



Hangman Settlement Agreement 2023 Annual Report

By

Water Quality Program, Eastern Region

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Introduction

Streams in the Hangman Creek Watershed are impaired by excess fecal coliform bacteria, turbidity (sediment), elevated water temperatures, dissolved oxygen (DO), and pH. Several point source and nonpoint source issues have been identified and discussed through several water quality studies. The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the Spokane Conservation District (SCD) studied these water quality issues and developed a cleanup plan, or a [Total Maximum Daily Load](#)² report. The TMDL evaluated sources of pollutant loading and outlines the necessary pollutant reductions. The TMDL was approved by EPA in 2009. A [TMDL Implementation Plan](#)³ was produced to guide the cleanup of the creek in 2011. More information is available about Ecology’s work in the Hangman Creek Watershed on Ecology’s Hangman Creek multi-parameter TMDL [webpage](#)⁴.

On September 28, 2015, Spokane Riverkeeper (Riverkeeper) challenged the EPA’s decision to approve the Hangman Creek TMDL based on the lack of “adequate reasonable assurances that nonpoint sources of pollution will be reduced.” In early 2018, Ecology and Riverkeeper reached a settlement agreement ([The Hangman Settlement Agreement](#)⁵) that consists of the following components:

- Complete a full analysis of the creek’s health including streamside vegetation and in-stream conditions within Washington State boundaries.
- Identify, prioritize, and fix water quality problems through focused Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation.
- Monitor the creek’s health and track progress of improvements.
- Develop and implement an education and outreach plan.

This document describes the work that Ecology and its partners completed during 2023 and fulfills the Settlement Agreement obligation for Ecology’s annual reporting on watershed evaluation work, prioritized site tracking, and education and outreach efforts. It also describes Ecology funding for work in the watershed and what lies ahead for 2024 and beyond.

Watershed Evaluation Work

As a condition of the Settlement Agreement, Ecology staff performed an annual evaluation of the Hangman Creek Watershed to document nonpoint water quality concerns related to dryland agriculture and livestock land uses. 68 sites were documented in 2023.

² <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/0910030.pdf>

³ <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1110012.pdf>

⁴ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-quality/Water-improvement/Total-Maximum-Daily-Load-process/Directory-of-improvement-projects/Hangman-Creek>

⁵ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/585aee335016e1541642dc0c/t/5ab4456f8a922d7af03cb277/1521763696270/2018+02+06+Spokane+Riverkeeper_Ecology+Unsigned.pdf

The Settlement Agreement requires Ecology staff to prioritize up to ten livestock sites and ten tillage sites annually for contact to address water quality concerns. Five livestock sites and ten tillage sites were prioritized and contacted in 2023. Three valid complaints were received and associated sites were contacted as well. At the end of 2023, Ecology had a total of 93 priority sites (Figure 1) that include tillage, livestock, and complaint-based sites within the watershed. 2023 was the sixth year that watershed evaluations were completed in the Hangman Creek Watershed as part of the Settlement Agreement. Figures 2 through 5 show examples of the livestock and tillage sites documented during the 2023 watershed evaluations.

