

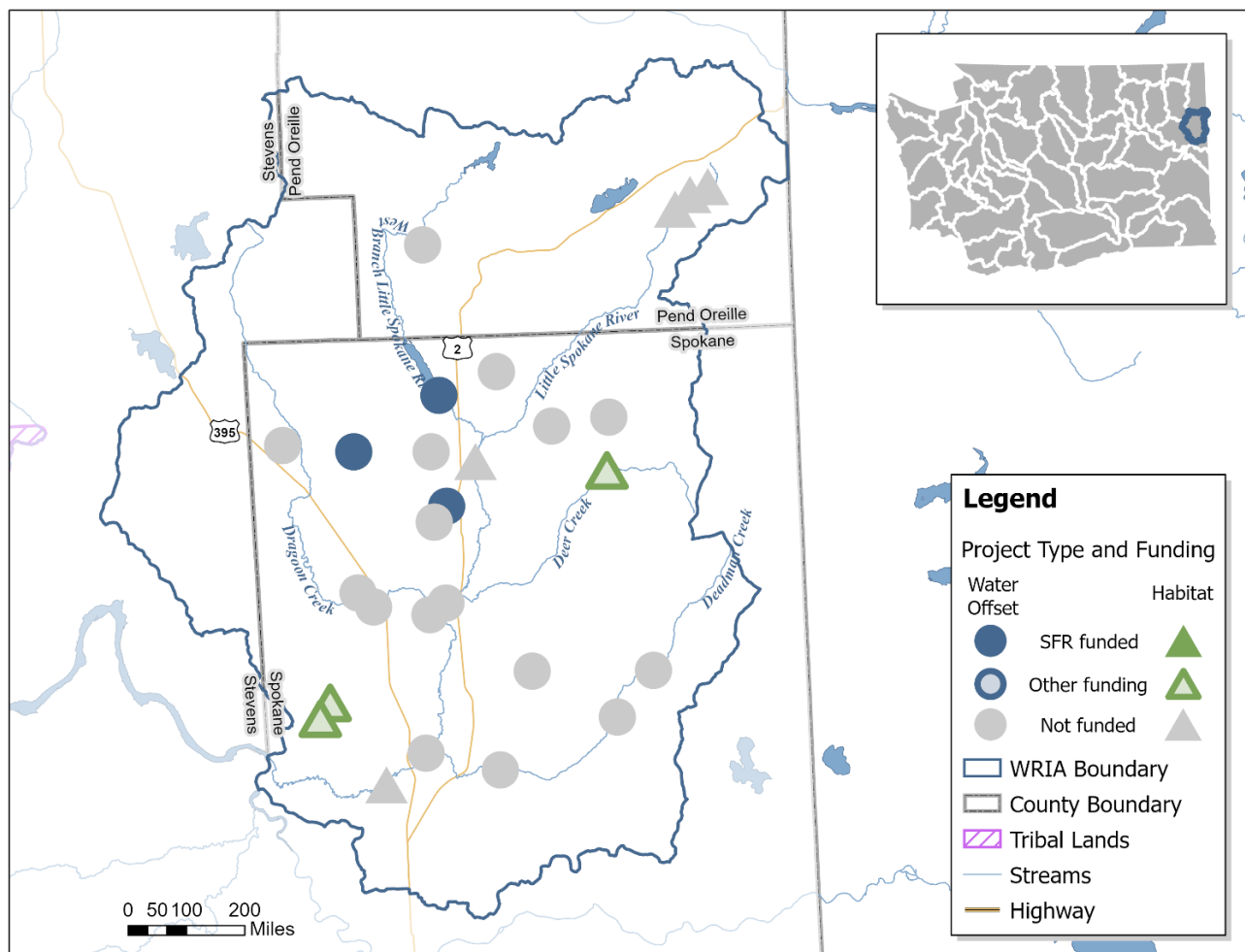
# Watershed Plan Implementation Assessment for the Little Spokane Watershed

The Washington Department of Ecology adopted the Little Spokane Watershed Plan Addendum on January 28, 2021. Plan implementation is ongoing as local entities develop their projects and secure funding. The Little Spokane Watershed is also known as Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 55.

This plan implementation assessment provides an update based on the best currently available information:

- Local water offset and net ecological benefit projects (as defined in the watershed plan) implemented to offset the consumptive water use impacts from new domestic permit-exempt (PE) wells and achieve a net ecological benefit.
- Current and projected new domestic PE wells.
- Current estimated and projected consumptive water use impacts from these new wells.

