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Contact: David Gerth
(509) 649-2951

Salmon to Enter Taneum Creek Watershed for First Time in More Than a Century

Nov. 12 celebration marks completion of salmon recovery project

Salmon will be able to reach 30 miles of premier habitat in Yakima River tributaries in Kittitas County next week, when crews put the finishing touches on a Taneum Creek dam removal project.

A celebration, which includes release of coho salmon, will begin with a tour of the project at 10 a.m., Nov. 12, at 3661 E. Taneum Rd., Thorp. At 11 a.m., the Kittitas Conservation Trust will release adult coho salmon into the creek, the first to freely migrate upstream into Taneum Creek in more than 120 years.

Six years in the making, the project restores unrestricted fish passage to habitat that largely has been inaccessible since the late 1800s when Bruton dam was built to divert water from Taneum Creek into irrigation ditches. Kittitas Conservation Trust sponsored the deconstruction and removal of the dam in late October and has been rebuilding the creek using a state-of-the-art technique called a roughened channel that was pioneered by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. A roughened channel is a manmade watercourse constructed from a range of streambed materials including large boulders up to 6 feet in diameter, smaller cobbles and gravel and fine sand. A roughened channel is designed to mimic a natural creek or river with pools and riffles that promote salmon spawning and rearing.

The project is the largest, single re-connection of habitat for migrating fish in Washington this year, and will improve habitat for coho salmon and steelhead. Mid-Columbia River steelhead are listed as threatened with extinction under the federal Endangered Species

Act. The project will benefit all of Taneum Creek's resident and migratory fish and aquatic species.

"This is a unique project because of the large amount of habitat being opened and the diverse groups that came together to make it a success," said David Gerth, executive director of the Kittitas Conservation Trust. "A wide variety of people found common ground for this project. Opening up this habitat in the Taneum Creek watershed will help restore salmon species in the upper Yakima River basin."

The Kittitas Conservation Trust received grants from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Department of Ecology's Water Infrastructure program, the Community Salmon Fund program, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat program. The trust used technical support from the Yakama Nation and multiple federal and state agencies, including the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Transportation, U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Department of Energy's Bonneville Power Administration. Other partners include the Washington Water Trust, Kittitas Reclamation District, Kittitas County Public Works, MRM Construction, Inc. and local irrigation water users. The roughened channel was designed by Fisheries Consultants, Inc.

The public is invited to attend the celebration. Because of limited parking, please notify KCT at kct@inlandnet.com with the number of people attending and cars. Terrain likely will be muddy, so visitors should wear appropriate shoes.

EDITORS NOTE: Photographs attached. Higher resolution versions are available.

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Taneum Creek before project



Dam deconstruction



Taneum Creek with roughened channel