

# BUILDING A FUTURE FOR WATER, WILDLIFE AND WORKING LANDS

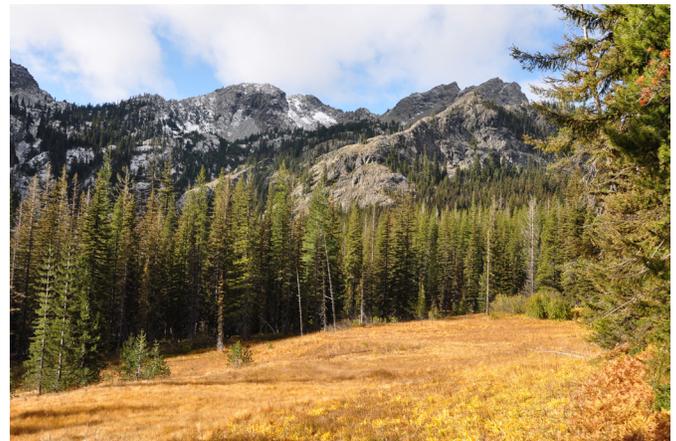
YAKIMA RIVER BASIN INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Protecting Land, Fish, and Water

The Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan is a forward-thinking plan to address current and future water needs in the basin. The Integrated Plan also improves the overall ecological integrity of the Yakima Basin by protecting and enhancing riparian and headwaters habitat, providing fish passage at reservoirs, and making targeted land acquisitions on a willing-seller basis. The successful implementation of the Integrated Plan will result in what could be the largest sockeye run in the lower 48, newly protected lands and water in the basin to ensure cold, clean water downstream, and improved wildlife habitat in vital forest and river valleys.

### **LAND: Protection of over 200,000 acres of forest and shrub steppe**

From the snowy peaks of the North Cascades to the rolling hills of sagebrush, balsamroot and lupine, the Yakima Basin is one of the most diverse and ecologically rich areas in the state. The forested headwaters of the basin are home to a wealth of wildlife, including cougar, gray wolf, wolverine, and flying squirrel. Elk and mule deer migrate across this landscape as well, feeding on the bitterbrush and browsing in the foothills during the winter, while calving in the early spring.



#### **Land: National Forest**

- Protection of about 140,000 acres of public land as national conservation and recreation areas in the Teanaway and Manastash-Taneum regions.\*
- Protection of about 21,000 acres of wilderness areas in the Teanaway and Bumping Lake regions.\*

The Teanaway area is in the upper Yakima Basin to the north of the I-90 corridor and west of Highway 97. The Wenatchee Mountains, Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and Stuart Range provide an impressive backdrop to this rich valley, home to thriving wildlife populations, including vital winter habitat for elk and one of the state's newest gray wolf packs.

The Manastash-Taneum area bridges the upper Yakima and Naches sub-basins of the Yakima Basin and lies south of the I-90 corridor. The conifer forests, basalt cliffs, talus slopes, rolling plateaus, and wildflower meadows represent the diverse ecosystems of the Manastash area. This is also prime elk country and a major wintering and calving ground for elk and mule deer.

The Bumping Lake region lies in the foothills of Mt. Rainier, surrounded by thick conifer forests and ancient old-growth. The William O. Douglas Wilderness provides a stunning backdrop to this popular recreation destination. Big game species like deer, black bear, and elk make their home here, as well as mountain goat, grouse, and northern spotted owl.

*\*Subject to congressional action.*



### **Land: Acquisitions**

#### **Teanaway**

- Voluntary acquisition of 50,000 acres of the Teanaway River Valley.

Acquisition of 46,000 acres of privately-held land in the iconic Teanaway River Valley would protect unique and critical habitat for numerous species, such as the northern spotted owl, wide ranging carnivores, and the Colockum elk herd. The middle and lower Teanaway River basin is comprised of a mixed conifer forest, including ponderosa pine and grand fir. The Teanaway River system represents some of the highest quality streams and coldwater fish spawning and rearing areas in the Yakima River Basin, and is critical to the recovery of the Yakima River steelhead run.



