

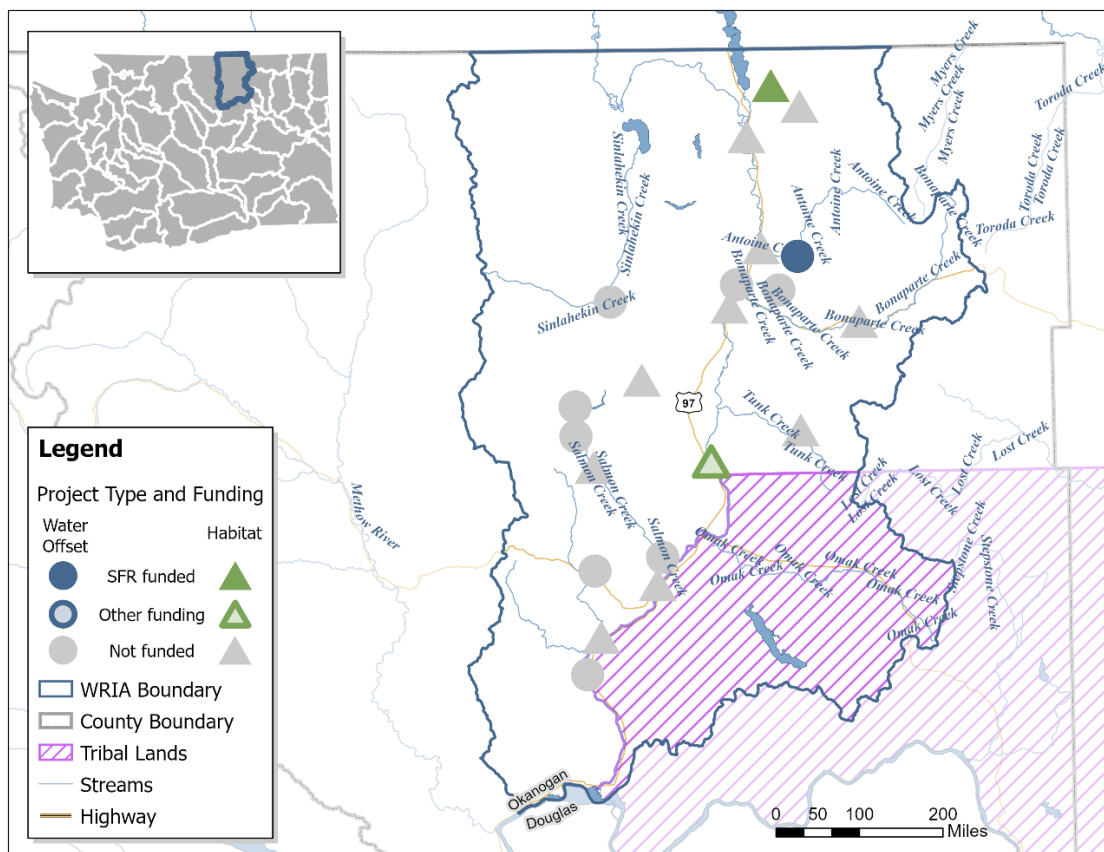
Watershed Plan Implementation Assessment for the Okanogan Watershed

The Washington Department of Ecology adopted the Okanogan River Basin Watershed Plan Addendum on January 28, 2021, as a part of the Streamflow Restoration law (RCW 90.94.020). The Okanogan Watershed is also known as Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 49. Plan implementation is ongoing as local entities secure funding and develop their projects intended to offset the impacts on streamflows from new domestic permit-exempt (PE) wells and achieve a net ecological benefit (NEB).

Ecology assesses plan implementation periodically and conducts outreach to WRIA 49 partners and project sponsors to present information to the best of our ability. This assessment provides an update on:

- Local water offset and habitat projects (as defined in the watershed plan).
- Current and projected new domestic PE wells.
- Current estimated and projected consumptive water use impacts from these new wells.

Projects in WRIA 49 (Okanogan Watershed)

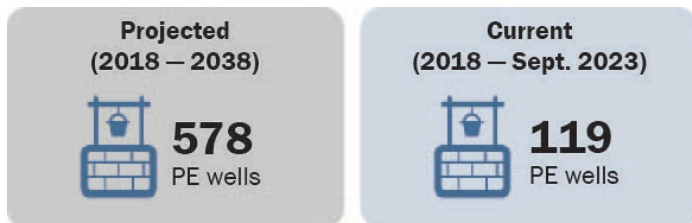


Approximate locations of projects in WRIA 49 from the adopted plan addendum. Projects contribute to the anticipated net ecological benefit and offset the impacts from new PE wells. Projects are funded through either Ecology’s Streamflow Restoration (SFR) grant or other funding sources.

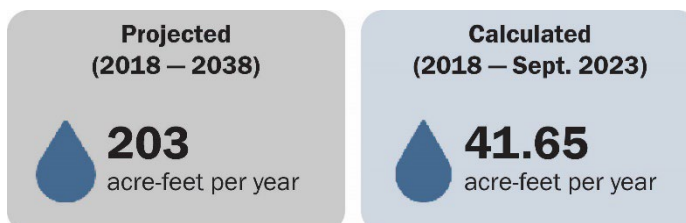
Watershed plan implementation

Ecology is using the following parameters to track progress on plan implementation.

