

July 30, 2024

Dear Water users:

**Historical overview** – The Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District's main canal was constructed 115 years ago. It's a 12 mile long, 8ft diameter open concrete flume. It took 3 years to construct, and typical summer canal flows can exceed 300cfs = 135,000gpm.

**Past failures** – There have been 4 major events impacting the canal over those 115 years that have caused substantial interruptions to water delivery. Most of which came by way of landslides and impacts from large boulders. Right now, we are trying to avoid a 5<sup>th</sup>.

Important to consider – there is very little access to the canal other than a narrow 3ft-wide footpath. Past major repairs required the use of helicopters and log yarders to complete. Equipment that would be nearly impossible to set up and operate during an active wildfire.

**Conditions** – The area is extremely unstable now. Charred, dead trees can easily topple due to wind, rain, or even minor disturbances. This could easily trigger loosened rocks on the steep hillsides to dislodge and create an even bigger problem. There is no vegetation to absorb rain and moisture. We witnessed these issues while clearing boulders from access roads over the weekend. It was concerning to see the landslides created by even the smallest rocks rolled off the roadway. We have major concerns for our crew's safety and for others working in this environment. However, we understand the importance of this critical resource we manage and the need to restore water delivery to our customers.

**Current operations** – We are taking advantage of unseasonably favorable weather conditions, with clearance from the Incident Command managing the wildfire, by accessing the area and making the needed repairs to our critical infrastructure. A 3-day complete system shutdown was implemented yesterday (7/29/24). Crews are in the canal now, removing large boulders and making structural repairs to the concrete. Alongside them are crews from BOR, who are walking the canal, dropping trees that pose immediate risks and removing fallen trees resting atop the canal.

**Managing risks** – Following this event, we will work with partners and stakeholders, to assess the area and evaluate all mitigation measures needed to help stabilize the area around the canal. This will include repairs to previously installed armoring and cover that is now damaged or compromised.

**Immediate needs** – Patience and understanding from the community. We are in uncharted waters and every decision we make comes with risks. We have a monumental task ahead, but for now, we need to weigh the risks and make good decisions, ensuring we don't exacerbate the problem and suffer yet another major loss of the canal.

Thank you again for your continued support. For additional information and pictures of maintenance activities, please visit our website <http://www.yakimatietonirrigation.com> or our Facebook page.

Sincerely,

Travis Okelberry – District Manager