

## Yakima Basin Integrated Plan: Habitat and Agricultural Improvements

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**NARRATOR:** In Washington's Yakima River Basin, we can achieve more together than we can apart.

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**JUSTIN:** Well there's only so much water in the Yakima Basin, and everybody needs water. The fish need water, and our plants need water. So you have to start deciding, "What's a fair way to divvy it up?"

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**NARRATOR:** In the early 1900s, the Bureau of Reclamation worked with Yakima Basin farmers to develop irrigation infrastructure that would help inhabit the West. A century later, Reclamation and its partners are looking to further improve Western Water both for now, and in the future. In the state of Washington, the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan is setting the standard for a holistic and comprehensive water resource management plan that is drought-resilient and benefits multiple uses.

**TOM:** By doing kind of a larger look at how you can fix the system with a grander vision, you can leverage benefits on a variety of different interests.

**WENDY:** In terms of the Integrated Plan, it's the greater good of the Basin, and we need to manage it for all resources including fish and wildlife, and irrigation.

**JUSTIN:** I think there's an overall team vibe going on, and that's one of the great things with the Integrated Plan...

**NARRATOR:** So what is the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan? It's the third phase of the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project, or YRBWEP. After devastating drought in the 1970s, Congress authorized the YRBWEP Feasibility Study to find solutions to the basin's water supply problems. In 1984, Congress authorized YRBWEP Phase 1 to build Fish Screens and Ladders at diversion dams. YRBWEP Phase 2 was authorized in 1994 to conserve water for agriculture and instream flows. YRBWEP Phase 3 is known as the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, which itself has 3 phases that will span 30 years. We are currently in the Initial Development Phase. This is a

watershed-scale, balanced approach to sustainable water supply for fish, families, farms, and forests in a basin with shifting hydrologic conditions. The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan has 7 key elements that represent unique stakeholder interests, all of which are moving forward together for the overall health of the basin.

**WENDY:** The Integrated Plan, having the seven elements that it does, offers a synergy that would be unlikely without all of the elements working together. We talk about implementing the integrated plan in a balanced package, and that balanced package is projects associated with each element, are moving forward together.

**NARRATOR:** The Habitat Enhancement and Agricultural Conservation elements include numerous projects that can be implemented quickly while large infrastructure projects are in development.

**TOM:** The habitat projects, the reason there's many of them is they're less costly, so you can do more of them.

**DALE:** They're projects that can be implemented quickly, but their benefits persist in perpetuity, hopefully.

**NARRATOR:** Agricultural conservation projects range from canal piping and lining to sprinkler conversions and irrigation system improvements. Habitat enhancements are made such as rock dam removals and tributary flow supplementation. Both of these elements work hand in hand with each other to improve overall basin health.

**WENDY:** Ag conservation and habitat enhancement are two separate elements of the Integrated Plan, but ag conservation provides water savings that can be used by the habitat enhancement projects. And so they do complement each other. Prior to the Integrated Plan, we could speak to about two or three habitat projects that Reclamation worked on from 1994 to about 2009, and since 2013, there have been over 40 projects that the State Department of Ecology has funded and worked with partners to build. That's an amazing achievement to have 40 projects being worked on by this group of folks, and we're achieving an amazing amount of water conservation and habitat enhancement.

**JUSTIN:** We want to make the best use of our resources. If there are ways to re-plumb the irrigation system to benefit the irrigation project and fish at the same time, we're going to do those. And that is part of the Integrated Plan and part of the bigger picture of what the Yakama Nation's trying to do.

**TOM:** We have put a lot of money on the ground at the state level, working with the Bureau of Reclamation in partnership and with our other stakeholders in partnership, particularly the Yakima Nation, working on improving habitat, fish passage, and a lot of things that we can do right now. For example, the Manastash project had all of the above.

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**WENDY:** The Manastash Creek historically has gone dry for a period of time in late August. And with that, the steelhead couldn't migrate upstream, for the spawning and rearing that they needed to do.

**NARRATOR:** In the very first project of the Integrated Plan, Reclamation piped two irrigation delivery canals, or laterals, in the Kittitas Reclamation District.

**URBAN:** We're at the site of the first construction project to break ground as part of the 30 year, 3.8 billion dollar Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan. The Yakima Basin will provide significant benefits to the entire Columbia River System. Those benefits will come from scores of projects like the one here in the Manastash.

[construction machinery]

**WENDY:** The water savings from those two piping projects were then left in the Manastash Creek. There's been a series of projects associated with Manastash all aimed at ultimately getting steelhead, which is a listed species in the Basin, up past a certain diversion point that has been blocked for about 100 years. And we have the first steelhead go up this 30-mile reach of the river up into the upper watershed. But it took all these smaller projects to get done, lining and piping projects to get done, along with Reed Diversion removal. So it's amazing how much time and effort it takes to actually get something like that achieved. But we were able to do it in a shorter amount of time because everybody's focused and working on the same team to get those projects done.

[water rushing]

**DALE:** And also KRD's willingness to use the canal to convey additional water, we've got flow throughout the year now when we haven't had it for well over 100 years. It's terrific. So to the extent we can get these fish back to these tributary habitats and allow them to thrive and flourish there, the hurdles we need to overcome on the main stem are less significant. They're just terrific nursery areas if we can keep them watered up.

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**NARRATOR:** These numerous Habitat Enhancement and Agricultural Conservation projects are shining examples of the successful collaboration, cooperation, and synergy that the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan has made possible. Over the 30 year \$3.8 billion dollar plan, diverse stakeholders can work together to meet water needs for multiple uses.

**TOM:** We're really excited about the fact this plan has brought diverse, often conflicting, interest together around the same table working towards a common goal.

**WENDY:** Folks feel empowered to do these projects, and they have resources now that they didn't have. To be able to continue on with this work, we're going to need to continue with resources and the collaboration and the partnership.

**DALE:** Oh, it's challenging, but I think we've got a convergence of opportunity, attitude and resolve, and I think we're going to get this stuff done.

[water rushing]