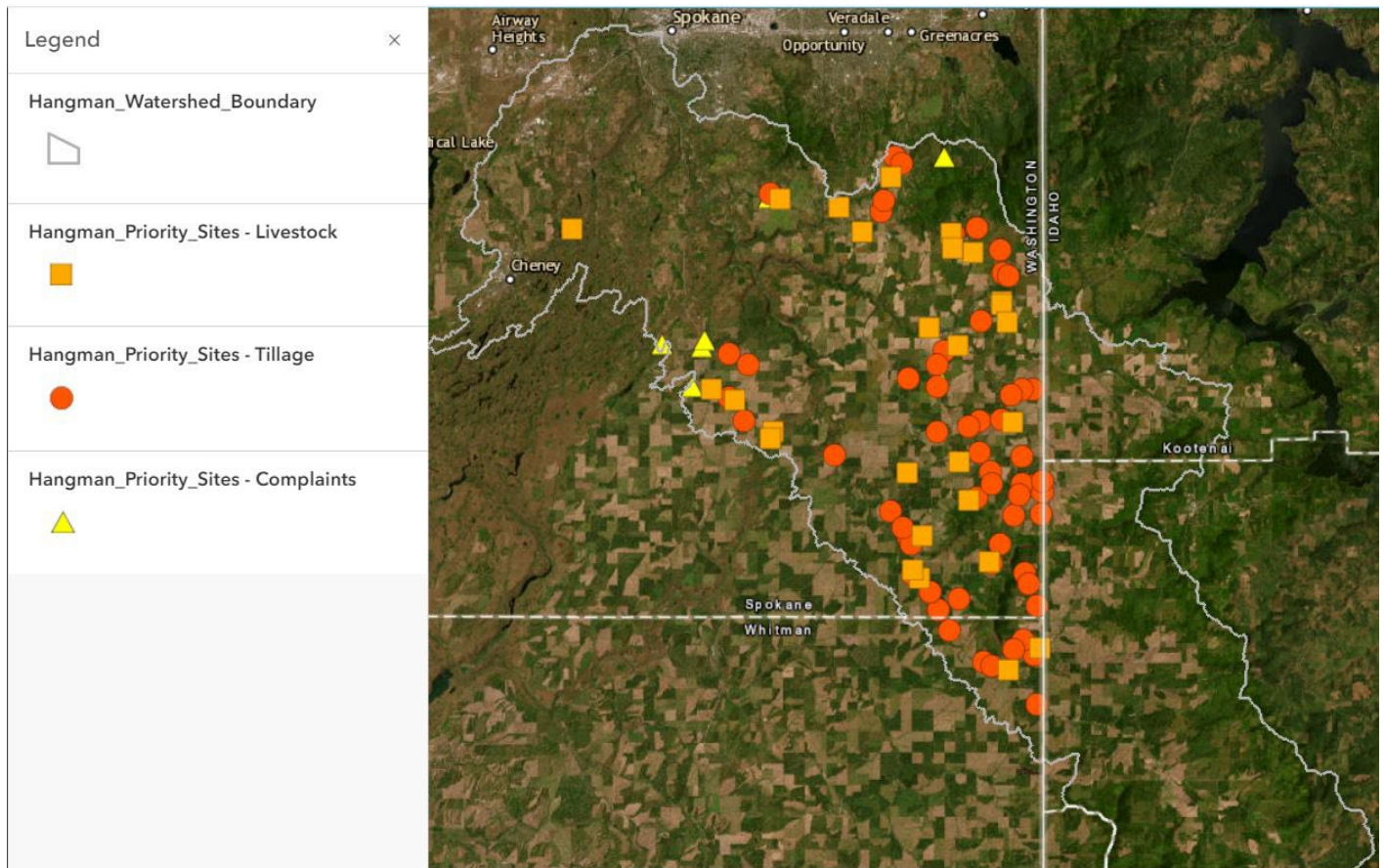


Figure 1: Hangman Prioritized Site Map.



Figure 2: Gully erosion on dryland agricultural field transferring sediment to stream



Figure 3: Dryland agricultural production adjacent to seasonal stream



Figure 4: Gully erosion on dryland agricultural field transferring sediment to stream



Figure 5: Livestock impacts to seasonal stream

Priority Site Tracking

The Settlement Agreement requires Ecology to track the progress of each priority site, and report annually the following information located below in Table 1.

Project Tracking Elements	Amount	Notes
Site Evaluations	667	Total site evaluations during watershed evaluations 2018-2023.
Sites prioritized	93	All livestock, tillage, and complaint-based sites are considered priority sites for tracking purposes.
Ecology site visits	130	Ecology staff have conducted 130 site visits of the prioritized sites. Some sites have been visited several times by Ecology staff for various reasons from plan negotiations to project construction oversight.
Priority sites being addressed by Ecology alone	38	Sites which the producer or landowner has worked or is working only with Ecology on a plan, to the best of Ecology's knowledge.
Priority sites being addressed by Ecology and a CD or other stakeholder organization in partnership	37	Sites which the producer or landowner has worked, or is working, with Ecology and third party on a plan. Third parties include: Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Spokane Riverkeeper, Natural Resources Conservation Services, Farm Service Agency, Pine Creek Conservation District, Spokane County, and Spokane Falls Trout Unlimited.
Sites certified in Farmed Smart Program	0	No current priority sites are part of this program.
Site visits where previously implemented BMPs are not operated and maintained adequately	0	Ecology will continue to monitor previous BMP sites during annual watershed evaluations for proper operation and maintenance.
Sites brought into compliance without use of enforcement tools	17	Sites where BMPs have been implemented to be fully protective of water quality, without the use of enforcement tools. These projects have been completed.
Recommendations for enforcement	4	Sites where Ecology staff submitted a request for enforcement.
Enforcement actions taken by Ecology	4	Sites where an administrative order was issued.
Sites brought into compliance after enforcement	2	The two of the four enforcement actions issued thus far have resulted in compliance with completed projects. The other two enforcement action sites are now actively working on implementation of the Order.
Sites contacted but not brought into compliance	18	Sites that are unwilling to work with Ecology or have yet to respond to contact efforts. Ecology will continue to escalate regulatory pressure on these sites as needed.
Valid complaints in watershed	7	Six complaints have become priority sites.
Complaints resolved through technical assistance	5	Five complaint sites are in various stages of active communication with Ecology on plans.
Complaints resolved through enforcement	0	No complaints have yet been resolved through enforcement.

