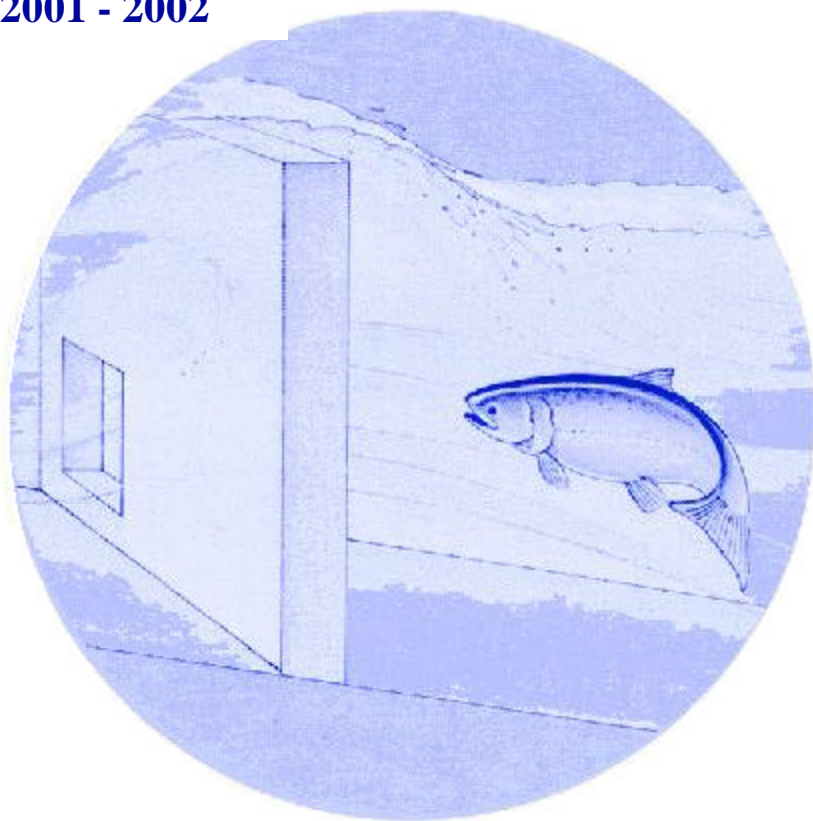


Yakima River Basin Side Channels Project



Progress Report 2001 - 2002



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Yakima Side Channels

Progress Report for 2001 -2002

Project Number 1997-051-00

Prepared by Scott Nicolai

**Yakama Nation Yakima-Klickitat
Fisheries Project**

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Progress Report – *Yakima Side Channels* 1997-051-00

The project objectives include habitat protection and restoration in the most productive reaches of the Yakima Subbasin. The geographic focus includes four reaches in the Yakima, and one in the lower Naches. These areas were identified through studies conducted by WDFW, Yakama Nation, Central Washington University and University of Montana. Research on fish populations and densities, water quality, hyporheic and benthic macro invertebrates suggests that the geographic priorities the most important areas for fish production. Physical characteristics include broad floodplains with multiple channels that flow through extensive riparian/wetland complexes. Geologic characteristics are similar among the reaches, in that they all lie upstream of a ridge that acts to delimit groundwater flow down the stream gradient. Groundwater reemerges in the channel, charging the stream with nutrient-rich and thermally stable water. Many areas have lost key habitat features through various human actions. However strongholds of productivity remain, and in many cases restoration can be undertaken to reconnect the features that made these areas productive. Active habitat restoration actions include re-connecting structurally diverse alcoves and side channels, introducing large woody debris, fencing and revegetation of riparian areas. Priority reaches include Easton, Ellensburg, Selah, Union Gap and on the Naches, the Glead reach.

The most significant projects undertaken during this time frame include:

- Scatter Creek Phase I protection - 107 acres purchased in January 2002. Scatter Creek Resources, LLC. has secured options to purchase many thousands of acres of timberland in the upper Yakima watershed. Once purchased, these lands would be parceled and sold for residential and recreational home sites. Of the total Scatter Creek acreage, 417 acres of floodplain property on the Yakima and Cle Elum Rivers were identified for protection through the Yakima Side Channels project. The YKFP main supplementation facility, which includes approximately 325 acres of unaltered habitat, connects to the downstream boundary of the Scatter Creek property. With the completion of the first phase of the project, 310 acres remained unprotected.
- Scatter Creek Phase II – 310 acres purchased in June 2002. This phase substantially increased environmental benefits gained in phase I. The properties are all contiguous, they connect with 300 acres of public land at the upstream end, and abut the phase I properties at the downstream end. Some of the property is just a five-minute drive from Interstate 90, and 85 miles from downtown Seattle. Habitats include a mosaic of large wetland complexes and active side channels are

interspersed with pine terraces.

- Lanphere property protection - 96 acres purchased April 2002. This parcel abuts the YKFP Easton Acclimation Facility, and is situated 15 miles upstream of the aforementioned Scatter Creek property. The Seattle metropolitan area is only 60 miles from the property, thus development pressure in this area is heavy. The Lanphere property includes flood channels, backwater sloughs, wetlands and an intact riparian community. A road had been constructed through the property by the former landowner, who intended to develop it for residential housing. Restoration actions have occurred on the property, including placement of tree stumps to act as barriers to vehicular access.
- Hanson Ponds floodplain restoration and protection. Extensive planning and coordination have been accomplished during this time frame. This property is less than 300 yards upstream of the Dixon property, which was protected by the Yakima Side Channels project in 2000. Hanson Ponds includes 125 acres, with 8500 feet of shoreline along the Yakima mainstem. On the property, an armored levee was constructed to prevent the river from breaching into two gravel pits. The levee simplified the river, and prevented the reestablishment of a native riparian community. A collaborative restoration plan has been developed with the town of Cle Elum, the local municipality. State and federal agencies have been involved. Restoration actions include building an armored notch through the levee, allowing Hanson Ponds to become a side-channel rearing area. A road will be abandoned, and a parking area developed for walk-in access. Large woody debris will be placed in the created side channel, and native riparian vegetation will be planted on the abandoned road and portions of the levee surface. Funding for restoration actions will be provided by the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, which is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In-stream habitat restoration must coincide with a favorable instream work window, thus the construction related restoration for this project is scheduled for implementation in summer of 2003.
- Lower Naches properties phase II – 52 acres purchased in September 2002. The Rosen property, which is the first of four properties to be acquired under phase two of the Lower Naches Habitat protection work, lies contiguous to the other three properties (Peterson, Young and Swanson) that will be purchased in the next phase. Purchase of the remaining parcels should occur in the next few weeks. All the properties were inundated during the 1996 flood, though much of the property is not designated as jurisdictional floodplain.

These projects provide permanent protect of some of the key habitat areas in the Yakima basin. In combination with past and future work, the Yakima Side Channels project fills a critical habitat need in this basin.