

Watershed Operations

March 2009

Salmon, Traditions Return to Colville Tribe Omak Creek Watershed, Washington State

Introduction

The Omak Creek watershed project is important due to the significant cultural resource value to members of the Confederated Colville Tribe (CCT). Salmon represent a significant spiritual place in the Tribal culture, by improving fish passage; it will be possible for more salmon to return to the traditional Tribal waters.



The Omak Creek project will address fish passage and habitat issues that will allow the Spring Chinook salmon to return to their native spawning areas.

Funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, this project is part of the Obama Administration's plans to modernize the nation's infrastructure, jump-start the economy, and create jobs. NRCS is using Recovery Act dollars to update aging flood control structures, protect and maintain water supplies, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands. NRCS acquires easements and restores floodplains to safeguard lives and property in areas along streams and rivers that have experienced flooding.

Project Description

- **Location:** Okanogan County, the town of Nespelem, 4th Washington Congressional District
- **Federal Funding:** \$625,000
- **Sponsor Funding:** \$500,000

The Omak Creek watershed project has multiple objectives, including addressing water quality and fish habitat for two threatened and endangered anadromous fish species. The projects focus on addressing fish passage barriers such as man-made road crossing culverts.

Partners

- USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Confederated Colville Tribe
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bonneville Power Administration

Benefits

The Omak Creek watershed is the only remaining watershed on the Colville Indian reservation capable of supporting steelhead trout and Spring Chinook salmon, both of which are threatened and endangered species in this area. There are more than 9,800 Tribal members and approximately 450 individuals living in this watershed who will directly benefit from the project.



Spring Chinook salmon play an important cultural role for the Tribe.

Reinvesting in the Omak Creek Watershed, Washington State

Economic Opportunities

An estimated \$1 million will be infused into the local economy as a direct result, approximately two percent of the local gross domestic product. Students from Paschal Sherman Indian School, situated very close to Mission Falls, have participated in numerous restoration projects along Omak Creek and will continue to benefit in these watershed improvement efforts.

Statewide Perspective

Beginning in 1996, the CCT worked with the NRCS to develop and implement a watershed plan to improve riparian habitat, reduce sedimentation, improve water quality, and implement range management objectives.

As a result, there are numerous other projects being planned and implemented along this portion of the Upper Columbia River watershed. In concert with the Omak Creek restoration effort, other projects will help restore fish habitat and improve water quality and quantity for economically and culturally significant populations of listed threatened and endangered anadromous fish species.

For More Information

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Previous work in Omak Creek provided critical fish passage at Mission Falls.

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