Table 1: Hangman Settlement Agreement prioritized site tracking metrics 2018-2023.

2023 Actions

Watershed Evaluation:

Performed Comprehensive Watershed Evaluation: Ecology staff documented 68 non-point pollution problems in the watershed using the ERO watershed evaluation process. 10 tillage sites and 5 livestock sites were prioritized. ERO staff determined site prioritization by considering site specific criteria, such as the length of stream impacted and the severity of riparian damage.

Compliance and Technical Assistance

- **Complaint Response:** Ecology staff followed up on three valid water quality complaints. Ecology staff met with the landowners at these three sites. Ecology is actively working on plans with these landowners to implement practices that will protect water quality.
- **TA Letters:** Ecology staff mailed fifteen certified letters to prioritized sites during the watershed evaluation process. Dozens of phone conversations, site visits, and partnership meetings took place as a result of this effort. Much of the funded project implementation in the Hangman Watershed is a direct result of this process.
- **Enforcement –Administrative Orders:** Ecology issued an Administrative Order to a dryland agricultural operation for two separate properties in Fall 2022. The Order was appealed, and the Pollution Control Hearing Board (PCHB) upheld the Order in early 2023. The two properties cumulatively include approximately 11,500 feet of the mainstem Rock Creek and its tributaries with the Hangman Watershed, which were actively being farmed up to water’s edge. Implementation of the Order components began in 2023, which includes approximately 8 acres of native grass buffers and 22 acres of riparian forest buffers.
- **Enforcement – Warning Letters:** Ecology issued three warning letters in 2023 in the Hangman Watershed, which were all livestock related. Two of the three sites came into compliance in 2023, and the third site is actively working with Ecology on plans.

Funding Highlights

Below is a summary of projects funded by Ecology’s [Water Quality Combined \(WQC\) Funding Program⁶](#) in fiscal year (FY) 2023.

- **Implemented the *Hangman Riparian Restoration and Conservation Program (\$3,500,000)*:** This program provides rental rates with long-term contracts for agricultural riparian land taken out of production and planted with native trees and shrubs. Ecology partnered with Spokane Conservation District on this project. This first

⁶ https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Payments-contracts-grants/Grants-loans/Find-a-grant-or-loan/Water-Quality-Combined-Funding-Program/WQC-funding-cycle?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

phase of the program contracted 169 acres for riparian restoration along perennial streams in the Hangman Watershed, which were previously in dryland agricultural production. This program was created to facilitate compliance for sites contacted by Ecology as having water quality concerns, which is an eligibility criterion for enrollment in the program.

