



Teamwork Prospers on Toppenish Creek

North Fork Toppenish Creek Restoration



Toppenish Creek, on the grounds of the Yakama Nation in central Washington, is home to native steelhead, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. One of two main tributaries of the Yakima River basin, it serves an essential role in providing cultural resources for the Yakama Nation as well as primary habitat for threatened fish species. That is why, when Toppenish Creek was identified as a top restoration priority for Mid-Columbia steelhead recovery, two entities with shared goals came together: the

Yakama Nation and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The North Fork of Toppenish Creek once provided spawning and rearing habitat for much of the native steelhead population of Yakima River Basin. Over the years, passage had become degraded and the creek had been redirected from its original channel. With Yakama Nation staff in the lead, the Service provided technical expertise and review to design a project that would remove

fish passage barriers and enhance the floodplain. All of the design work was completed in-house and Yakama Nation staff conducted the survey work, reducing the project cost by \$30,000.

Teamwork was key in achieving the project's restoration and conservation goals. The partnership's effort restored access to four miles of cold water refugia, spawning, and rearing habitat, and reestablished one-half mile of instream and riparian habitat.



“The FWS has been a key partner helping to restore the Toppenish Creek Watershed that will increase fish and wildlife populations for the Yakama Nation. ... the North Fork Toppenish Creek Project laid the groundwork to reestablish natural processes needed to maintain riparian and floodplain functions for healthy fish and wildlife ecology.”

-Ryan DeKnikker, Fisheries Habitat Biologist, Yakama Nation Fisheries

Roger Tabor/
USFWS

In addition to access to the headwaters, this project relocated the creek back into its historic channel thus restoring floodplain functions which are vital to maintain habitat resilience against climate change impacts to stream temperature. The project is part of a larger Yakama Nation

and Service team effort to restore passage and habitat in the Toppenish Creek Watershed and encourage healthy populations of steelhead, rainbow trout and cutthroat trout into the future.

To date, our partnership efforts have restored passage to 122 miles

of in-stream habitat for native fish in the Toppenish Creek Watershed. The Service has contributed \$231,800 from the National Fish Passage and Partners for Fish and Wildlife programs toward restoring the watershed, with contributions from our partners totaling \$845,000.



Adult steelhead pair

USFWS

Project Partners

Bonneville Power Administration
Pacific Coastal Salmon Fund
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Yakama Nation

Accomplishment Metrics

Species benefited

- Steelhead trout (threatened)
- Rainbow trout
- Cutthroat trout

Habitat restored

- 4 miles of refugia, spawning, and rearing habitat
- 0.5 mile instream and riparian habitat