

Attachment 2. Project Description



Project Description

Kittitas County CDS

Introduction

The Easton Rearing and Research Facility Project (Project) constructs a research facility to rear and recover Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) populations within the Yakima Basin, consistent with the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan (YBIP). Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD), the Yakama Nation (YN), and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) are working jointly to construct the Facility and will consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) on project facilities and operations. The facility will be operated by the YN with support from KRD and Reclamation. The Facility will be owned by the Kittitas Reclamation District.

Project Name: Easton Research and Rearing Facility

Project Type: Outfall structure – Fish facility wastewater.

Waterbody Name: Lake Easton, Yakima River

Proposed Project Start Date: March 2026

Proposed Project End Date: December 2026

Location: The Project will be located at 1420 Railroad St. Easton, WA on Parcel # 518934, situated northeast of the Easton Dam and south of the Easton State Park (Figure 1). The parcel is owned by Reclamation. The Easton Diversion Dam and its associated facilities are owned by Reclamation and operated by the KRD.

Driving Directions: Traveling westbound on Interstate 90 (I-90), take exit 70, turn left onto Lake Easton Rd., and turn right onto Lake Easton State Park Rd. Traveling eastbound on I-90, take exit 70, turn right onto Lake Easton Rd., and turn right onto Lake State Park Rd.

Project Summary

Facility construction will include a prefabricated building, a new water well, a stormwater pond, an electrical line, underground water lines for the well water and facility process water, and an outfall. To facilitate building and water system construction some land will be cleared, and trenches will be dug. Approximately 15 to 20 trees will be removed in the uplands – see Plans for species, condition, and size details.

The building will include rearing facilities, storage areas, office space, and a bathroom. The building will be a one-story, pre-engineered metal building with approximate dimensions: 4,123 sf (62 ft x 66.5 ft). The gravel parking lot dimensions will be approximately 2,800 square feet (40 ft x 70 ft). This area will be used for parking and fish feed delivery. Septic facilities for the building will include a new septic system adjacent to the facility building. One new well will be needed, one for production (main well) and a secondary for back up or emergency use. The line connections will be underground.

Underground water lines consist of well water lines running from the wells to the building and a facility process drain water discharge line running from the building to an outfall. The outfall will be located landward of the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of the Yakima River where it will discharge to a riprap pad.

All facility process drain water will be conveyed from the facility via underground piping to a filtration system in the uplands specifically designed for the facilities fish load to filter out total suspended solids prior to discharging at the outfall. Trenches for line placement will be approximately 2 feet wide and up to 4.5 feet deep.

Access for construction will utilize existing roads. The current access road will be improved and extended to meet Kittitas County Code and International Fire Code for driveways. Two areas have been identified for staging. These areas are currently open with minimal vegetation; no trees will be removed from these areas. Equipment, materials, and fuel will be placed in the staging areas.

Stormwater from pollution generating impervious surfaces (PGIS) such as the gravel parking area and the non-PGIS, such as the facility roof, will be conveyed via catch basins, storm sewer pipes, and ditches into an infiltration pond for 100% infiltration.

Site restoration includes seeding of disturbed areas, which are not directly used for the project, with a native seed mix.

Purpose and Need

Bull trout were listed as threatened over much of the species' range in 1998 (USFWS 1999). In September of 2015 a Federal Bull Trout Recovery Plan was finalized as mandated under the ESA. In it, the Yakima Basin was designated as one of 24 occupied "core" areas within the Mid-Columbia Recovery Unit (USFWS 2015). Over the last 100 years bull trout in the Yakima River Basin have experienced dramatic declines in distribution and abundance despite ESA listing status and conservation and recovery efforts (WDFW 2004). Several distinct populations remain at critically low abundances (WDFW unpublished data).

