



COLUMBIA BASIN WATER TRANSACTIONS PROGRAM

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Columbia River

2002-013-01 - WATER ENTITY - CBWTP REPORT COVERS WORK PERFORMED UNDER BPA CONTRACT # 91074 REPORT WAS COMPLETED UNDER BPA CONTRACT # 93260

2008-104-00 - UPPER COLUMBIA LAND & WATER ACQUISITION REPORT COVERS WORK PERFORMED UNDER BPA CONTRACT # 91172 REPORT WAS COMPLETED UNDER BPA CONTRACT # 93298

2008-206-00 - INSTREAM FLOW RESTORATION REPORT COVERS WORK PERFORMED UNDER BPA CONTRACT # 73982 REL 169 REPORT WAS COMPLETED UNDER BPA CONTRACT # 73982 REL 195

REPORT DATE RANGE: 10/1/2022 – 9/30/2023

A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
WITH BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION,
AND NORTHWEST POWER AND CONSERVATION COUNCIL



Pole Creek in Idaho



The **Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program** (CBWTP) was developed in 2002 to address chronically diminished stream flows in tributaries of the Columbia River.

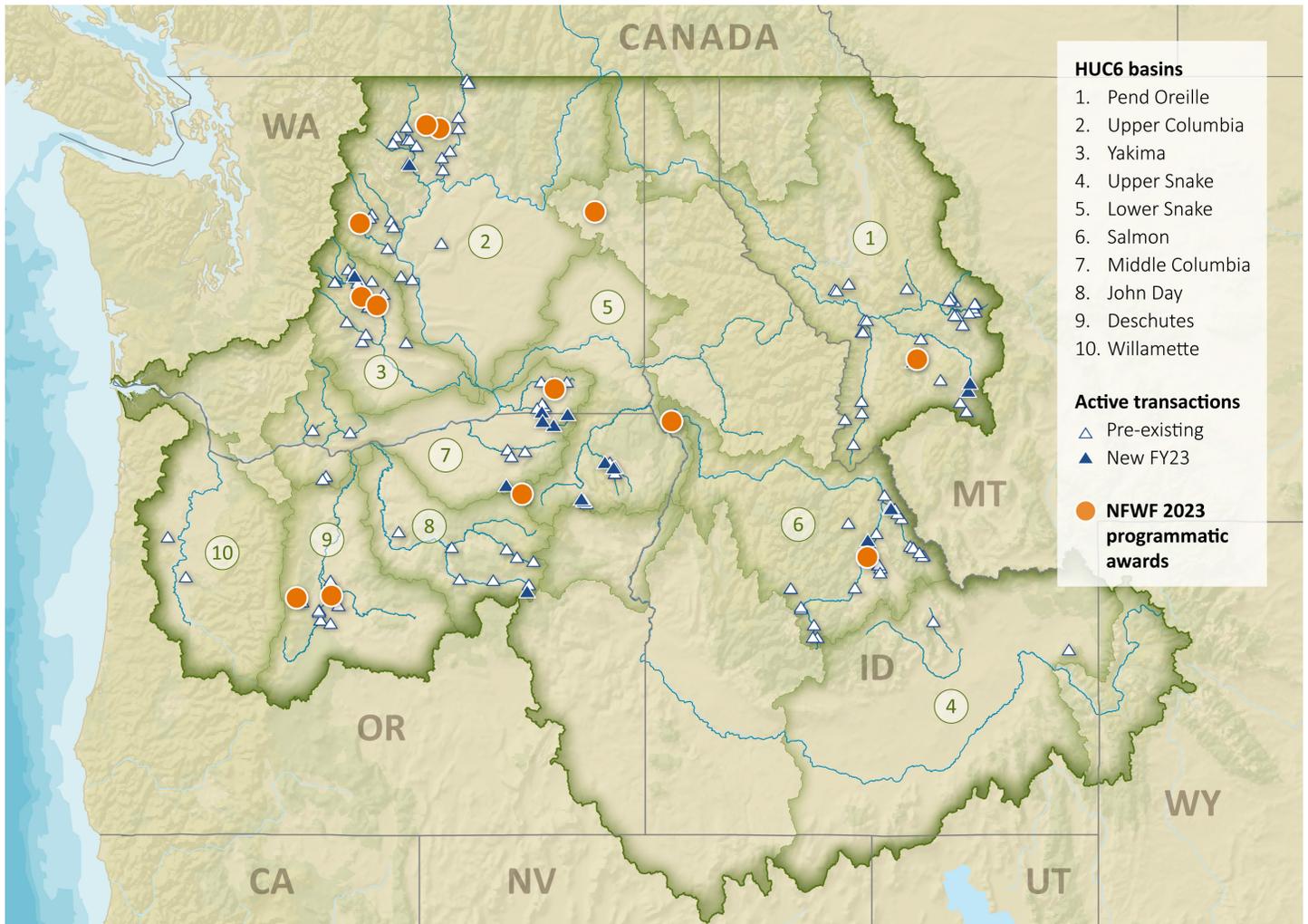
The native fish species of the Columbia River Basin rely on the healthy flow of rivers and streams for their survival, resilience and persistence. But stretches of many streams and rivers in the Basin run low — and sometimes dry — in summer and early fall because of legal water withdrawals. Inadequate stream flow, often the result of competing out-of-stream water uses like crop irrigation, are a key factor limiting the productivity of Pacific salmon, steelhead trout and a host of resident fish species.

