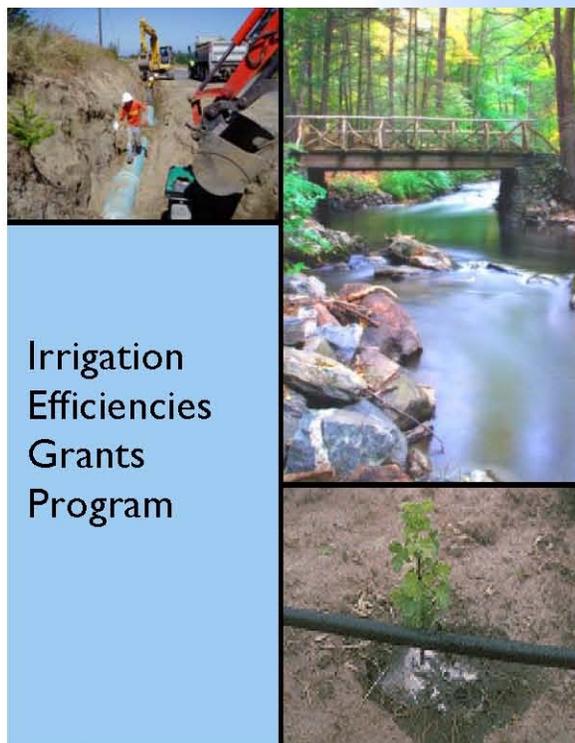




2008 Report

# WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION



Irrigation  
Efficiencies  
Grants  
Program



# Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program

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## *Irrigated Agriculture and Salmon Recovery: Community Solutions*

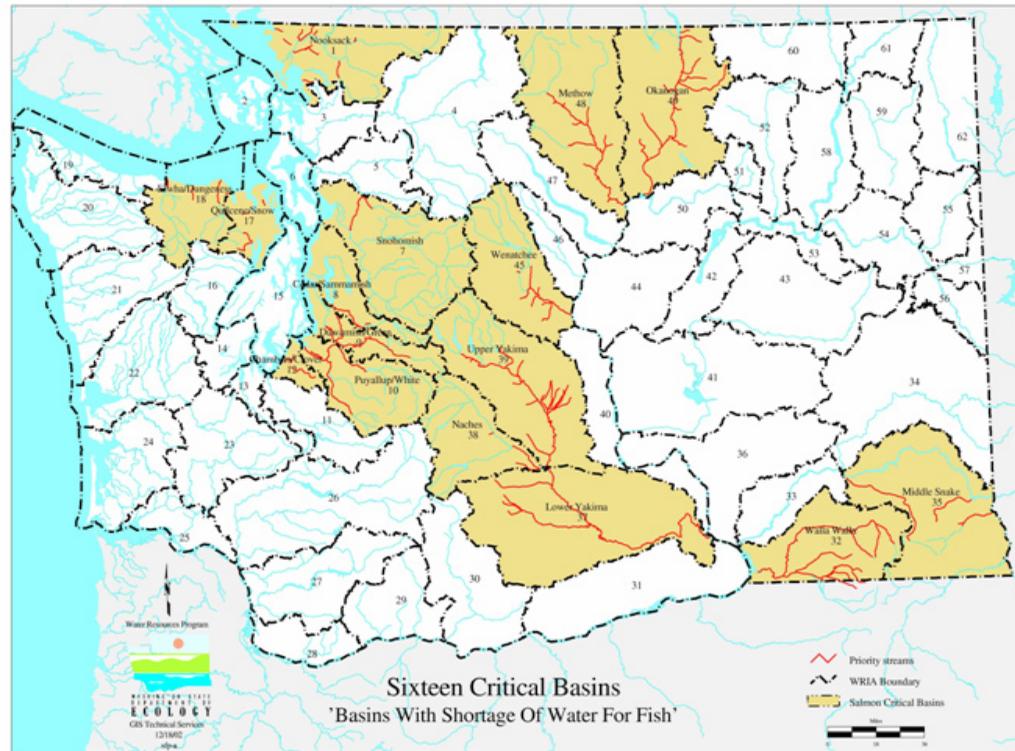
The Conservation Commission and 47 conservation districts in the State are dedicated to conserving water to help offset low stream flow conditions. One of the most effective tools for accomplishing this is the Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program (IEGP). Under this program, private landowners partner with local conservation districts on voluntary projects that increase the efficiency of on-farm water application and conveyance delivery systems. The water saved is converted into beneficial instream flows in tributaries where ESA (Endangered Species Act) listed species will benefit.

