

factsheet

May 2009

Methow River conservation easement protects salmonid fish habitat

The Bonneville Power Administration is currently working with the Yakama Nation to fund the Methow Conservancy's acquisition of a 44-acre conservation easement in the Methow River watershed in Okanogan County, Wash., for fish habitat mitigation. This watershed was selected for protection and restoration because of the risk that the remaining high quality riparian habitat may be lost.

The proposed easement would preserve and restore anadromous fish habitat. Funding for the proposed easement is among the commitments made in the historic 2008 Columbia Basin Fish Accords. The Accords established firm, ten-year funding commitments to habitat and hatchery actions and greater clarity about biological benefits, building on NOAA Fisheries' biological opinions for listed salmon and steelhead and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's fish and wildlife program.

Located in north-central Washington, this property would provide habitat for upper Columbia spring and summer chinook, steelhead trout and bull trout. Spring chinook salmon are listed as endangered, and bull trout and steelhead trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

This property was selected for protection for several reasons. First, it is at the core of the Upper Methow Riparian Protection Corridor, which includes 22 conservation easements protecting 1,794 acres of private land along 23 miles of critical spawning habitat for spring chinook, steelhead and bull trout. Second, the unprotected riverfront properties in this corridor are at high risk of residential development, which severely impacts riparian areas through bank hardening, soil compaction, soil erosion, loss of riparian forest and water-holding capacity, increase in water temperatures and loss of channel migration processes.

The property proposed for easement contains fish habitat that would provide BPA with credits for partial mitigation of resident fish habitat losses due to its Columbia River dams. Other partners involved with this project include the Yakama Nation and the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office's Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Land to get stewardship plan

If this proposed easement is acquired, which is expected in summer 2009, a conservation easement would be placed on the property to ensure that the fisheries values and habitat are protected in perpetuity. The Methow Conservancy would hold the easement and provide long-term stewardship of the easement agreement, including monitoring and enforcement. The Conservancy would work with the landowner to develop a stewardship plan to protect and enhance the riparian habitat. This plan would be updated regularly to account for changes on the property and consider the best available science along with public input and basinwide opportunities for restoration.

Pending BPA's approval of the stewardship plan, any activities that could damage habitat (such as harvesting wood products, grazing livestock or constructing buildings in the riparian zone) would be prohibited on this land.

For more information

If you have questions about this proposal or would like additional information, please contact Jay Marcotte, BPA, at (503) 230-3943, toll-free at (800) 282-3713 or via e-mail at jgmarcotte@bpa.gov. You may also contact Katharine Bill, Methow Conservancy, at (509) 996-2870 or via e-mail at kb@methowconservancy.org.



Methow River Watershed Conservation Easement

Okanogan County, Washington