- **Implemented the Pine Creek Conservation Districts, *Little Hangman Creek Riparian Forest Planting (\$50,000)***: This project will implement riparian restoration within an approximately 8.1 acre riparian area of Little Hangman Creek, located in the Hangman Watershed, approximately 2 river miles downstream from the Idaho border. This project supplements a larger bioengineered streambank stabilization project and the site was previously identified and contacted by Ecology for severe water quality concerns with dryland agricultural operations within the riparian area.
- **Implemented the Spokane Tribe of Indians, *DIF Project Maintenance, Riparian Restoration, and Livestock BMPs Project (\$257,868)***: This project includes project maintenance across five previously installed riparian restoration projects in the Hangman Watershed. All five projects were identified during past regional watershed evaluations by Ecology staff as having significant water quality concerns, which were addressed by a previous implementation grant. This three-year grant is well under way for ensuring successful riparian establishment along these sites.
- **Implemented the Spokane Riverkeeper, *Rock and Hangman Creeks Riparian Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Project (\$256,892)***: This project will continue to improve nonpoint pollution issues throughout the watershed by installing 50 acres of riparian plantings, establishing three water quality monitoring locations, 10 water temperature loggers, and provide education and outreach programs to maximize restoration efforts within the watershed. This three-year grant is well underway with 40 acres of riparian installation completed.
- **Implemented the Spokane Conservation District, *Spokane Riparian Establishment Project (\$283,500)***: This project implements three projects, two of which are in the Hangman Watershed. These projects include livestock BMPs and riparian restoration. Issues with matching funds from a partner federal agency have delayed two of these projects, but at the end of 2023 Ecology and Spokane Conservation District have successfully acquired enough project match to move forward with implementation.
- **Implemented the Spokane CD, *Making Conservation Pay Project (\$3,000,000)***: This loan from State Revolving Funds allowed Spokane County Conservation District to expand their Direct Seed Equipment Loan program to 13 counties in Eastern Washington. This program allows producers to purchase the necessary direct seed equipment to practice low disturbance, direct seed conservation tillage. This loan helps to convert acres in the Hangman Creek farmed with conventional tillage techniques to

direct seed. This three-year program is well underway and currently providing equipment loans to multiple producers in Eastern WA.

- **Implemented the Spokane CD, *Hangman Creek Streambank Stabilization RM-17 Phase II Project (\$333,333)***: This project builds upon and continues work along Hangman Creek at river mile 17 to stabilize banks, plant riparian buffers and install irrigation systems to improve plant survival. The second phase of the project prevented an estimated 16,000 tons of sediment from reaching the Spokane River. Designs, materials, and permits were obtained in 2021, and the project was constructed in 2022. Riparian planting maintenance and general monitoring was completed in 2023. The grant agreement was closed out in 2023, but the SCD will continue to monitor and maintain as needed.
- **Implemented the Spokane CD, *Hangman Creek Agricultural BMP Assistance Project (\$1,500,000)***: This project increases community awareness, addresses agricultural sediment pathways, inventories bank erosion contributions, implements 3,000 feet of stream restoration and reduces sediment delivery through producer incentives, cost-share programs, and loans. The funding allows the Spokane CD to support producers by focusing implementation at high priority sites identified during Ecology watershed evaluations. This three-year project is well underway providing financial assistance to implement multiple projects throughout the watershed; one of the most significant projects within this grant was constructed in 2023 – a nearly one-mile stream restoration project on Little Hangman creek consisting of floodplain reconnection, bank stabilization, and a 31-acre riparian planting.
- **Implemented the Lands Council, *Hangman Creek Watershed Riparian and Wetland Restoration Project (\$294,600)***: This FY22 grant project continues The Land Council’s work in the Hangman Watershed by installing Beaver Dam Analogs, planting riparian buffers, and educating agricultural producers and local youth in the watershed.

Education and Outreach:

The Outreach Strategy prioritizes action items for the first three years. Below is an update on outreach activities that occurred in 2023.

- **One on One Discussions:** Ecology staff conducted dozens of individual site visits with landowners and producers that were contacted for having water quality concerns. These site visits typically last over an hour and contain meaningful and often difficult conversations on water quality issues. Although often challenging, these outreach activities can be incredibly fruitful for water quality education and implementation efforts. Many projects in the financial assistance section below are the direct result of these discussions.
- **Direct Mailing to Watershed Residents:** Ecology developed and mailed the first in a series of water quality focused mailers to more than 2,500 watershed residents in 2023. The mailer content covered common best management practices for agriculture, funding, and salmon recovery efforts.

- **Conduct a Public Survey:** The release of the public survey was delayed in 2022 and 2023 due to staff turnover at both Ecology and Riverkeeper. Ecology will resume discussions with Riverkeeper about the survey in 2024.
- **Centennial Trail Interpretive Sign:** We identified a typo in the interpretive sign that was installed along the Centennial Trail in November 2021. Ecology ordered a corrected sign in 2022, which will be installed in 2024.
- **Stakeholder Meetings:** We’ve determined that one-on-one, or small group meetings are more effective methods of sharing information and engaging our partners. While there is value in convening the large stakeholder group, moving forward, Ecology staff will focus on increasing the number and diversity of stakeholders engaged in the Hangman Creek Watershed, as well as continue building and maintaining positive relationships with existing stakeholders.