The Washington State Conservation Commission administers the IEGP through an interagency partnership with the Washington State Department of Ecology. The program began in 2001 as an appropriation that directed Ecology's Water Resource Program "... to provide grants to conservation districts to assist the agricultural community to implement water conservation measures and irrigation efficiencies ..." within 16 drought critical basins.

Center pivot system  
in Eastern Washington



Pre-project visit by landowner  
and agency representatives in  
the Methow Valley



The IEGP provides cost-share funding and technical assistance to private landowners for installing best management practices (BMPs) such as pivot sprinkler systems, drip irrigation systems, and piped conveyance systems. The program has proven to be the most effective and fiscally responsible method for achieving on-the-ground water conservation; results include:

- Increased instream flows in fish critical streams.
- Addressing local priority resource concerns.
- Fostering partnerships with other state and federal agencies, environmental and agricultural interests groups, tribes, municipalities, and rural communities in a coordinated effort to conserve natural resources.
- Conservation water savings for instream flows in the State's Trust Water Rights Program (TWR).
- Increased water management efforts at the local level.

The IEGP was born out of a desire by private landowners and environmental groups to cooperate in a unique effort to restore instream flows. Each participating conservation district provides a unique, local program that allows for the most effective, site specific solutions. Since 2001, participating districts have included: Asotin County, Cascadia (Chelan County), Clallam, Columbia, Kittitas County, North Yakima, Okanogan, Pomeroy (Garfield County), South Yakima, and Walla Walla. The IEGP is but one of many programs and services offered by the Commission, helping the 47 conservation districts throughout the state enhance and restore natural resources on privately owned lands.

## Program Improvements Over Time

### *Initial Efforts*

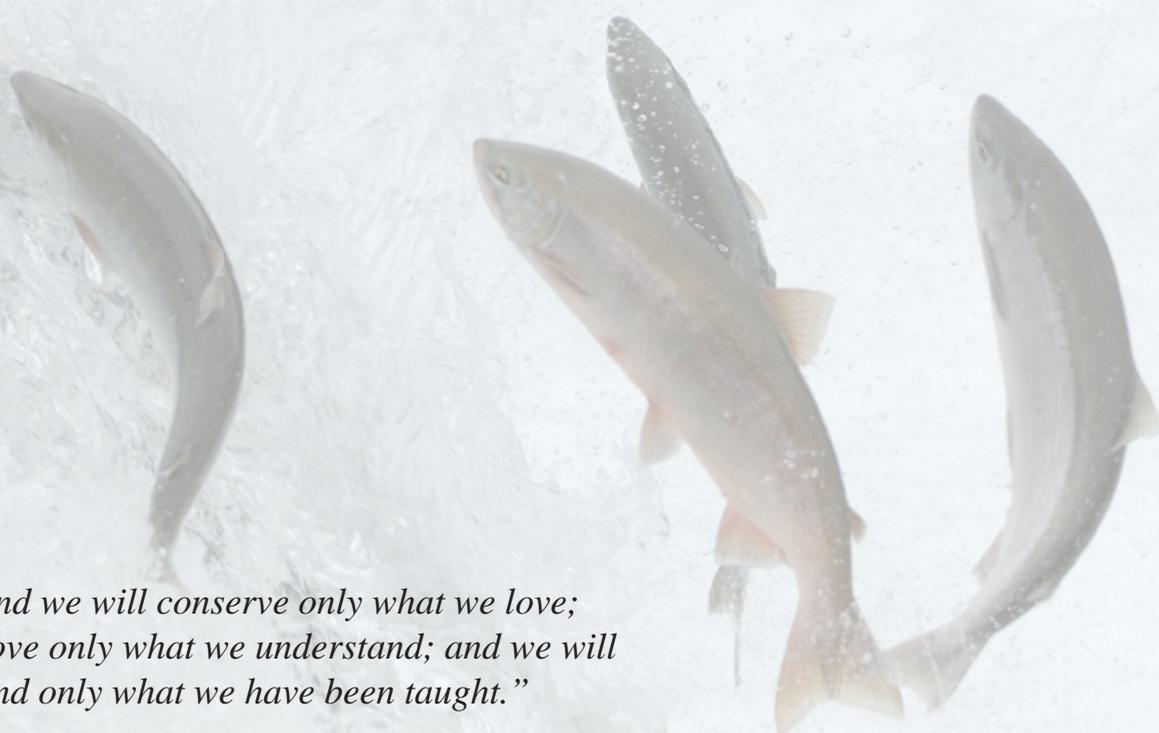
The Commission initially funded four projects during the 2001-03 biennium under a funding process developed by a large steering committee. It was then decided to tighten the funding criteria to ensure that salmonids would benefit through each funded project or group of projects.

