Levy.

### **ANALYSIS:**

For conserved water diversions that stay in the river system, each thousand acre-feet that passes through Grand Coulee and all downstream dams generates 1,026 megawatt-hours of energy over the irrigation season. The same volume of water left in the system in the upper Salmon, the Walla Walla and the Deschutes areas generates 216, 147 and 46 megawatt-hours, respectively. Average revenues gained from conserved irrigation diversions at the sites listed above are roughly \$57, \$12, \$8 and \$3 per acre-foot, respectively (based on an average electricity price of \$55 per megawatt-hour). These savings are considered to be approximate because of simplifying assumptions used in the calculations. For example, irrigation water return rates were averaged over the general area of withdrawal. A more precise estimate would involve determining the return rate for a specific irrigation withdrawal site.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

An alternative is to postpone the release of the paper and to have staff perform a more detailed analysis, focusing on specific irrigation withdrawal sites. However, this alternative would consume a significant amount of staff time and require substantial third-party support. Pursuing more detailed analysis is not anticipated to contribute the intended applications of this analysis. In staff's opinion, the information provided in this paper is sufficient to allow the RTF and others to move forward with proposed measures.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attached is the final version of the Council's paper entitled, "White Paper on the Power-System Value of Conserved Irrigation Diversions," which includes amendments stemming from comments received. Also attached are the comments received and the Council's response to those comments.

Draft Version of paper:

<https://www.nwcouncil.org/reports/draft-power-system-value-conserved-irrigation-diversions>