

Title: The Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program

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Abstract

Program

The Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP, program) is a multi-party effort to restore fish passage to Yakima River tributaries that historically supported salmon and to improve habitat in areas where fish access is restored.

The idea for YTAHP began in 2000 as a way to extend Yakima Basin screening activities from the mainstem to the tributaries. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has funded the program since 2001, with additional funding for individual projects coming from BPA and other sources, including the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Key objectives include diversion screening, providing for fish passage at man-made barriers (dams, culverts), and to provide assistance to landowners interested in water quality, water conservation and stream-side habitat.

Approach

YTAHP takes advantage of local, state, tribal and federal parties with interest and experience in fish enhancement activities, water management and/or farm stewardship. A *Strategic Plan* was developed to guide program implementation. Prioritization of barriers is needed to target spending and focus on benefits. For projects, YTAHP addresses regulatory compliance, engineering and technical support.

The program has three main steps: 1. Tributary surveys to identify fish passage barriers; 2. Tributary Teams to evaluate stream survey data and create prioritized lists of tributary projects; and 3. Implementation of projects as funding allows. The Tributary Teams will include landowners, water right holders, conservation district and state fish and wildlife representatives, irrigation districts and other interested parties and will work locally to effect positive change. Several early action projects have already been completed.

The YTHAP Core Team oversees the program while the Tributary Teams will perform the bulk of the design and implementation of projects. A technical workgroup assists in evaluating designs and ensuring projects address environmental and technical issues.

Core Team Participants

- » So. Central WA Resource Conservation & Development Council
- » WA Department of Fish & Wildlife, including the Yakima Screen Shop
- » North Yakima Conservation District
- » Kittitas County Conservation District
- » Kittitas County Water Purveyors
- » Yakima Nation Safe Access Program