Protecting this area would provide significant ecosystem, water quality and quantity, and species benefits that complement the habitats and species protected by the Plum Creek Central Cascades Habitat Conservation Program, directly adjacent to the western portion of the proposed area.

#### **Wymer Reservoir Project Area (Eaton Ranch)**

- Voluntary acquisition of 15,000 acres of the Eaton Ranch.

Acquisition of a 15,000 acre working ranch in the Yakima River canyon would protect key shrub steppe land that provides sage grouse breeding grounds in immediate proximity to the proposed Wymer Reservoir. Radio-equipped greater sage grouse have been documented traveling across the site. Big horn sheep commonly move between the site and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife land and a resident group lives there year-round. Habitat on site is present for numerous other species including Townsend's ground squirrel, mule deer, black-tailed jackrabbits, sage thrasher and sparrow, and American badger. The tract is composed primarily of basalt cliffs and shrub- steppe vegetation, a critical habitat type. In addition, the Yakima Canyon riparian area provides salmon, steelhead, and resident rainbow trout habitat.



#### **Heart of the Cascades (Plum Creek Portions)**

- Voluntary acquisition of 10,000 acres of Plum Creek lands.

Strategic acquisitions of 10,000 acres of forested checkerboard parcels along the Little Naches, Taneum, and Manastash rivers will protect vital remaining mixed conifer forests and aquatic habitat in the central Cascades. The checkerboard properties play a strategic habitat connectivity role in the central Cascades landscape, supporting large ungulate herds that, in turn, support large carnivores. These parcels have been identified because of their significance to support the recovery of federally listed spotted owls and gray wolves. The project will also provide permanent protection to significant portions of the Yakima watershed headwaters that support listed aquatic species, including bull trout. Enhancing water quality and quantity are critical to the efforts to restore fish populations in the headwaters and further downstream.





### Fish & Water: Protection of 200 miles of river; Fish passage on six existing dams; and restored habitat.

From its source high in the Cascades, the Yakima River is joined by myriad streams and rivers as it makes its way through ponderosa pine forest and shrub-steppe desert to join the mighty Columbia River. The Yakima Basin is one of the state’s most diverse watersheds. Successful restoration of the watershed could produce the largest sockeye run in the lower 48 and increase overall annual salmon and steelhead returns ten-fold to roughly 300,000.



### Wild and Scenic Rivers

- Designation about 200 miles of wild and scenic river corridors.\*

Wild and scenic rivers designation provides protection for the nation’s most outstanding rivers. Many rivers in the Yakima Basin are eligible and deserving of the long-term protection and recognition afforded by the designation. Designation as a wild and scenic river ensures that the natural, cultural, and recreational values of free-flowing rivers remain intact for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Wild and scenic recommendations in the Integrated Plan include: Upper Cle Elum River, Waptus River, Cooper River, American River, Rainier Fork of American River, South Fork of the Tieton, a portion of the Teanaway River mainstem, and North, Middle and West Forks, South Fork of Indian Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, and Deep Creek. More rivers may be added to this list pending future stakeholder discussions.

### Habitat Restoration

- The Yakima Plan will build fish passage systems at six headwaters dams that have blocked salmon and steelhead from pristine, cold water spawning habitat for a century and isolated bull trout populations above the dams. Fish passage will be built at six reservoirs in the Yakima Basin, including: Clear Lake, Cle Elum, Bumping, Rimrock (Tieton), Keechelus and Kachess. Culverts and irrigation infrastructure would also be modified throughout the Yakima Basin to restore access to dozens of miles of spawning habitat.
- Restoration of key floodplains to improve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality and to reduce flood damage to local communities.
- Numerous other river restoration actions such as fencing creeks, replanting river and streamsides, and restoring meadows, wetlands and side channels.

*\*Subject to congressional action.*

#### Questions?

Please give us a call.

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