To enhance stream flow, CBWTP works through locally based entities to acquire water rights voluntarily from willing landowners. Using temporary and permanent water rights acquisitions and other incentive-based approaches, CBWTP supports grantees in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington to assist landowners who wish to restore flows to key fish habitat. Voluntary, market-based water transactions provide an effective and fair way to balance out-of-stream water uses with the need to maintain stream flow for imperiled fish.

From 2002 to 2023, the CBWTP has completed 698 water right transactions, which have restored approximately 2.73 million acre-feet of water to key tributary streams in the Columbia Basin. This is enough water to provide for the annual domestic use of 29.7 million Americans.

Funding for this program is provided by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) in cooperation with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and through coordination with Columbia Basin Fish Accord partners: the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.





THE COLUMBIA BASIN

Conserving fresh water for people *and* fish

The Columbia Basin covers 258,000 square miles, making it one of the largest river basins in the United States. The basin includes public and private lands, multiple mountain ranges, arid valleys, forests and agricultural lands. The mainstem of the Columbia River rises in British Columbia, Canada, winds its way through Washington State, and forms a significant portion of the border with Oregon before meeting the Pacific Ocean near Astoria, Oregon. This region contains abundant rivers and streams that deliver water to the Columbia River and its tributaries to provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, renewable energy, drinking water, irrigation for agricultural production and scenery that makes the area a diverse and vibrant ecosystem.

The Columbia Basin is home to several threatened and endangered fish species that depend on the freshwater system to migrate and fulfill their life cycle. However, many of these streams are dewatered due to over-appropriation, climate

change and drought. A large part of the Columbia Basin receives very little precipitation. In these arid parts of the basin, diverting water for on-farm use is often a direct tradeoff with freshwater ecosystem health. The basin's rivers and streams provide habitat for myriad fish and wildlife species, including some of the region's last remaining wild salmon runs. Healthy fish populations are vital to biodiversity and local economies, serve as a food source for people who rely on subsistence fishing, and are part of the cultural identity and spiritual well-being of Native Nations of the Columbia River Basin, who consider salmon a sacred first food.

In 2002, BPA established a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in cooperation with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, to launch CBWTP to restore flows to key fish habitats through voluntary, market-based temporary and permanent water rights acquisitions and other incentive-based approaches.

Note: Of all CBWTP transactions completed over the last 22 years that are currently active in streams (228), 19 were newly funded in fiscal year 2023.