### *Expanded Advisory Committee*

A technical advisory committee was formed with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Natural Resource Conservation Service assisting the Commission-Ecology partnership to create new funding criteria. This advisory group has also served as a sounding board and approval mechanism through the years for “out-of-the-box” projects seeking Efficiencies funding. The program has funded 36 more projects successfully with the new funding requirements.

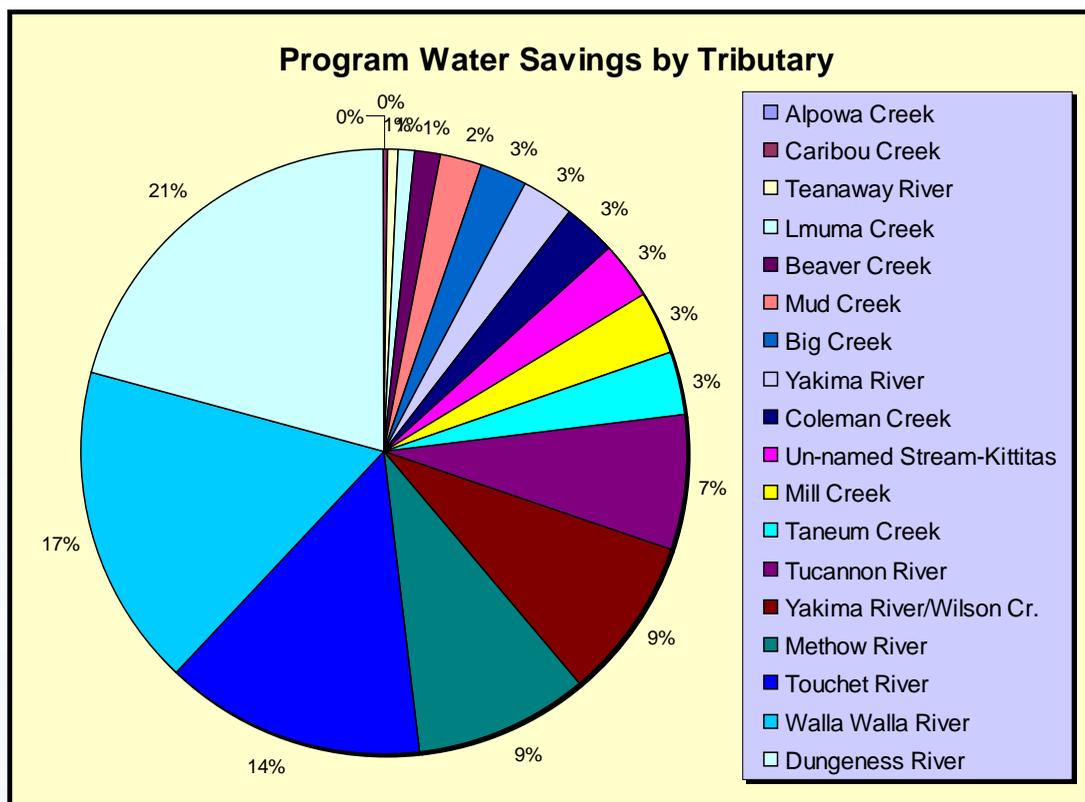
### *Consolidated Application Process*

Another positive change is a melding of the Efficiencies project application with Ecology’s Trust Water Rights Change Form, creating the Consolidated Application Form. This allows the land-owner to fill out only one application which then becomes a “depository” for the project data that is dynamic and workable until it is signed by the applicant and made formal. This one document also makes it easier to coordinate with the Technical Advisory Committee on those out-of-the-box projects seeking funding.



