



# Conservation in Washington: Powered by People



## MAKING AN IMPACT:

- *Saved an estimated 2,404 acre feet of water (nearly 800 million gallons) as a result of irrigation efficiencies.*
- *Removed gravel diversion dams that previously impeded fish migration.*
- *Provided 20 farm owners/operators with more efficient and reliable irrigation delivery systems.*

## WALLA WALLA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT - PARTNERS FIND SOLUTIONS THAT BENEFIT FISH AND FARMERS

The Bergevin-Williams/Old Lowden ditch systems have been used to irrigate farms in the Walla Walla Valley for decades. Gravel diversion dams were built in the Walla Walla River that caused water to flow into these irrigation ditches. However, these dams impeded fish migration, which was a major concern of basin-wide restoration efforts. In an effort to maintain higher stream flows and improve fish passage, the Walla Walla County Conservation District worked with farmers and conservation partners to find a “win-win” solution.

**FINDING A COMMON PATH** The Walla Walla County Conservation District (WWCCD) secured grant funding from the Bonneville Power Administration, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Department of Ecology to remove two gravel dams and consolidate irrigation ditches into a single diversion. To further complement the aquatic improvements, WWCCD upgraded the Bergevin-Williams/Old Lowden irrigation ditches to a pipeline system. This increased irrigation efficiency and reduced water use on 1,816.5 acres. Work on this project began in 2009 and completed in 2013.

**RESULTS ON THE GROUND** Fish, farmers, and workers benefitted from the Bergevin-Williams/Old Lowden irrigation project. Improvements in irrigation efficiency allow farmers to save water each year that is placed into the Trust Water Rights. This results in additional water for fish. In fact, this project has saved an estimated 2,404 acre feet of water—that’s nearly 800 million gallons of water that has been placed into trust. And, the yearly fish passage obstructions have been removed allowing for migration. The 20 farm owners and operators involved in this project are benefitting from an improved irrigation delivery system that is both more reliable and efficient. This complex project also provided jobs for a number of workers in various occupations.

This project demonstrates that conservation and agricultural stakeholders can work in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Water is critically important for agricultural and ecological objectives, but resources can be managed to support both “fish and farmers.”

“The real story of the Bergevin-Williams/Old Lowden consolidation was the cooperation and collaborative workings of private sectors and agencies, both state and federal,” said Kay Mead, WWCCD Irrigation Efficiency Coordinator.

Left: Old Bergevin-Williams gravel diversion dam (“push-up”) prior to removal.



Right: Bergevin-Williams/Old Lowden single diversion that was constructed to replace gravel dams.