Chinook salmon



Columbia River Gorge



Steelhead trout in the Salmon River, Idaho

106

Streams with active
CBWTP transactions
from 2002-2023

19

New transactions
in 2023

1,033

Cubic feet per second
of streamflows
protected in 2023

145,263

Acre-feet **cumulative**
protected for the
life of transactions
funded in 2023

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Program refinement and growth

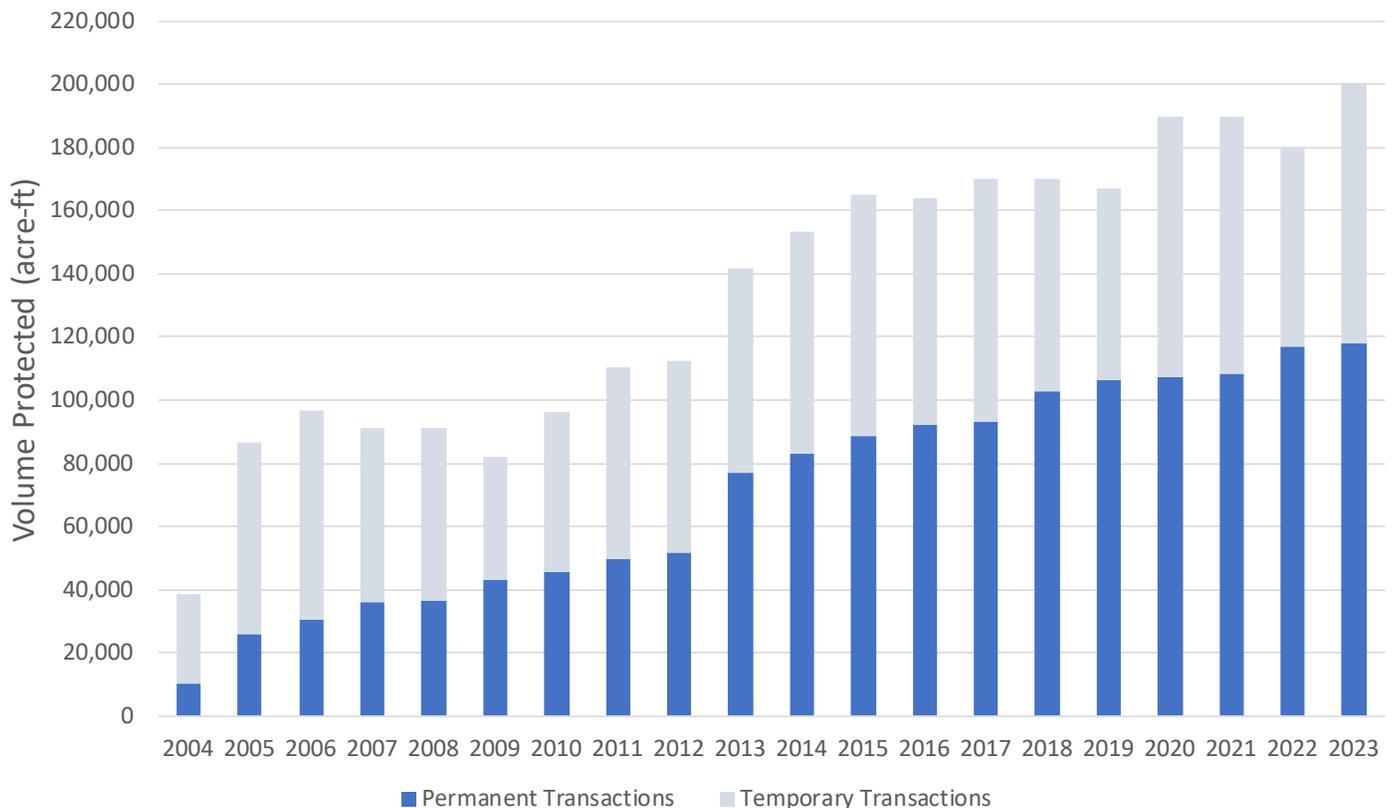
CBWTP has grown steadily over the years and has become the largest and most renowned water transactions program in the country. The program utilizes a competitive grant process to provide support for transaction development, implementation and monitoring to ensure maximum benefit and compliance of transactions throughout their life cycle. The program supports a network of Qualified Local Entities (QLEs) that includes nonprofits, state agencies, municipalities and Tribes who work to build trust and relationships with water users to develop win-win water solutions. CBWTP works with landowners to dedicate water instream and strives toward permanent instream flow dedication. Restoring instream flows is a key strategy to recover watersheds and provide resilience to aquatic ecosystems.

