



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Walla Walla District

# Walla Walla River Basin Feasibility Study Fact Sheet



Confederated Tribes  
of the Umatilla  
Indian Reservation

## **STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Walla Walla River Basin Feasibility Study (feasibility study) is to investigate the feasibility of conducting aquatic ecosystem restoration within the Walla Walla River Basin in Oregon and Washington. The feasibility study will concentrate on restoration of fish habitat quality as its main objective, with emphasis placed upon options for increasing instream flows.

A feasibility report/environmental impact statement (FR/EIS) will document the results of the feasibility study and evaluate the environmental effects of alternative actions to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

## **BACKGROUND**

This study follows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps') completion of the Walla Walla River Watershed Reconnaissance Report (report), October 1997. The report identified water resource problems in the basin and potential opportunities to resolve those issues. The report concluded that habitat for salmonids listed under the Endangered Species Act, as well as nonlisted species/stocks, could benefit from ecosystem restoration. Increasing instream flows was identified by the report as a primary opportunity to address ecosystem restoration, pending identification of a local sponsor to share in the cost of conducting the study.

On May 10, 2002, the Corps and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) signed a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement. The agreement provides for the Corps and CTUIR to share equally in the cost of conducting the feasibility study and preparing an FR/EIS, with primary emphasis upon increasing instream flows in the Walla Walla River Basin. While the primary focus for ecosystem restoration is upon increasing flows, the study will concurrently seek to identify other habitat improvement measures, which will be identified in the FR/EIS. The Corps and CTUIR are aware of various habitat improvement efforts underway in the basin and will not seek to evaluate those efforts in this study. However, the Corps will consider habitat improvement measures not currently undertaken in the basin for possible expansion of the scope of the current study with CTUIR or for development of future cost-share projects with CTUIR or others.

The following have been identified for initial consideration during the feasibility study as possible measures to increase instream flows. These measures will evolve and new measures may be identified as the study progresses. Related actions would include analysis of effects of measures upon groundwater and analysis of desired flows for targeted reaches. The project ultimately proposed for implementation in future years may involve a combination of these and/or other measures:

- **Water Exchange: Piping Water from Another Drainage** – This measure would take water from the Columbia River and transport it to existing irrigation delivery systems. In exchange, less water would be withdrawn from groundwater and surface water for use in the irrigation delivery systems. As a result, more water would remain instream.
- **Off-Channel Storage Reservoir(s)** – This potential measure would involve construction of an off-channel water storage reservoir(s) that would store water when it is available and release it during periods of low flow.
- **Irrigation Efficiency** – Potential measures include improved canal lining systems and consolidation of existing irrigation delivery systems to reduce seepage losses and use of more efficient irrigation application methods. Water saved through this effort would become instream flow.
- **Water Rights** - This measure would include possible acquisition of existing surface water and groundwater rights issued by the states of Oregon and Washington or transfer from willing sellers into trust for environmental purposes. As a result, more water would remain instream.
- **Channel Modification** – Potential modifications of the Walla Walla River and other basin river channels may also be studied if the benefits of increased flow are not realized through the measures identified above or through other measures identified during the study. Such studies may include efforts to reduce seepage and the resulting effects on groundwater rejuvenation and/or recharge.

**STUDY MILESTONES**

Scoping Period.....	Fall 2002
Completed Draft FR/EIS.....	Spring 2004
Public Review of Draft FR/EIS .....	Summer 2004
Completed Preliminary Final FR/EIS.....	Fall 2004
Public Review of Preliminary Final FR/EIS.....	Winter 2004
Record of Decision .....	Spring 2005

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