Partner Coordination

- **Coordination with Watershed Partners**

Ecology met regularly with watershed partners to plan, fund, and coordinate on implementing BMPs that improve and protect water quality. Watershed partners included, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| ○ Spokane Conservation District | ○ Inland Northwest Land Conservancy |
| ○ Pine Creek Conservation District | ○ Natural Resources Conservation Services |
| ○ WA Department of Fish and Wildlife | ○ Spokane Falls Trout Unlimited |
| ○ Spokane Riverkeeper | ○ The Lands Council |
| ○ Spokane Tribe of Indians | ○ Farm Service Agency |
| ○ Coeur d’Alene Tribe | |

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Ecology continued to work on increasing the number of stakeholders engaged in the Hangman Creek Watershed, as well as continued building and maintaining positive relationships with existing stakeholders. Engaged watershed stakeholders and positive partnerships are vital to cultivating a synergistic environment for achieving significant water quality improvements. Additionally, Ecology is committed to engage with the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene Tribes and local municipalities on water quality protection measures.
- **Meetings with the Spokane Riverkeeper:** Ecology staff met with the Spokane Riverkeeper every other month to provide updates on work in the Hangman Creek Watershed, talk through issues, and plan for future work. Starting in 2024 Ecology and Riverkeeper will plan to meet bi-annually unless otherwise deemed necessary.

- **Meetings with Watershed Partners and Building Funding Capacity:** Ecology staff met regularly with watershed partners to plan and coordinate on implementing best management practices that improve and protect water quality. Ecology will continue to work on maintaining existing funding opportunities as well as support and encourage new funding opportunities for water quality improvement work.
- **Funding for New Riparian Restoration Program**

Ecology continued its partnership with the Spokane Conservation District on this innovative riparian restoration program – Hangman Riparian Restoration and Conservation Program. The program is currently implementing 169 acres of riparian plantings across eleven of the Hangman Settlement Agreement prioritized sites. The Spokane Conservation District and Ecology have secured an additional approx. \$3 million dollars at the end of 2023 to continue this important and unprecedented work.

Riparian and In-Stream Analysis

As part of the Settlement Agreement, Ecology is required to complete an assessment of the riparian and in-stream conditions of the Hangman Creek Watershed within Washington State. Ecology, with input from the Riverkeeper, broke this task into three components: riparian land use categorization, riparian canopy height and cover, and in-stream conditions.

In 2019, Ecology initiated the riparian land use categorization component. Ecology categorized and quantified land use types within the stream buffer at the parcel and HUC 12 scales – this component has been completed and results can be found in the 2019 Annual Report.

In 2020, Ecology initiated the riparian canopy height and cover component using two LiDAR datasets to analyze canopy height and cover within the riparian buffer area for the 40% of the watershed where LiDAR data was available – the results from this component can be found in the 2020 Annual Report. The remaining 60% of the watershed will be analyzed using the same methodology when LiDAR becomes available in 2024.

The in-stream field component was completed in May of 2022 by Ecology and Spokane Conservation District. The in-stream report was drafted at the end of 2022 and was still in draft in 2023. Ecology will finalize the report and share with Riverkeeper in 2024.

Future Outlook

Watershed Evaluations and Site Prioritization

As a condition of the Settlement Agreement, starting with the sixth year of the agreement, Ecology will meet with the Riverkeeper to determine future frequency of watershed evaluations.” Ecology staff have a watershed tour planned with the Riverkeeper spring 2024, during which time we will discuss this topic.

75 sites are actively working with Ecology and its partners on water quality improvement projects. 18 sites are not working with Ecology on active water quality concerns. This planning, implementation, tracking, and enforcement workload is near total capacity given considerable

constraints. Ecology does not want to jeopardize the delicate balance of quantity over quality, and will be discussing this with the Riverkeeper in the context of the Settlement Agreement obligations during the 2024 spring watershed tour.

Tracking and Reporting on Existing Sites

Ecology staff will continue to offer technical and financial assistance for existing prioritized sites. This may include additional regulatory escalation on sites with water quality issues that are unwilling to work on water quality protection measures. Ecology will perform a routine check on previously implemented BMPs in the Fall of 2024 to ensure existing BMPs are maintained adequately.