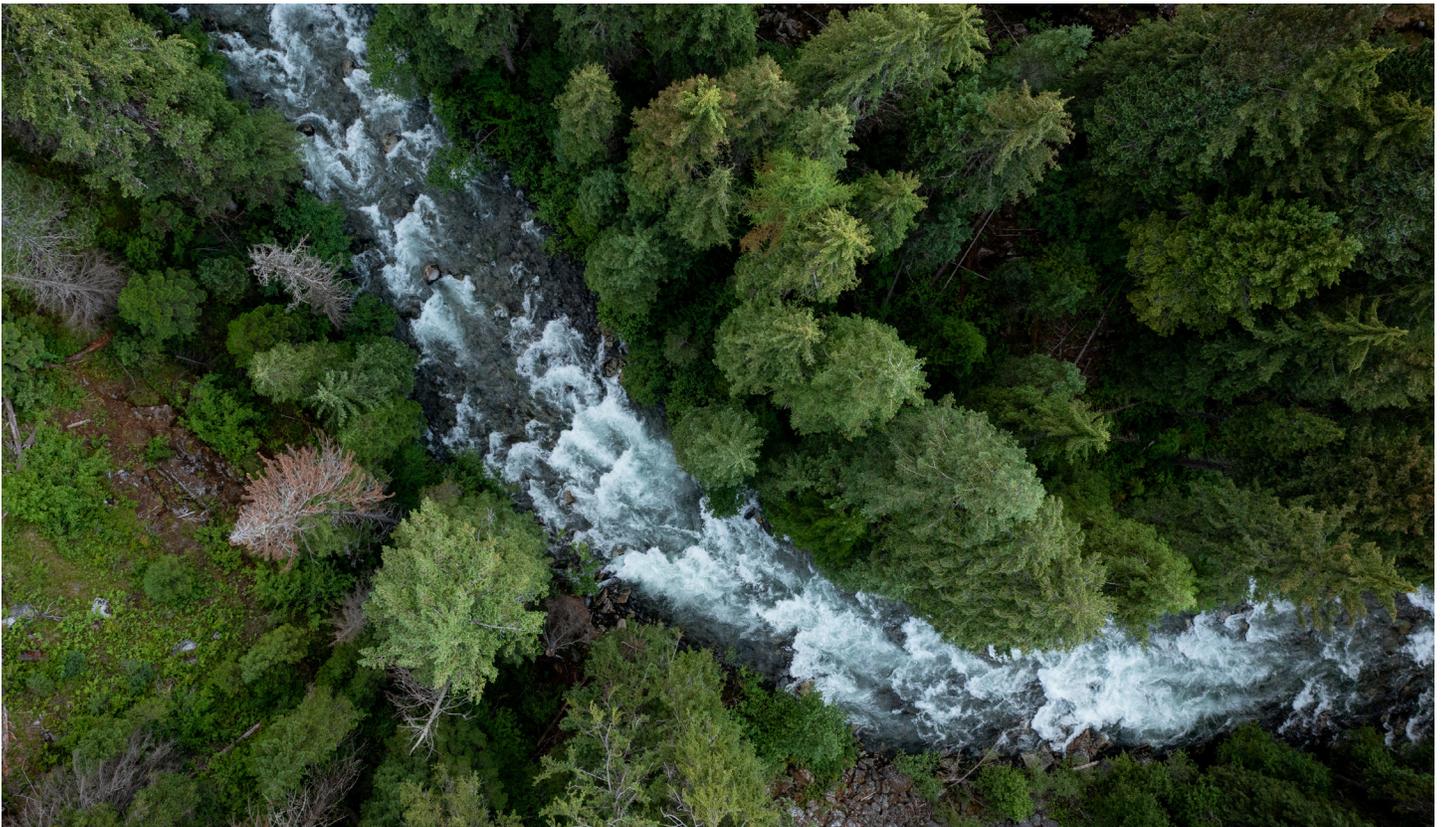
In 2023, CBWTP grantees continued to develop meaningful instream flow transactions and work with landowners. Some transaction highlights include Washington Water Trust securing the program's only currently instream transaction on Libby Creek in Washington, which will help connect the mainstem Methow River to upstream reaches and provide habitat for juvenile salmonid rearing. In Oregon, on Catherine Creek, Trout Unlimited continued their work with the first landowner to permanently transfer water into Catherine Creek and secured a transaction for additional instream benefit. This was part of the landowner's broader planning partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation, the Grande Ronde Model Watershed, and the Union Soil and Water Conservation District to combine habitat and flow restoration. In addition, NFWF made further administrative efficiencies to the program to reduce cost and increase execution. For example, for the first time in 2023 all QLE monitoring data submissions were streamlined to be consistent across the basin and reduce administrative burden. This dramatically improved the quality of CBWTP's basin-wide transaction data and opened opportunities for the program to focus more deeply on data trends and basin-wide transaction strategy. These activities, in addition to many more accomplishments, all help to secure water and meet the needs of fish and people in the Columbia Basin.