*“In the end we will conserve only what we love;  
we will love only what we understand; and we will  
understand only what we have been taught.”*

*Baba Diom*



## Primary Accomplishments

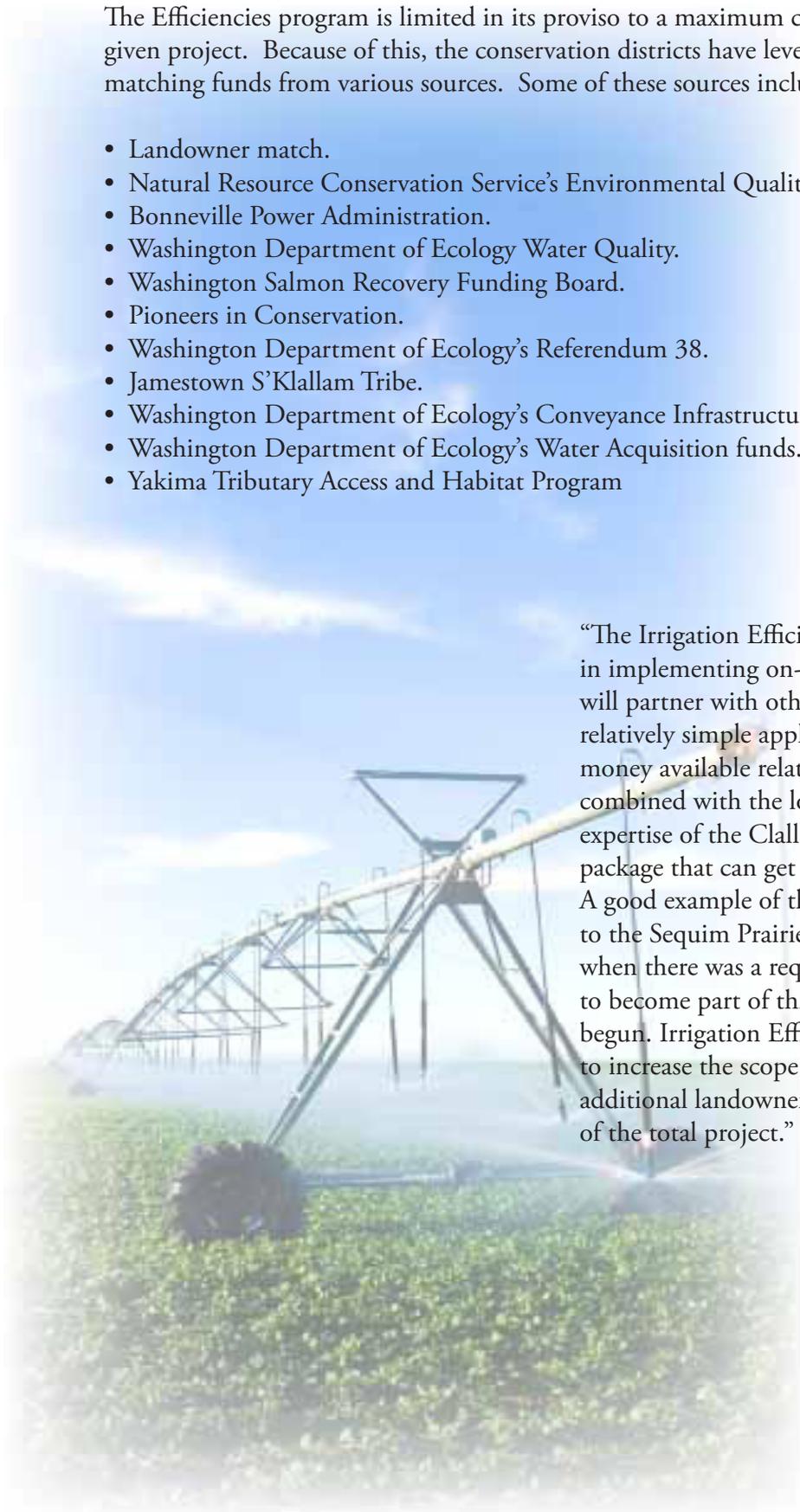
The Program's primary accomplishments to date include:

- 40 total projects funded.
- \$9,933,530 in cost share awarded.
- 11,977 acre feet of water per year saved and applied to the Trust Water Rights Program for instream flows. This equates to 51.8 cubic feet per second of instantaneous flow (337 gallons per second, or 23,240 gallons per minute.)
- 24 projects converting flood or hand line irrigation to center pivot irrigation.
- 16 conveyance projects such as the piping of unlined ditches.
- Average cost per cubic foot per second of approximately \$191,767.
- Average cost of water savings applied to the Trust: \$829 per acre foot.
- Enhancement of primary reach instream flows in 17 tributaries across the State.