Evidence of natural recovery of bull trout in the Yakima Basin has not been achieved. After the Bull Trout was listed in 1999, nearly all the populations have declined or remained stable. The storage reservoirs will be a major hurdle in natural re-colonization of tributaries. Genetic flow between populations have also been restricted. All are an integral part in the upper Yakima River Basin as part of comprehensive basin-wide recovery and conservation efforts for bull trout in the basin. The proposed action was presented to the Yakima Basin Bull Trout Working Group and was one of the strategies presented in both the Yakima Bull Trout Action Plan (2012) and the Bull Trout Recovery Plan (USFWS 2015). The proposed reintroduction approach involves the translocation of bull trout into these areas from one or multiple sources (i.e., donor populations) originating from within the Yakima River Basin, but out-of-basin sources (e.g., Chiwawa River) may be considered in the future. This proposed action and future assessments will address questions to inform the appropriateness of reintroduction following some key contingencies adapted from past studies.

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The purpose of the Project is to assist in the recovery of Yakima Basin bull trout populations. This action is needed to support and enhance other recovery efforts that alone have not significantly improved basin bull trout populations. Some of these populations are near extirpation. The construction of this Facility will allow fisheries managers to support existing populations and begin reestablishing bull trout in areas they formally occupied.

Project Implementation – Timeline and Sequencing

Work is planned to begin in fall 2025 with test well drilling. Facility construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2026, with completion in winter 2026. Facility operations are anticipated to begin directly after construction is completed in 2026/2027.

The Project construction actions will begin in March 2026 and will include mobilization, staging, temporary erosion and sediment control, BMP installation, vegetation removal, and facility construction. Construction is anticipated to be completed in December 2026.

Two staging areas are proposed, one approximately 70 feet from the OHWM of the Yakima River, just downstream of the Dam and one, approximately 185 feet from the OHWM of the Yakima River.

The rearing and research facility building will be constructed approximately 300 feet landward of the OHWM of Lake Easton/Yakima River. The building will be a pre-constructed steel building that will be brought on site. Holding tanks and water systems will be installed. A stormwater infiltration pond will be constructed, and an abandoned outhouse will be demolished. The roadway and parking areas will consist of gravel.

Discharge pipes conveying process drain water will be installed from the facility building, to a filtration system, and then to an outfall located in the uplands consisting of a 3 foot by 6 foot rip pad near the Yakima River. Process drain water will be discharged to an outfall near the Yakima River downstream of the Dam at a maximum rate of 0.71 cfs. The 10-inch diameter effluent discharge line will discharge directly to an existing heavily rip-rap lined section of Yakima River stream bank that is approximately 175-feet downstream of the Easton Dam Fish Ladder entrance and approximately 60 feet landward of the OHWM of the Yakima River. This location was selected due to the natural drainage feature that exists at this location along with the large amount of stable angular rock riprap that is supplemented with an existing heavy growth of riparian zone vegetation that will provide erosion control and energy dissipation prior to discharge of effluent water. Additional rip rap will be hand placed to create a 3 foot by 6 foot dissipation pad for the discharge of process drain water from the facility once it is filtered.

Tree removal will occur in the uplands where the facility building is proposed. No tree or vegetation removal will occur within 200 feet of the OHWM of the Yakima River/Lake Easton.

No activities will occur within the 100 year floodplain.

Habitat Conditions at the Project Site

Aquatic habitat consists of Lake Easton and the Yakima River. Riparian habitat appears to be intact and functional. The Project will have no impacts to riparian habitat and there is no in-water work.

The site is characterized by an overstory dominated by Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), with scattered occurrences of lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), western white pine (*Pinus monticola*), and grand fir (*Abies grandis*). The understory is relatively open, with a shrub layer primarily composed of thin leaf huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*), dull Oregon-grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and Woods' rose (*Rosa woodsii*).

Habitat conditions include a well-developed forest structure and minimal presence of invasive plant species. A dirt road bisects the site, and several buildings are present in the surrounding area, introducing localized disturbance. The site is directly adjacent to a popular Washington State Parks campground. Despite these features, the site retains good ecological integrity and supports a diverse native plant community; however, it may be less utilized by wildlife given the noise disturbance from the campground.