2023 INVESTMENTS THROUGH THE CBWTP

CHELAN COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCE DEPARTMENT	\$19,391
CLARK FORK COALITION	\$196,017
DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY	\$224,335
IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES	\$284,343
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION	\$27,265
NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION	\$320,391
NEZ PERCE TRIBE	\$11,321
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE	\$44,470
TROUT UNLIMITED - MONTANA WATER PROJECT	\$130,293
TROUT UNLIMITED - OREGON	\$209,118
TROUT UNLIMITED - WASHINGTON WATER PROJECT	\$292,245
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE	\$94,620
WASHINGTON WATER TRUST	\$437,115
WATER TRANSACTIONS	\$952,881
TOTAL	\$3,243,805

Protected Flow in Acre-Feet (2003 - 2023)





Lostine River in Oregon

IDAHO

Identifying, Prioritizing and Implementing Water Transactions in the Upper Salmon and Teton River Basins (ID)

Idaho Department of Water Resources

Total payment: \$382,407

Identify, prioritize and implement new water transactions in the Upper Salmon and Teton River basins. Project will improve tributary flows for the benefit of Snake River spring/summer-run Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead and native trout populations.

Increase Flow Restoration Efforts in the Nez Perce Tribal Geographies (ID, OR, WA)

Nez Perce Tribe

Total payment: \$11,321

Increase flow restoration efforts in the Nez Perce tribal geographies. Project will increase tribal capacity to coordinate with other groups developing water transactions within the broad geography of ceded lands and enable the Tribe to propose transactions uniquely linked to tribal relationships, tribal treaty rights and tribal sovereignty.

MONTANA

Restoring, Reconnecting and Protecting Instream Flow in the Upper Clark Fork Basin (MT)

Trout Unlimited – Montana Water Project

Total payment: \$136,793

Develop water right leases and transactions that work to augment streamflow and critical habitat for native trout species, including bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout,

throughout the Clark Fork River basin and Blackfoot River and Bitterroot River subbasins. Project will reconnect key tributaries to their mainstems and restore chronically dewatered stream reaches.

Support for Water Transfers to Instream Flows (MT)

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Total payment: \$27,265

Assist organizations developing water transactions with review and coordination of project proposals. Project will efficiently process instream flow water right change applications to legally protect instream water acquired through water right transactions.