## Leveraging Match Funds

The Efficiencies program is limited in its proviso to a maximum cost share rate of 85 percent on any given project. Because of this, the conservation districts have leveraged well over a million dollars in matching funds from various sources. Some of these sources include:

- Landowner match.
- Natural Resource Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program.
- Bonneville Power Administration.
- Washington Department of Ecology Water Quality.
- Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board.
- Pioneers in Conservation.
- Washington Department of Ecology's Referendum 38.
- Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.
- Washington Department of Ecology's Conveyance Infrastructure funds.
- Washington Department of Ecology's Water Acquisition funds.
- Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program



“The Irrigation Efficiencies Program has been effective in implementing on-the-ground projects because they will partner with other grant money sources; it has a relatively simple application process and can make money available relatively quickly. When this is combined with the local knowledge and administrative expertise of the Clallam Conservation District, we have a package that can get a lot of conservation work done. A good example of this is the funding that was provided to the Sequim Prairie Tri-Irrigation Reservoir Project when there was a request from an additional landowner to become part of this project after the project had begun. Irrigation Efficiency Funds were quickly available to increase the scope of that project to include the additional landowner and improve the cost effectiveness of the total project.”

Gary Smith

Assembling conveyance pipes in the lower Walla Walla Basin



Pivot center assembly in the Methow Valley

## Commission's Role in Broader Water Resource Issues

### *Drought*

Since the drought of 2001, the Conservation Commission has partnered with the Department of Ecology's Water Resources Program in a coordinated effort to address low flows in 16 critical basins. In addition to the IEGP, the Commission assisted with drought response programs both in 2001 and 2005. The programs primarily offered technical assistance funding through conservation districts to private landowners to assist them in their water conservation and drought mitigation efforts. These efforts included soil moisture monitoring, irrigation water management, information, and education.

### *Climate Change*

The Commission has also played an advisory role in the Climate Change Policy Advisory Work Group to help the Governor and Ecology direct policy anticipating a major environmental shift in future water resources and demand.

### *Columbia River Basin Water Management Program*

With the passage of House Bill 2860 in February of 2006, the Commission also assisted Ecology's Water Resources Program with the development and implementation of the Columbia River Basin Water Management Program (CRBWMP). Those efforts are ongoing, with the Commission seeking new and innovative ways to assist private landowners and water purveyors with their water conservation implementation.

The Commission has managed pass through funding for conservation districts to inventory unfunded water conservation projects within their districts and to attend training sessions that will allow their assistance in the implementation of Ecology's conservation project funding cycles. The Commission has also actively participated in CRBWMP through the policy advisory group, the technical advisory group, the implementation team, and the legislative report team.

Washington State Conservation Commission and the Department of Ecology, in partnership with 47 conservation districts, private landowners, state and local agencies, and Washington's tribes, have achieved promising results in water conservation and instream flow enhancement through the Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program. Citizens across Washington have begun to embrace the idea that, working together, we can find win-win solutions to provide water for people and salmon, while strengthening the farming economy of our communities.