Existing Site and Land Use

The project site is currently used by Reclamation and KRD for the operation and maintenance of the Easton Diversion Dam, KRD irrigation diversions, and the fish facilities. The parcel is zoned Forest and Range, and the land use is Rural Working. Under the Kittitas County Shoreline Master Program, Lake Easton, also known as the Easton Pool, and the Yakima River are designated Shoreline Rural Conservancy environment. The FEMA floodway and FIRM 500 year floodplain are mapped as existing in portions of the parcel outside of the building footprints. No hazardous slopes are mapped within the project footprint. Lake Easton is mapped as a lacustrine limnetic unconsolidated bottom permanently flooded/impounded (L1UBHh) wetland and the Yakima River is mapped as a river upper perennial unconsolidated bottom permanently flooded (R3UBH) wetland.

Existing structures on site include a dam tenders' residence (house), associated garage with lean to, detached garage, bunk house, abandoned outhouse, shed, well, septic, and propane tank. The Easton Diversion Dam and associated fish facilities are within the project parcel. The site is accessed from a gravel road, Lake Easton State Park Rd., which bisects the project site. One building is associated with the dam and associated facilities. Overhead, power, underground power, and communications are available at the site.

Equipment

Equipment such as excavators, dozers, dump trucks, skid steers, front-end loaders, full-suspension yarders, and similar equipment may be used for each of the various project elements. No equipment will be operating in water.

Aquatic Impact Avoidance and Minimization Measures

All work will be completed in the uplands. No in-water work will occur, and no riparian vegetation will be removed. Appropriate BMPs will be used to ensure that no stormwater or sediment enters

the Yakima River/Lake Easton during construction. No work will occur below the OHWM of the Yakima River/Lake Easton. No tree or vegetation removal will occur within the Yakima River Riparian Management Zone (200 feet landward of the OHWM). Staging and refueling of equipment will occur more than 50 feet from the OHWM of the Yakima River. An outflow consisting of a riprap pad will be placed outside of the OHWM, in the uplands, to dissipate discharge flows and allow for infiltration. The outfall location is approximately 60 feet from the OHWM of the Yakima River and existing rip rap exists along the bank. Additional rip rap will be added by hand to create a 3 foot by 6 foot dissipation pad for the process drain water. The outfall location has heavy growth of riparian vegetation that will provide further water erosion control and energy dissipation prior to discharge effluent water entering the Yakima River.

Project Impacts & Mitigation

No waterbodies will be impacted. No work will occur below the OHWM of the Yakima River/Lake Easton, and no vegetation removal will occur within the riparian area. No fish handling will occur, and no alterations are anticipated to riparian habitat or in stream habitat.

Rip rap for the outfall will be placed by hand, and no machinery will be operating in the riparian area of the Yakima River/Lake Easton. Appropriate BMPs will be in place to ensure that no stormwater or sediment enter the Yakima River/Lake Easton.

Process drain water from the facility will be filtered and solids and nutrient pollutants removed prior to discharge of wastewater. No changes will be made to the existing riparian conditions. Although it is anticipated that a portion of the process drain water will infiltrate at discharge, there is a potential for an increase of up to 0.71 cfs of flows to enter the Yakima River. Up to 0.71 cfs will be insignificant to the current flows within the river.

No mitigation is proposed.

The project will continue to use the currently permitted Bull Trout rescue/rearing program protocols that are established under Reclamation's Section 10 ESA Recovery Permit #ES36382D-2 with the USFWS.

NMFS consultation determined the project to be beneficial to ESA fish species and concurred the Project is not likely to adversely affect steelhead (LOC WCRO-2025-00590).