Hangman Riparian and Instream Assessment

The in-stream assessment was completed in 2022 and was still in draft in 2023. A report on the in-stream assessment will be shared with Riverkeeper in 2024.

Outreach Strategy

Amanda Richardson moved on to a different role at Ecology in 2023, and will no longer be the Hangman Settlement Agreement Outreach Lead. Ecology was approved to fund a new Environmental Education and Outreach position that will continue this important work. That position is expected to be filled in 2024 and will work with Riverkeeper to identify outreach priorities at that time. Priorities they will begin working on in 2024 will include:

- **Distribute Public Survey with Spokane Riverkeeper:** Ecology will work with Spokane Riverkeeper to develop a plan to distribute the survey.
- **Direct Mailings to Watershed Residents:** Ecology will print and mail the second in a series of mailers to over 2,500 watershed addresses in 2024. Ecology will also draft subsequent mailings and develop a plan for future distribution.
- **Update Hangman Outreach Strategy:** Ecology will work with the Spokane Riverkeeper to update the Hangman Outreach Strategy document that guides education and outreach efforts in the watershed. The Strategy is intended to be updated every 3 – 5 years to reflect work accomplished, lessons learned, and new priority action items.
- **Continue One on One Discussions:** Ecology staff conduct individual site visits with landowners and producers that were contacted for having water quality concerns. These site visits typically last over an hour and contain meaningful and often difficult conversations on water quality issues. Although often challenging, these outreach activities can be incredibly fruitful for water quality education and implementation efforts.

Future Funding

Below is a summary of the grant through Ecology's WQC Funding Program for FY23.

- **Begin Implementing the *Hangman Riparian Restoration and Conservation Program Phase 2: (\$3,000,000)***: This program provides rental rates with long-term contracts for agricultural riparian land taken out of production and planted with native trees and shrubs. Ecology partnered with Spokane Conservation District on this program. This first phase of the program contracted 169 acres for riparian restoration along perennial streams in the Hangman Watershed, which were previously in dryland agricultural production. This program was created to facilitate compliance for sites contacted by Ecology as having water quality concerns, which is an eligibility criterion for enrollment in the program. This phase 2 consists of two separate grants which will continue to enroll an approx. 150 more acres into the program in 2024.
- **Begin Implementing the *Hangman Creek Agricultural Sediment Abatement Project (\$424,000)***: This project will restore a 2,100-foot-long reach of the Hangman Creek mainstem. The project will remove historic livestock influences, reduce active erosion through bioengineered streambank stabilization practices, and restore the riparian area with restorative buffers ranging from 130–200-foot widths. This project was funded in 2023 and will begin implementation in 2024.
- **Begin Implementing the *Spokane CD, Direct Seed Loan Program (\$5,196,914)***: This loan from State Revolving Funds allowed Spokane County Conservation District to expand their Direct Seed Equipment Loan program to 13 counties in Eastern Washington. This program allows producers to purchase the necessary direct seed equipment to practice low disturbance, direct seed conservation tillage. This loan helps to convert acres in the Hangman Creek farmed with conventional tillage techniques to direct seed. This program is a continuation of the expiring *Making Conservation Pay Project*. This program was funded in 2023 and will begin implementation in 2024.
- **Continue Implementing the *Spokane Tribe of Indians, DIF Project Maintenance, Riparian Restoration, and Livestock BMPs Project (\$257,868)***: This project includes project maintenance across five previously installed riparian restoration projects in the Hangman Watershed. All five projects were identified during past regional watershed evaluations by Ecology staff as having significant water quality concerns, which were addressed by a previous implementation grant. This three-year grant is well under underway for ensuring successful riparian establishment along these sites.
- **Continue Implementing the *Spokane Riverkeeper, Rock and Hangman Creeks Riparian Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Project (\$256,892)***: This project will continue to improve nonpoint pollution issues throughout the watershed by installing 50 acres of riparian plantings, establishing three water quality monitoring locations, 10 water temperature loggers, and provide education and outreach programs to maximize restoration efforts within the watershed. This three-year grant is well underway with 40 acres of riparian installation completed and monitoring equipment deployed and

functioning.