Re-regulating reservoir  
in the Methow River Basin

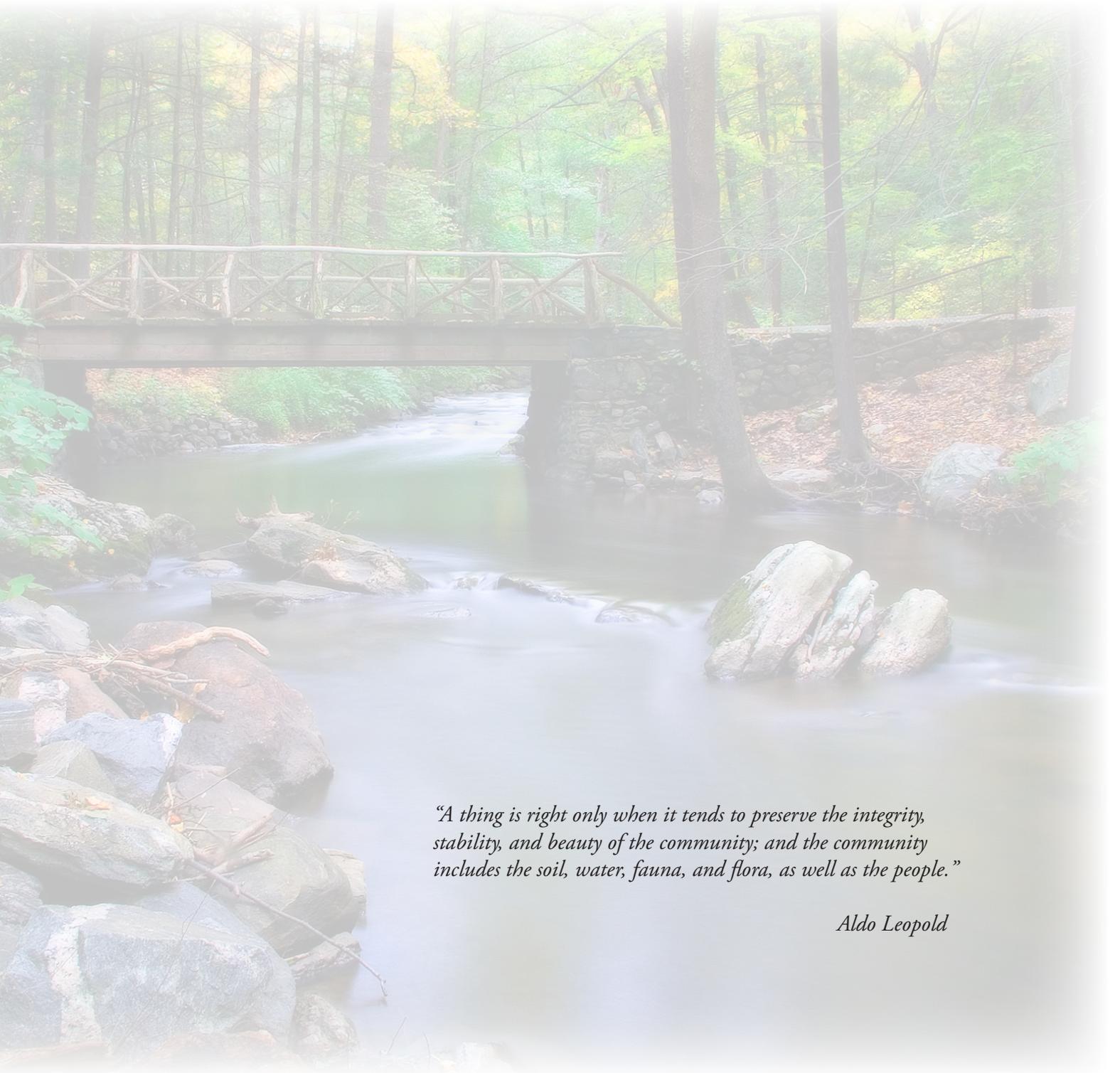


Drip irrigation system in the  
Dungeness River Basin



Pipe installation in  
Clallam County



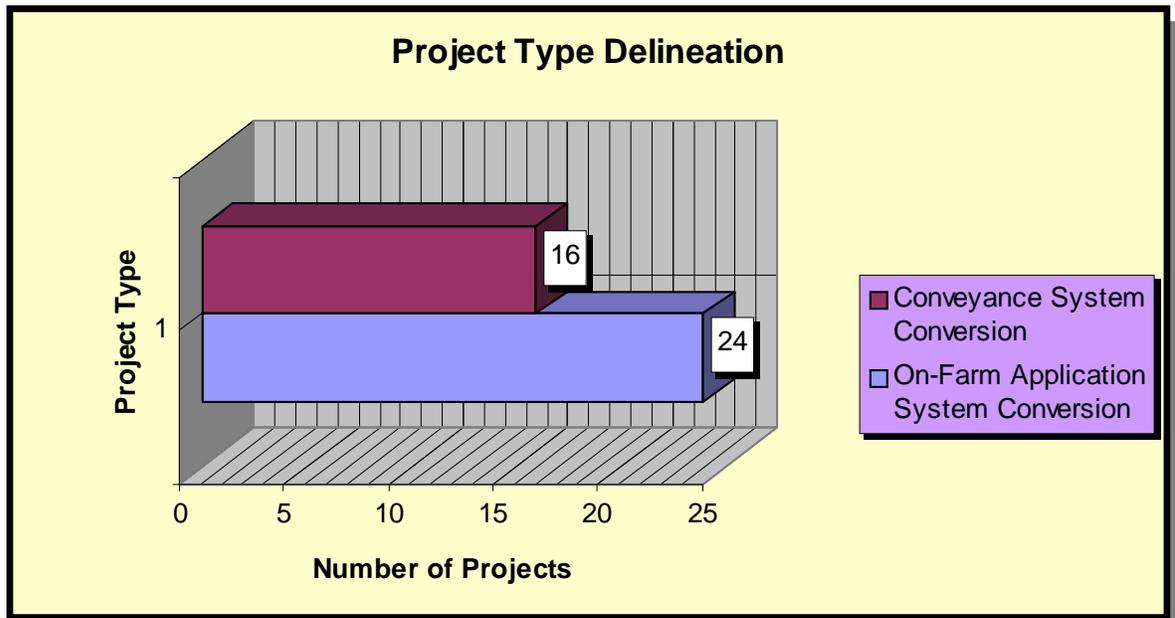


*“A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the community; and the community includes the soil, water, fauna, and flora, as well as the people.”*

*Aldo Leopold*

Table of IEGP Projects

	Number of projects in tributary	Qa (acre feet)	Qi (cubic foot/sec.)
Yakima River	1	337	1.34
Caribou Creek	1	40.5	1.02
Beaver Creek	1	165.21	.71