Water Transaction Development in the Clark Fork River Basin (MT)

Clark Fork Coalition

Total payment: \$196,017

Identify, implement and monitor water transactions in the Clark Fork basin of Montana. Project will improve stream flows and aquatic habitat conditions for native trout.

OREGON

Deschutes Basin Streamflow Restoration (OR)

Deschutes River Conservancy

Total payment: \$224,335

Restore stream flow in Oregon’s Deschutes Basin through water transactions. Project will improve habitat and water quality for native fish, including salmon and federally listed steelhead trout.

Elevating Instream Flow Enhancement in the Umatilla Tribal Geographies and Northeast Oregon (OR)

Trout Unlimited - Oregon

Total payment: \$941,935

Identify, prioritize and develop water transactions in the Grande Ronde, Wallowa, Umatilla, Walla Walla and John Day River basins working in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Project will improve future flow regimes for ESA-listed salmonids, mitigate for out of stream use, increase habitat quantity and lower water temperatures.

Real-Time Instream Flow Assessment of Transactions (OR)

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Total payment: \$44,470

Continue to develop a real-time instream flow tracking system to ensure that CBWTP transactions are monitored and enforced through an automated program. Project will increase instream flows by ensuring stakeholders are immediately aware when legally protected senior instream flows are not being met and regulation or management adjustments are necessary.

WASHINGTON

Elevating Instream Flow Enhancement in the Methow and Okanogan Basins - Colville (WA)

Trout Unlimited – Washington Water Project

Total payment: \$90,720

Identify, prioritize, and develop water transactions in the Methow and Okanogan subbasins of Washington working in collaboration with the Colville Tribe. Project will increase habitat and instream flow in priority Colville tributaries and will build capacity for working with agricultural landowners on conservation projects that will benefit Pacific salmon, steelhead and their habitat.

Hydrologic Flow Restoration in the Yakima, Entiat and Wenatchee Basins (WA)

Trout Unlimited – Washington Water Project

Total payment: \$211,373

Identify, prioritize and develop projects with willing water right holders in the Entiat, Yakima and Wenatchee subbasins of Washington to complete significant instream flow enhancements to priority streams and tributaries. Project will improve tributary instream habitat to benefit listed salmon and other fish species and their habitats.

Provide Streamflow Monitoring and Water Transaction Support (WA)

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Total payment: \$94,620

Provide stream monitoring and technical assistance to all Washington state QLEs on prioritization, identification and development of water right transactions. Project will review monitoring plans to ensure that streamflow and, where appropriate, biological monitoring are incorporated into project monitoring plans.



Steelhead trout

Streamflow Restoration to Benefit Salmon, Steelhead and Trout in the Columbia Basin (WA)

Washington Water Trust

Total payment: \$181,924

Restore fish-critical streams in the Columbia River Basin by implementing instream flow acquisitions in the Methow, Yakima, Wenatchee, Klickitat and White Salmon River basins. Project will benefit ESA-listed Chinook salmon and steelhead.

Stream Flow Restoration to Benefit Salmon, Steelhead and Trout in the Columbia Basin - Colville (WA)

Washington Water Trust

Total payment: \$115,788

Restore fish-critical streams in the Columbia River Basin by implementing instream flow acquisitions in the Okanogan, Wenatchee and Methow watersheds. Project will continue its partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation to benefit ESA-listed steelhead, spring Chinook and bull trout.

Streamflow Restoration to Benefit Salmon, Steelhead and Trout in the Columbia Basin - Umatilla (OR, WA)

Washington Water Trust

Total payment: \$245,055

Restore fish-critical streams in the Columbia River Basin by implementing instream flow acquisitions in the Walla Walla basin. Project will continue its partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation to benefit ESA-threatened summer steelhead and bull trout.

Wenatchee Subbasin Instream Flow Improvement Project (WA)

Chelan County Natural Resource Department

Total payment: \$19,391

Develop and implement water transactions in the Wenatchee subbasin in Chelan County, Washington. Project will improve instream flows and restore habitat for native salmon and steelhead populations.