- **Continue Implementing the Spokane Conservation District, *Spokane Riparian Establishment Project (\$283,500)*:** This project implements three projects, two of which are in the Hangman Watershed. These projects include livestock BMPs and riparian restoration. Issues with matching funds from a partner federal agency have delayed two of these projects, but at the end of 2023 Ecology and Spokane Conservation District have successfully acquired enough project match to move forward with implementation.
- **Continue Implementing the Spokane CD, *Hangman Creek Agricultural BMP Assistance Project (\$1,500,000)*:** This project increases community awareness, addresses agricultural sediment pathways, inventories bank erosion contributions, implements 3,000 feet of stream restoration and reduces sediment delivery through producer incentives, cost-share programs, and loans. The funding allows the Spokane CD to support producers by focusing implementation at high priority sites identified during Ecology watershed evaluations. This three-year project is well underway providing financial assistance to implement multiple projects throughout the watershed; one of the most significant projects within this grant was constructed in 2023 – a nearly one-mile stream restoration project on Little Hangman creek consisting of floodplain reconnection, bank stabilization, and a 31-acre riparian planting.
- **Continue Implementing the Lands Council, *Hangman Creek Watershed Riparian and Wetland Restoration Project (\$294,600)*:** This project continues The Land Council’s work in the Hangman Watershed by installing Beaver Dam Analogs, planting riparian buffers, and educating agricultural producers and local youth in the watershed.

Partner Coordination

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** We’ve determined that one-on-one, or small group meetings are more effective methods of sharing information and engaging our partners. Ecology will continue to facilitate stakeholder meetings in 2023 and beyond. Ecology staff will continue to work on increasing the number and diversity of stakeholders engaged in the Hangman Creek Watershed, as well as continue building and maintaining positive relationships with existing stakeholders. Engaged watershed stakeholders and positive partnerships are vital to cultivating a synergistic environment for achieving significant water quality improvements. Additionally, Ecology is committed to engage with the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene Tribes and local municipalities on water quality protection measures.
- **Conduct a Watershed Tour with the Spokane Riverkeeper:** In spring 2024 Ecology will tour the watershed with the Riverkeeper and showcase some of the work completed, work planned, and document some problem sites. Additionally, Ecology and Riverkeeper will meet regularly to discuss Settlement Agreement progress.

- **Meet with Watershed Partners:** Ecology staff will continue to meet regularly with watershed partners to plan and coordinate on implementing best management practices that improve and protect water quality. Ecology will continue to work on maintaining existing funding opportunities as well as support and encourage new funding opportunities for water quality improvement work. Ecology and the Spokane Riverkeeper will look for opportunities to complete a watershed tour together along with any other interested stakeholders.
- **Hangman Stakeholder Meetings:** Ecology staff will continue to work with the Spokane Conservation District to convene watershed stakeholders as needed.

Compliance/Technical Assistance

- **Continue Communications on Existing Sites:** 56 of the 94 sites prioritized and contacted in the last six years yet to have fully protective water quality plans developed or implemented, many of them currently working with Ecology however. Ecology will devote its resources to bringing these existing sites into compliance in 2024.
- **Complaint Response:** Ecology staff will continue to follow up on valid water quality complaints in the Hangman Watershed. Ecology staff will conduct site visits and actively work on plans to implement practices that will protect water quality.
- **Monitor the Implementation of the Administrative Order issued to SF Rock Creek Agricultural Operation:** The Pollution Control Hearing Board (PCHB) ruled in favor of Ecology of this Administrative Order. Ecology issued the Order to one dryland agricultural operation for two separate properties in fall 2022. The Order was appealed, and the PCHB upheld the Order in early 2023. The two properties cumulatively include approximately 11,500 feet of the mainstem Rock Creek and its tributaries with the Hangman Watershed, which were actively being farmed up to water's edge. Implementation of the Order components began in 2023, which includes approx. 8 acres of native grass buffers and 22 acres of riparian forest buffers. Ecology will continue to monitor the implementation of this Order.
- **Take Additional Formal Enforcement in Hangman Creek:** Ecology staff will send approximately 5 warning letters and likely issue an additional Administrative Order in 2024. 56 of the 94 sites prioritized and contacted in the last six years yet to have fully protective water quality plans developed or implemented, many of them actively working with Ecology, however – 18 of them unwilling to implement any practices that protect water quality. Sites that are unwilling to work with Ecology on fully protective water quality protection will be prioritized for enforcement actions.