## Projects in WRIA 55 (Little Spokane Watershed)

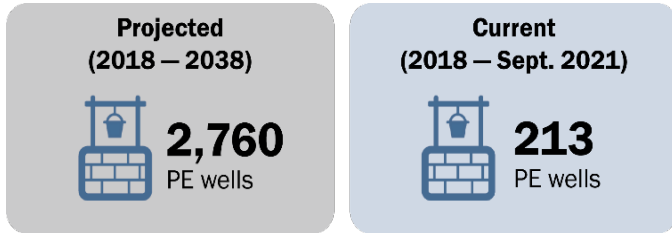


Approximate locations of projects in WRIA 55 from the adopted plan and streamflow restoration grants offered to date. Projects contribute to the anticipated net ecological benefit and offset the impacts from new PE wells. Projects are funded through either Ecology’s Streamflow Restoration (SFR) grant or other funding sources.

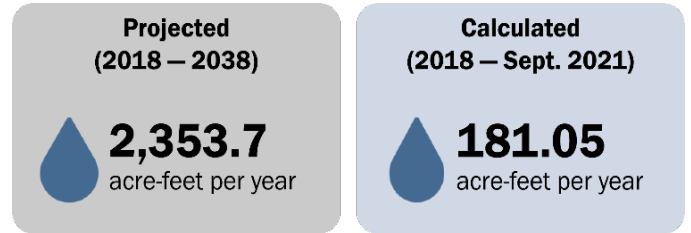
## Watershed plan implementation

Ecology is using the following parameters to track progress on plan implementation. We will update these parameters in future versions of the publication.

### Number of new permit-exempt (PE) wells

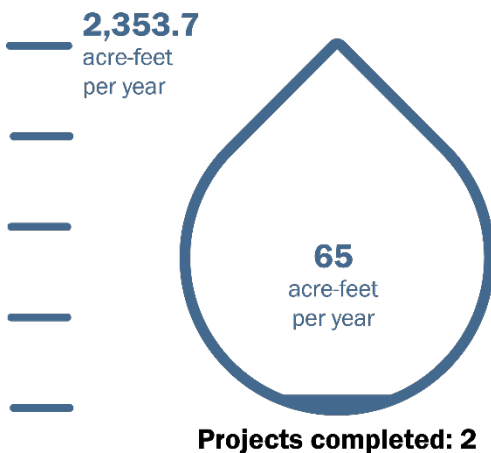


### Consumptive water use from PE wells



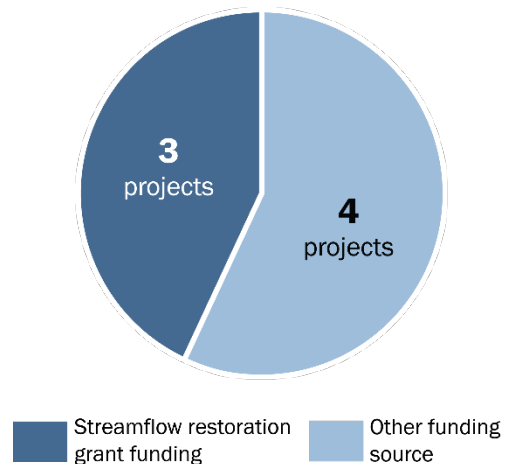
### Water offset from plan implementation

Projects are currently underway to offset the projected consumptive water use in WRIA 55.



### Funding sources for projects

Projects underway are funded either by Ecology’s streamflow restoration grants or other sources.



## Implementation snapshot

- Installation of new permit exempt wells in WRIA 55 (Little Spokane Watershed) is proceeding at a slower rate than the local watershed plan projected (56% below the projected rate). Using the plan’s assumption of consumptive water use per new PE well, Ecology estimates the consumptive water use impacts from these new wells is likewise proceeding at a slower rate (56% below the projected rate).
- In 2019 and 2020, three projects in the Little Spokane watershed received funding offers for competitive streamflow restoration grants. Ecology awarded over \$2 million to Spokane County to acquire water rights, restore wetlands, and initiate a managed aquifer recharge project. These three projects are expected to have a combined offset benefit of 1,680 acre-feet per year. This assessment will be updated to reflect the water offset achieved from these projects once projects are completed.
- Four projects were funded by sources other than Ecology. Spokane County continues to fund project development and implementation, and has acquired water right certificates that have an instream flow benefit of 65 acre-feet per year. The Family Forest Fish Passage Program has awarded over \$124,000 for the removal of fish barriers in Deer Creek. The Conservation Commission has funded the engineering portions of two separate floodplain and habitat restoration projects that will provide ecological benefits to the watershed.

