



East Fork Lewis River Partnership for clean water

2020 East Fork Lewis River Partnership Annual Report

Greetings,

Happy New Year to all of the East Fork Lewis River Partners working to protect and improve water quality in Clark County, Washington! This report features East Fork Lewis River implementation highlights, success stories, and updates from 2020. Thank you for your commitment to clean water. We look forward to working with you in 2021.

East Fork Lewis River Partnership highlights

Background - The East Fork Lewis River and its tributaries are on Washington State's polluted waters list for warm water temperatures and bacteria problems, which drives the need to develop a *Water Cleanup Plan* (TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan). In 2018, the [East Fork Lewis River Watershed Bacteria and Temperature Source Assessment](#) was published to identify priority locations for water quality improvement. The East Fork Lewis River Partnership was formed to work collaboratively with local, state, federal, and tribal governments, non-profits, watershed groups, and private landowners to develop and implement a *Water Cleanup Plan*. Since the Partnership launched, over 50 different partners from 30 different organizations have engaged in East Fork Lewis River Partnership activities. Priorities for long-term implementation include addressing water quality impacts from septic systems, stormwater, and agriculture, and enhancing riparian restoration and streamflow restoration efforts in the watershed. In August 2020, the [Draft East Fork Lewis River Water Cleanup Plan](#) was published. More information is available on [Ecology's website](#) and [Partnership webpage](#).

Meetings - The East Fork Lewis River Partnership convened twice in 2020. The first meeting was held on January 29, 2020. At this meeting, multiple partners shared updates on their work in the watershed. The [agenda](#), [meeting summary](#), and presentations are all available on the [Partnership webpage](#). The second East Fork Lewis River Partnership meeting occurred in August of 2020. The purpose of this meeting was to present the *Draft East Fork Lewis River Water Cleanup Plan* and kickoff the public review and comment period. The [agenda](#) and [presentation](#) from this meeting are available online. Ecology accepted public comment on the Draft Plan through the end of September 2020. Ecology published a [Response to Comments Memo](#) in October 2020, to summarize the public comments received on the *Water Cleanup Plan*. Ecology utilized the remainder of 2020 to respond to comments by developing a new Streamflow Restoration chapter and cost estimates for implementation. These new components of the *East Fork Lewis River Water Cleanup Plan* are expected to be complete in the first quarter of 2021, when the final plan is published.



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Implementation highlights

Multiple East Fork Lewis River Partners implemented successful projects in the watershed in 2020. The following list is a summary of implementation highlights in the watershed.

Nonpoint source implementation and monitoring - Ecology's nonpoint staff have been implementing proactive nonpoint source pollution investigation in the East Fork Lewis River watershed since 2018. In June 2020, Ecology published the [Quality Assurance Project Plan for Monitoring Fecal Coliform Bacteria in Western Washington Water Bodies](#) (QAPP). This QAPP enabled Ecology to collect investigative samples in the watershed to support bacteria pollution identification and correction work. Additional sampling efforts were prioritized to the City of La Center's jurisdiction in Brezee Creek, due to historical bacteria challenges recorded since 2005. Since the East Fork Lewis River Partnership launched in 2018, La Center has identified multiple illicit cross connections in its municipal stormwater system where sanitary sewer was directly connected to stormwater infrastructure. In addition to Ecology's sampling effort, Clark County also completed water quality sampling in 2020, and utilized microbial source tracking (MST) as a tool to identify specific sources of bacteria. Overall, both Ecology and Clark County confirmed high bacteria levels in Brezee Creek. MST sampling confirmed the presence of bacteria from dogs, humans, cows, and horses. Currently, the City of La Center is taking additional water quality samples to try to isolate and locate the major source of bacteria in Brezee Creek. La Center is exploring opportunities to partner with Clark County, and the new Poop Smart Clark program to find and fix sources of bacteria in the City. All of the water quality data collected by Ecology in 2020 has been uploaded to the [East Fork Lewis River Bacteria Monitoring Tableau](#) webpage. A final report summarizing 2020 water quality sampling is expected sometime in 2021. Contact Ecology's nonpoint source and monitoring specialists, [Shawn Ultican](#) or [Molly Gleason](#), if you have additional questions.

Poop Smart Clark pollution identification and correction program - In 2020, a new pollution identification and correction program called Poop Smart Clark was developed to address nonpoint source bacteria issues associated with septic systems and agriculture. Poop Smart partners include Clark Conservation District, Clark County Clean Water Division, Clark County Public Health, Watershed Alliance of Southwest Washington, and Washington State University Extension. Together, partners are utilizing water quality monitoring to complete targeted education and outreach to promote implementation of water quality best management practices (BMPs). Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture's NRCS RCPP program [awarded \\$1.4 million dollars to support agricultural implementation in Clark County](#) through 2025. Ecology is supporting this grant award with a partnership commitment of \$125,000 that will be achieved through Ecology's TMDL position in the Vancouver Field Office. In addition to the NRCS grant, the Poop Smart Clark partnership applied to Ecology's FY 2022 Water Quality Combined Funding program for a grant to implement additional pollution identification and correction efforts in the East Fork Lewis River watershed. This includes a new septic system inspection, maintenance, and repair program. The long-term goal is to implement this new Poop Smart Clark pollution identification and correction program countywide.



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Washington State University Extension - Washington State University (WSU) Extension's Small Acreage Program completed outreach to 1,127 landowners in the East Fork Lewis River watershed through direct mailings of post cards, which advertised educational workshop opportunities in 2020. Workshops hosted by WSU Extension in 2020 included the living on the land series, well and septic workshops, and other topics including forest management, soil management, weed management, watershed stewardship, and pasture management.