Yakima River/Wilson Creek	2	1,032.86	3.46
Teanaway River	1	60.793	.249
Un-named stream, Kittitas	1	371	1.4
Tucannon River	6	866.88	10.369
Walla Walla River	1	2,083	9.5
Big Creek	2	300.65	1.3
Dungeness River	11	2,490.46	8.205
Mill Creek	1	376.2	1.5
Taneum Creek	4	410.55	3.81
Alpowa Creek	1	9.2	.1114
Coleman Creek	1	339.5	.08
Mud Creek	1	257.85	.724
Methow River	1	1,098	4.01
Imuma Creek	1	90.39	.25
Touchet River	3	1,647.7	3.027



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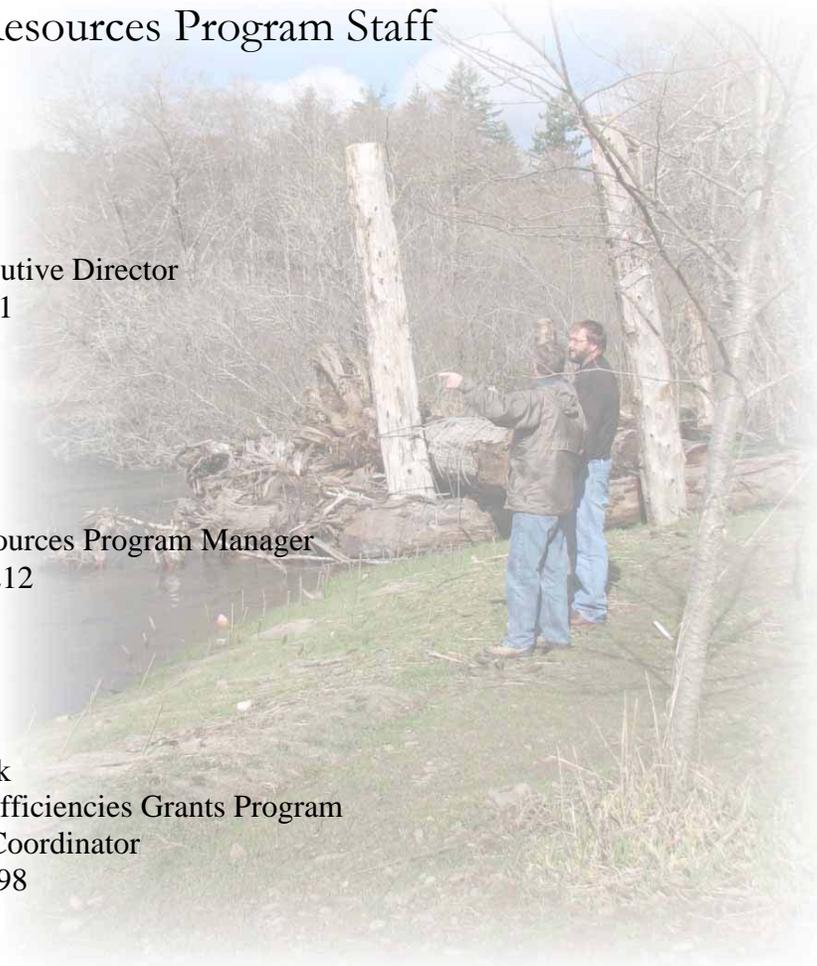
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