



# Conservation in Washington: Powered by People

## MAKING AN IMPACT:

- **Water temperature reduced more than 10 degrees F within primary spring Chinook spawning/rearing reaches.**
- **Issued 35 CREP contracts with landowners, covering 1,063 acres.**
- **Implemented 50-mile geomorphic assessment of the Tucannon River.**

## COLUMBIA CONSERVATION DISTRICT: RESTORING SALMON HABITAT

The Tucannon River supports four ESA-listed species: steelhead, bull trout, and spring and fall Chinook salmon. In 1992, Columbia Conservation District (CCD), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service developed a watershed habitat restoration plan for the Tucannon. The plan and associated assessment revealed threats to salmon habitats and recovery potential, including high water temperatures, stream bank instability, lack of instream habitat diversity and complexity, and sedimentation.

**FINDING A COMMON PATH** In 1996, the CCD began partnering with private and public landowners, BPA, tribes, and state and federal agencies to implement Tucannon restoration projects. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) became the District's primary tool to restore and protect the Tucannon's riparian (streamside) conditions. Administered by the Farm Service Agency and the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC), CREP offers landowners financial incentives for restoring and protecting

riparian habitat on their property. The District's CREP projects complemented their other efforts in the watershed to improve instream and floodplain habitat, increase instream flows using the WSCC's Irrigation Efficiencies program, and implement conservation tillage practices to reduce nonpoint sediment loading.

**RESULTS ON THE GROUND** The CCD issued 35 CREP contracts with landowners covering 1,063 acres, and they secured eight Irrigation Efficiencies contracts that put 11.77 *cubic feet per second* (cfs) and 975 *acre feet* (af) of water into trust (1 cfs = 7.48 gallons, 1 af = 43,560 cubic feet). They also installed 52 irrigation diversion screens, reduced tillage practices with reduction in cobble embeddedness/TSS (total suspended solids) to <20%, and completed multiple instream habitat enhancement projects. Restoration actions contributed to a temperature reduction of more than 10 degrees F within the primary spring Chinook spawning/rearing reaches (RM 26.9). These resource improvements led CCD, with support from BPA and the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, to implement a 50-mile geomorphic assessment of the Tucannon River, including LiDar flights. The assessment identified resource conditions, salmonid habitat limiting factors, and helped plan future restoration actions for continued habitat improvement. Current focus is on the 45 prioritized projects identified in the assessment effort.

Resource restoration and recovery success is dependent on; 1) landowner involvement, support, and trust in a voluntary and incentive-based approach, and 2) committed multi-year funding source(s). Conservation Districts' non-regulatory status and locally led processes involving landowners in the early development stages is a critical link in successful salmon restoration and recovery implementation and partnership development.

Left: Reconnected floodplain following dike/levee removal and modification.



Right: Temperature monitoring trend, Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.