NEPA/SEPA Determination

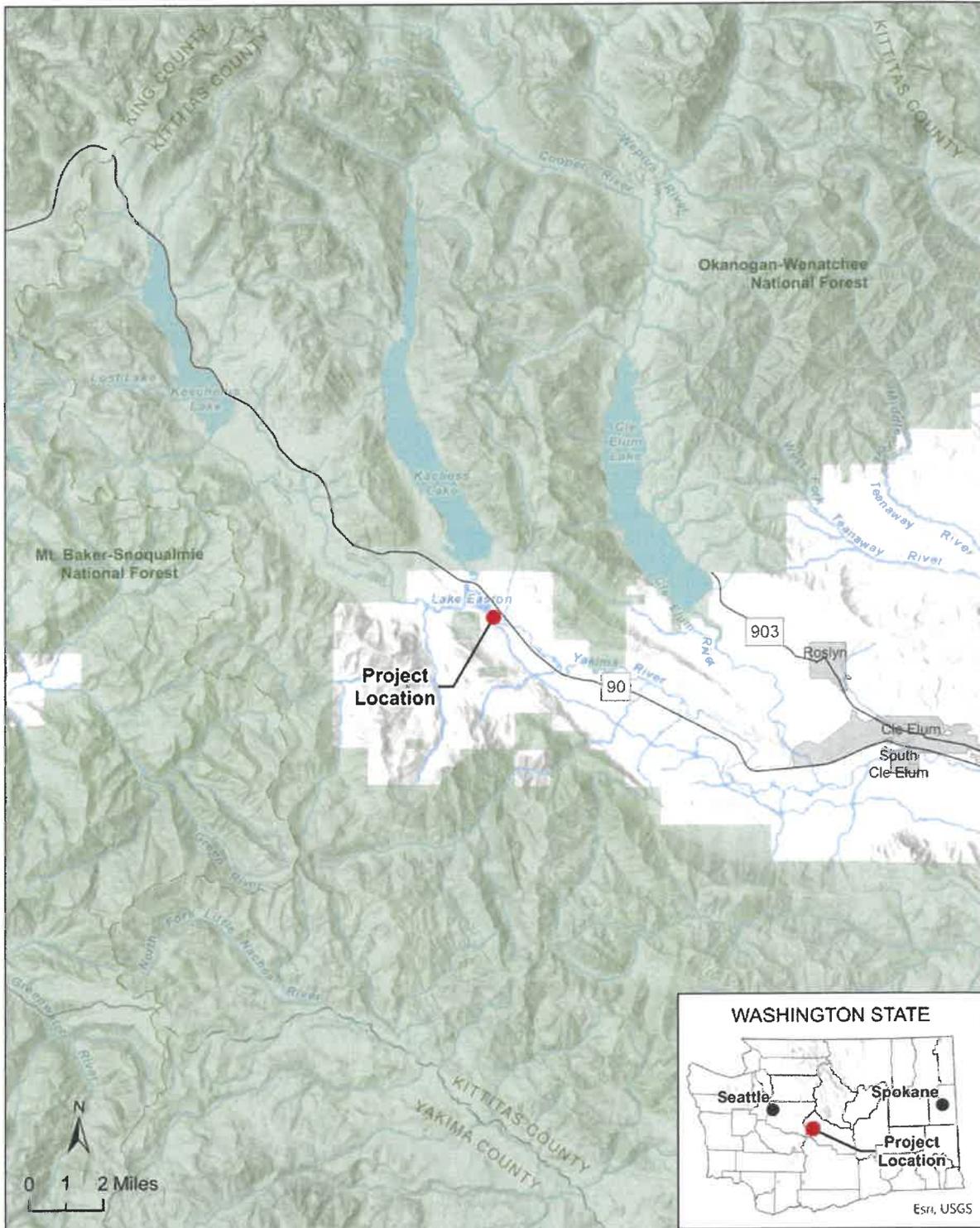
NEPA Categorical Exclusion Checklist Number CPN-YFO-CE-2025-085 was issued 7/16/2025 satisfies the requirements of SEPA.

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Figure 1. Vicinity Map



Data Sources: Kittitas County, USFWS, USGS, WSDOT. Basemap Sources: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS.
Date: September 21, 2022