Number of new PE wells installed

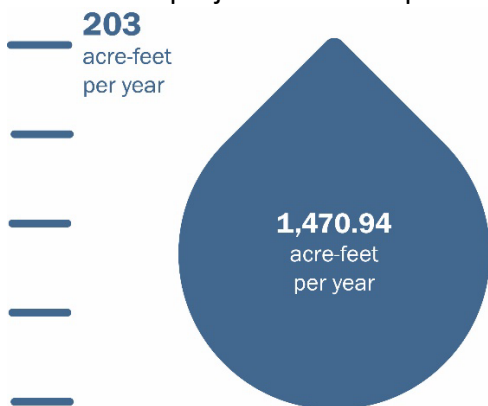


Consumptive water use from PE wells



Water offset from completed projects

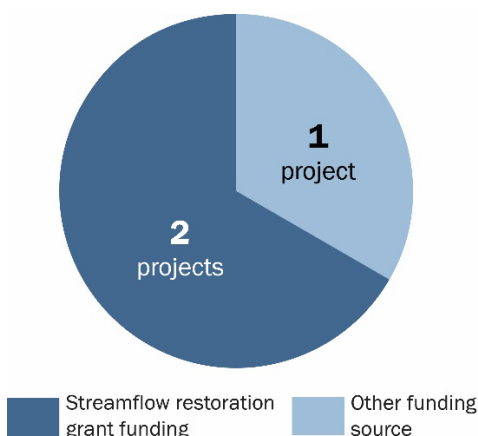
We estimate the offset from completed projects exceeds the projected consumptive water use.



Water offset projects completed: 1

Secured funding for projects

Projects have received funding from Ecology’s Streamflow Restoration grants or other sources



Implementation snapshot

- Installation of new PE wells in WRIA 49 (Okanogan Watershed) is proceeding at a slightly slower rate than the local watershed plan projected (25% below the projected rate¹). 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 also 25% below the projected rate.
- Implementation of projects identified in the plan is ongoing. In 2019, 2020, and 2022, Ecology received a total of six applications seeking competitive Streamflow Restoration grant funding for projects in the watershed plan. Three of these projects earned sufficient scores to receive a funding offer.
- Ecology awarded over \$8 million to Western Rivers Conservancy, in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and Trout Unlimited, to acquire Antoine Valley Ranch and its associated water rights. This project was completed in September 2023 and has an estimated water offset benefit of 1,470.94 acre-feet per year.
- The Johnson Creek Culvert project received over \$1M from funding sources other than Ecology and was completed in October 2023, restoring about 8 miles of Johnson Creek for ESA-listed summer steelhead.
- The current water offset from completed projects exceeds the projected consumptive water use from PE wells in WRIA 49 by 1,147 acre-feet per year.

¹ Based on preliminary data received from Okanogan County through fiscal year 2024. Final data was not available as of publication.

Watershed plan summary

The Okanogan watershed planning committee met from October 2018 to October 2020 to develop a new watershed restoration and enhancement plan that:

- Projected 578 new PE wells from years 2018 to 2038.
- Estimated the impact of these wells on rivers and streams at 203 acre-feet per year.
- Identified 21 projects to provide water offset² and/or [net ecological benefit](#) to streamflows.

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



578
PE wells



203
acre-feet per year

Projected streamflow benefits from planned projects



2,786
acre-feet per year

A volume of 203 acre-feet is about 100 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Benefits of WRIA 49 implementation



Initiates locally led solutions.



Improves rivers and streams for salmon.



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 new 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.

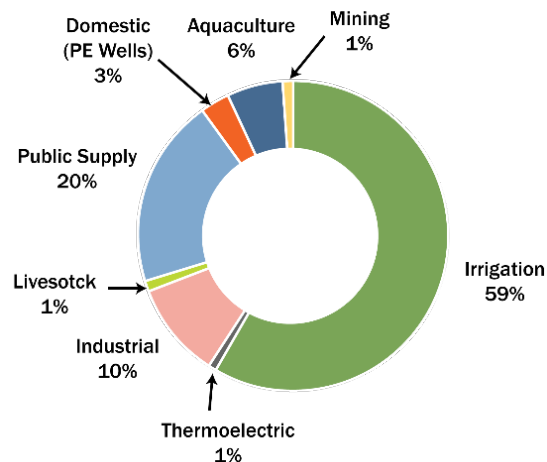
² From NEB Guidance (Publication number 19-11-079): Offset is the anticipated ability of a project or action to counterbalance some amount of the new consumptive water use over the next 20 years (2018 – 2038). Offsets need to continue beyond the 20-year period for as long as new well pumping continues.

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 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).

Webpages

- [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 Competitive Grants Status](#): Publication number 22-11-026
- [Streamflow Restoration Planning Update](#): Publication number 21-11-015
- [Final Guidance for Determining Net Ecological Benefit](#): Publication number 19-11-079

Other resources

- [WRIA 49 Watershed Plan Addendum](#) (PDF)³
- [WRIA 49 Watershed Plan Addendum – Appendices](#) (PDF)⁴

Watershed partners and project sponsors can update Ecology on the status of watershed plan implementation by emailing WRProjects@ecy.wa.gov.



Streamflow restoration program
WRProjects@ecy.wa.gov
 360-688-8928



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

³ <https://apps.wa.gov/ecology/docs/WaterRights/wrwebpdf/watershed/wria49/WRIA49WatershedPlanAddendum-Final-100120.pdf>

⁴ <https://apps.wa.gov/ecology/docs/WaterRights/wrwebpdf/watershed/wria49/WRIA49AppendicesA-D.pdf>