ABOUT NFWF

The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** is dedicated to sustaining, restoring and enhancing the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats for current and future generations.

NFWF will advance its mission through innovative public and private partnerships, and by investing financial resources and intellectual capital into science-based programs designed to address conservation priorities and achieve measurable outcomes.

In 38 years, NFWF has awarded more than 21,680 projects to more than 6,000 organizations in the United States and abroad.

In fiscal year 2023, the Foundation invested more than \$734.2 million to support more than 841 conservation projects across the nation. This investment leveraged more than \$319.8 million in matching support from grantees to generate a total conservation impact of more than \$734.2 million. This strong performance in fiscal year 2022 pushed the Foundation's cumulative conservation impact since its founding to \$8.1 billion.

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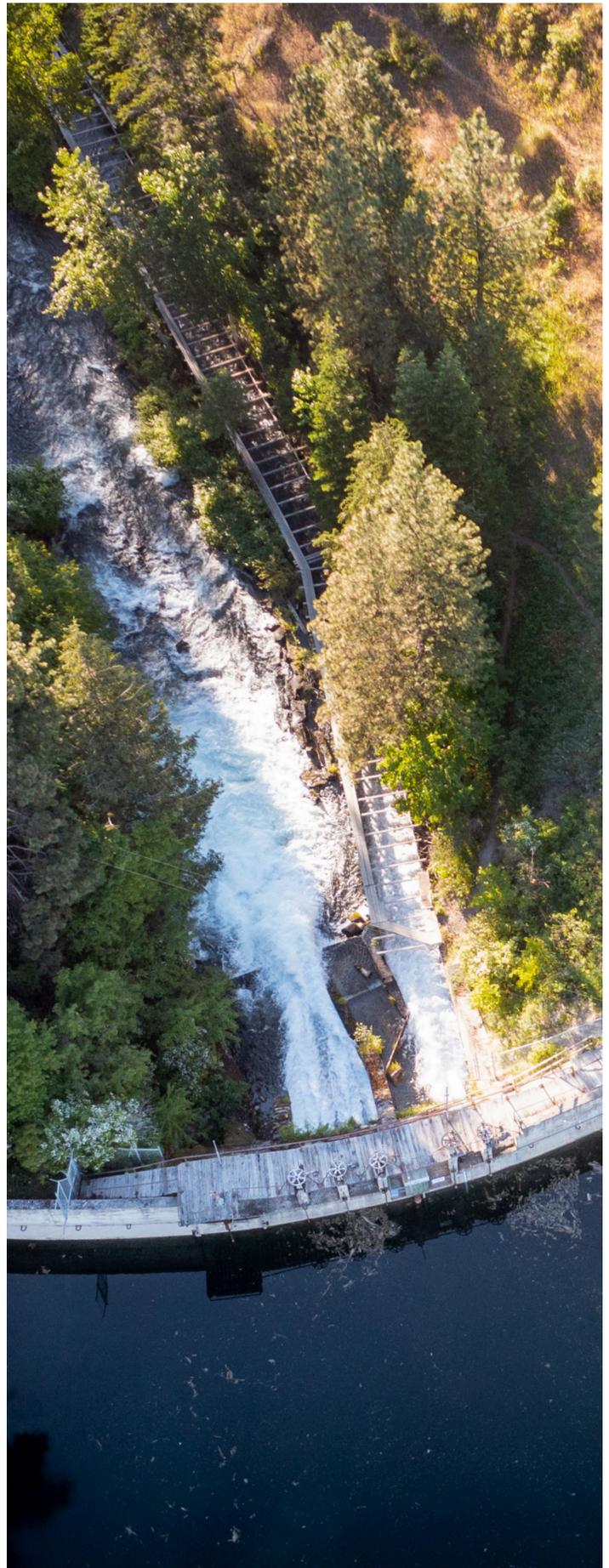
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Wallowa Lake Dam in Oregon



NFWF

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The confluence of the
Walla Walla River and
the Columbia River