

Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants



Focus on: The Little Naches River



WHY IT MATTERS

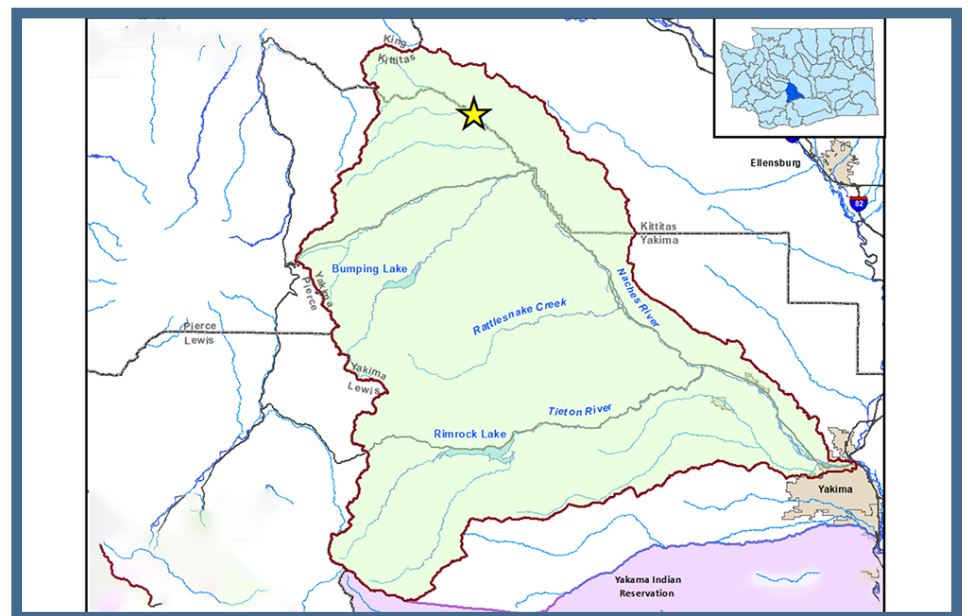
Historic land use practices have severely impacted the Little Naches River. More than 40 years ago, levees were built along the river to protect Forest Service Road 1900. The road was used for logging and recreation access. The stream channel was relocated, log jams were removed to reduce localized flooding, and the riverbed was bulldozed. The levees protected the road, but reduced streamflow, increased the damaging power of high flow events, caused erosion, and restricted the river from accessing its historic floodplain. These historic activities damaged important habitat, impaired natural processes for healthy streamflow, and reduced the capacity of this reach to support the spawning and rearing of native fish species.

Methods used to restore habitat

- Eliminated levees.
- Raised the sunken riverbed.
- Reconnected the floodplain.
- Added wood.
- Replanted riparian areas.

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Ecology's \$1.175 million grant restores habitat on the Little Naches River



Map of Naches Watershed (WRIA 38) showing location of project.

Project Description

In 2020, Ecology awarded Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group and partners a competitive Streamflow Restoration Grant to help reverse decades of damage and restore the habitat in a degraded one-mile stretch of the Little Naches River. Additional funding from federal and state partners allowed the project to take shape and be completed on time in Fall 2022.



Project type: Habitat Improvement

This project type includes: channel habitat improvements like streambank restoration, gravel and woody structure augmentation, and channel re-meandering, riparian restoration, levee modifications, and floodplain modifications.

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Staff rescue fish before the river is diverted

Project Outcomes

The project reversed decades of damage and transformed a one-mile stretch of the Little Naches River in hopes of becoming a fertile spawning ground for salmon and steelhead. An impressive collaborative effort eliminated levees to raise the sunken riverbed and added wood to create a more natural habitat and reconnect historic floodplains. Excavators and skidders placed 651 logs taken from the adjacent forest. The harvested wood was used to build engineered and non-engineered structures that were individually placed on the floodplain. Each log placement adds channel and floodplain roughness, helps to slow down water, reduces erosion and provides shade and refuge habitat for fish.

Riparian areas along the river were replanted with native trees, shrubs, and grasses to create shade and to reduce evaporation. The new plants will help repair the streambed by capturing wood and gravel and creating habitat for fish and other wildlife. As the vegetation matures, and future high flows continue to build up the streambed by depositing wood and sediment, the streamflow and habitat benefits will continue to restore natural processes.



651 logs were placed on the riverbed.



Little Naches River project after completion, 7/23.



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We are so grateful for the agencies, organizations, and individuals that work together for water, fish, and forest health in the Yakima Basin. Collaboration is key to achieving meaningful habitat restoration – and it sure makes our projects fun too.

Rebecca Wassell, Yakima Basin Program Director for Mid-Columbia Fisheries

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Photo credit: Jill Scheffer (from left to right Jill Scheffer (Ecology), Heather Hazlett (Ecology), and Rebecca Wassell (Mid-Columbia))

Front page photo: Little Naches riverbed after excavation and log placement on the floodplain.

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