## Watershed plan summary

The Little Spokane watershed planning committee met from November 2018 to September 2020 to develop a new watershed restoration and enhancement plan that:

- Projected 2,760 new PE wells from years 2018 to 2038.
- Estimated the impact of these wells on rivers and streams at 2,353.7 acre-feet per year.
- Identified 28 projects to provide water offset<sup>1</sup> and/or [net ecological benefit](#) to streamflows.

Projected PE well growth and consumptive water use (years 2018 - 2038)



**2,760**  
PE wells



**2,353.7**  
acre-feet per year

Projected streamflow benefits from planned projects



**4,262**  
acre-feet per year

A volume of 2,353.7 acre-feet is about 1176 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

## Benefits of WRIA 55 plan implementation



Initiates locally led solutions.



Improves rivers and streams in the watershed.



Offsets consumptive water use from rural homes.

## Streamflow Restoration Law (RCW 90.94)

In January 2018, the Washington State Legislature passed the Streamflow Restoration law (RCW 90.94) to help restore streamflows to levels necessary to support robust, healthy, and sustainable salmon populations while providing water for homes in rural Washington.

Ecology has been actively implementing this law since its passage. Ecology, in coordination with state and local agencies, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations has funded, led, and supported a range of 15 diverse local watershed plans across the state. Ecology, with generous support from the Legislature has also implemented a competitive grant offering to help state and local agencies, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations implement projects in their local watershed plans required by this law.

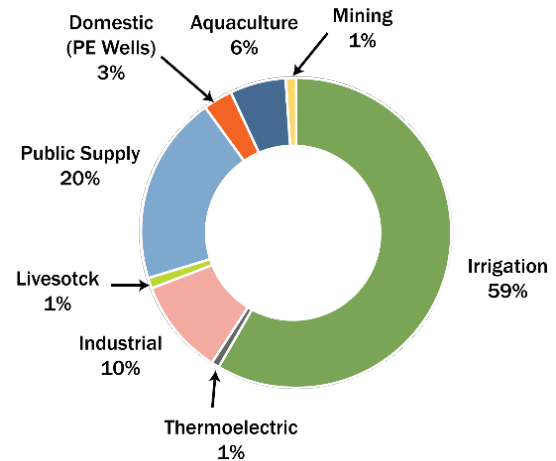
<sup>1</sup> From NEB Guidance (Publication number 19-11-079): Offset is the anticipated ability of a project or action to counterbalance some amount of the new consumptive water use over the next 20 years (2018 – 2038). Offsets need to continue beyond the 20-year period for as long as new well pumping continues.

## Consumptive water use in Washington State

Significant resources and collaboration went into statewide and local planning and ongoing local plan implementation to offset water use from domestic permit-exempt (private) wells in Washington State.

Consumptive water use from these wells accounts for about 3% of water use in Washington, a small portion compared with other consumptive water uses.

## Consumptive Water Use in Washington State (2015)



Data adapted from U.S. Geological Survey's report on Water Use in Washington (2015).

- [Streamflow Restoration](https://ecology.wa.gov/StreamflowRestoration): ecology.wa.gov/StreamflowRestoration
- [Streamflow Restoration Grants](https://ecology.wa.gov/StreamflowGrants): ecology.wa.gov/StreamflowGrants

## Publications

- [Streamflow Restoration Program Status](#): Publication number 21-11-016
- [Final Guidance for Determining Net Ecological Benefit](#): Publication number 19-11-079

## Other resources

- [WRIA 55 Watershed Plan Addendum](#) (PDF)<sup>2</sup>



Streamflow restoration program  
WRProjects@ecy.wa.gov  
360-407-6757



To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6872 or email at WRPubs@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341

Project sponsors can update Ecology on the status of project implementation by emailing WRProjects@ecy.wa.gov.

<sup>2</sup> <https://apps.wr.ecology.wa.gov/docs/WaterRights/wrwebpdf/watershed/wria55/WRIA55WatershedPlanAddendumFinal-110120.pdf>