



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Walla Walla District

FACT SHEET: YAKIMA DELTA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION FEASIBILITY STUDY *(cost-share partnership)*

RICHLAND • Washington

Project Objective:

At the request of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Corps has entered into a partnership with them to undertake a Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Section 1135 ecosystem restoration project at the Yakima River Delta in Richland, Washington. The purpose of the proposed action is to restore ecosystem function and aquatic habitat for fish (especially salmon) and other wildlife. This project would restore aquatic ecosystem structure, function, and dynamic processes degraded or lost following the construction and operation of McNary Lock and Dam.

The Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 authorizes the Corps to establish a cost-share partnership with a non-federal sponsor to study and (if warranted) construct modifications to existing Corps projects, or areas degraded by Corps projects, to restore aquatic habitats for fish and wildlife. The federal contribution limit is \$10 million under this authority.



The Corps is requesting public comments regarding the scope of the Yakima Delta Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study. The Corps and WDFW propose to evaluate alternatives and recommend a plan to restore the aquatic ecosystem of the Yakima River Delta. The Corps is interested in your opinion on actions and environmental effects that should be considered. Your input is an important part of the National Environmental Policy Act Process.

Background: Prior to the construction of McNary Dam and the federal levees in the 1950s, the Yakima River flowed freely into the Columbia River. The flow regime and seasonal intermixing helped to regulate temperature fluctuations, contributing to

suitable fish rearing and migration habitat and a healthy ecosystem.

This habitat, which supports birds, juvenile salmon, and other aquatic wildlife species, has been significantly degraded. The McNary Dam Reservoir now inundates the lower two miles of the Yakima River, changing shoreline vegetation and aquatic habitat. This also changes, the hydraulic conditions within the Delta, creating barriers to juvenile and adult salmon migration in the Yakima River.

This inundation turned the southern side of the Delta into a backwater that is now habitat for predatory fish and invasive plants. This ponding has reduced the ability of the Yakima River to carve and maintain shallow side channels, and retains sediment that provides ideal habitat for non-native Russian olive trees, overgrown cattails and non-native reeds.

The Corps and the WDFW will examine potential cost-effective actions to improve the habitat for aquatic fish and wildlife resources in the Yakima Delta. These actions may include channel modifications, developing shallow water habitat, removing invasive riparian plants and replacing them with native species, eliminating fish predator habitat and removing barriers to fish passage.

Project Process: As part of the Planning process, the Corps is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. To start that process, a public scoping comment period will begin on November 20th and conclude on December 19th, 2019. There will also be a public open house meeting on Wednesday, November 20 at the Richland Community Center, located at 500 Amon Park Drive in Richland, Washington from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. The comment period is the public's opportunity to provide initial input to WDFW and the Corps on the scope of this project. If the Study results in a recommended restoration plan, there will also be an opportunity for the public and other interested parties to comment on the EA.

Scoping comments are due December 19, 2019 and may be submitted three ways:

- Online at: <http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/EnvironmentalComplianceComment/>
- E-mail: NEPANWW@usace.army.mil with "Yakima Delta Ecosystem Restoration" in the subject line.
- Regular Mail:
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District
Attention: CENWW-PPL-C, Yakima Delta CAP 1135
201 N. 3rd Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Information and comments submitted will become part of the public record.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – WALLA WALLA DISTRICT

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