

# Office of Farmland Preservation

## Issue Briefing Paper

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**ISSUE:** State funding for two new water supply projects in the Tri-Cities and agreement that could lead to new state water permits.

**Source:** Walla Walla Task Force meeting

**Relationship to OFP:** Opens up productive agricultural regions and provides some assurance that water may be available during drought years.

**Description/Background:** The projects approved will:

- Allow early work on a major pump exchange project to bring water to Red Mountain and eventually double the flows in the lower Yakima River;
- Test and pilot ways to store millions of gallons of Columbia River water in underground aquifers to be reallocated when communities and fish need it the most; and
- Allow the state to issue drought permits to irrigators who face shutoff during dry water years; in return, the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association will manage water savings and efficiency programs.

The projects are funded or authorized through the state's landmark Columbia River Water Program passed in 2006.

Also, Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association (CSRIA) signed an agreement with the state Department of Ecology. The agreement will provide drought permits to irrigators in dry years, while the CSRIA works with the state on pilot projects to develop more efficient ways to use irrigation water.

**Issue for Farmland Preservation:** The Kennewick Irrigation District received \$95,000 from the state to study the feasibility of bringing new water to Red Mountain, which has been identified as a highly productive grape-growing area. This is the first installment of a \$15 million state investment the district will receive.

The KID project will test the possibility of moving KID's withdrawal point from the Yakima River to the Columbia River, supporting the lower Yakima River stream flows and fisheries and eventually increasing irrigated acreage.

The city of Kennewick received more than \$1 million to explore ways to capture water during the winter and store it in an underground aquifer, then reuse the water during the summer months. At least one-third of any stored water would be used to support stream flows for fish migration and spawning.

**Resolution:**