Ridgefield Pits Restoration - The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is leading the Ridgefield Pits Restoration Project, which will develop restoration alternatives and preliminary designs to restore river miles 7 to 10, where the river avulsed into historical sand and gravel mining pits. The goal is to complete the alternatives assessment and preliminary design work by the end of 2021, with the target to complete implementation by 2025. The estimated cost for construction of the preferred alternative for Ridgefield Pits restoration is at least \$5.5 million dollars. The first phase of the project was funded with RCO Salmon Recovery dollars.

Thermal Refuge Assessment - Currently the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is leading a Phase 1 Thermal Refuge Assessment of the watershed, which is developing a thermal profile of the river up to river mile 19. This assessment will identify cold-water refuges and areas where the watershed is gaining cold-water inputs. The Phase 2 project will extend this assessment into the upper watershed. This will provide essential information to support future restoration work to enhance cold-water areas, and address low-instream flow issues in the watershed. A Technical Oversight group will review data and rank restoration opportunities. The first phase of the project was funded with RCO Salmon Recovery dollars.

East Fork Lewis River Habitat Pilot Study - In 2019, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB) contracted with PC Trask and Associates to complete an extensive land use and land cover assessment of the East Fork Lewis River for the [Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery Plan Partner Program Implementation Review: East Fork Lewis River Habitat Pilot Study](#). This study quantified land use change and population growth in the East Fork Lewis River since the early 2000s. This effort also evaluated implementation progress and restoration success in the watershed, and made recommendations for future management. Results from this study provided valuable information for the *East Fork Lewis River Water Cleanup Plan*.

Ecology funding updates

Ecology supported grant project development for FY 2022 Water Quality Combined Funding by offering [Project Development Resources](#) to implementation partners. The Ecology draft offer list for FY 2022 funding should be posted on Ecology's [Water Quality Funding Program webpage](#) by January 15, 2021. The draft offer list will assume normal funding levels, but final funding results will not be available until after the state budget passes in June. If you are interested in developing a project for FY 2023, it is never too early to start the project development process. Applications will be due in October 2021. There will be no [Terry Husseman Account grants](#) in 2021 due to a lack of funds in the account.



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For additional information on Ecology's funding program, please contact [Leanne Whitesell](#), Regional Fund Coordinator at (360) 407-6295 or Leaw461@ecy.wa.gov.

Grant implementation updates

The following Water Quality Combined Funding Program projects were initiated, active, or completed in the East Fork Lewis River watershed in 2020. In addition to the grants listed below, the City of Battle Ground was awarded a Stormwater Financial Assistance Program grant in 2020 to build an enhanced stormwater maintenance program and expanded decant facility to process street sweeping and waste from storm drains.

Zimmerly Restoration Project complete - Clark Public Utility District completed a riparian restoration project, which helped increase shade on the mainstem East Fork Lewis River. This project planted over 28,000 trees and restored 24 acres of riparian area along 2,400 lineal feet of river. This project adds to a previously completed 35-acre riparian restoration project directly across the river.

East Fork Lewis River Knotweed Control Project complete - Clark Public Utility District completed a project to remove Japanese Knotweed and other invasive species throughout the watershed. Approximately 183 miles of stream were surveyed, treating 142 acres of knotweed. Clark PUD reached out to 5,872 community members about the impacts of knotweed on water quality. Clark PUD also provided 30 opportunities for volunteers to engage in the project, and completed riparian planting on 6.2 acres of the East Fork Lewis River.

McCormick Creek Restoration - Clark Public Utility District is restoring 20 acres of riparian habitat in the McCormick Creek subwatershed. This project will add 28,000 trees and 50 pieces of large wood to McCormick Creek, with the goal to improve water quality and salmonid habitat. Site preparation and invasive species treatment was completed from 2019 to 2020. Tree planting and large wood installation is expected in 2021.

Manley Creek Riparian Restoration - The Watershed Alliance of Southwest Washington is addressing a shade deficit in the East Fork Lewis River by creating a 10-acre, 100-foot riparian buffer on 2,400 feet of Manley Creek in Lower Daybreak Park. This project also includes education and outreach to all private property owners along Manley Creek to develop future riparian restoration projects. As of December 2020, approximately 3,600 trees were already planted at the project site.

Schriber Riparian Reforestation - Clark County is revegetating approximately 3,500 lineal feet of riparian buffer with a minimum width of 100 feet along the mainstem of the East Fork Lewis River. Approximately 17,920 native trees and shrubs will be planted to increase shade on 13.23 acres of land, with the goal to reduce warm water temperatures in the watershed.



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Salmon recovery funding update

[Salmon Recovery grant awards](#) through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) were announced in September 2020. The following projects were awarded funding in the East Fork Lewis River watershed in 2020.

Protecting Horseshoe Falls - The Columbia Land Trust will use this grant to purchase 21.3 acres near Horseshoe Falls that include nearly a half-mile of habitat along the East Fork Lewis River. By preserving the falls and surrounding forestland, the project will support fish and other wildlife habitat in and around the river, water quality, and other natural processes.

Planning the Restoration of East Fork Lewis River Habitat - The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership will use this grant to develop preliminary designs for the removal of 1,200 feet of hardened shoreline along the East Fork Lewis River, which will reconnect two tributaries to the river, improve the function of a 10-acre floodplain wetland, and restore habitat with native plants.

Applications for the [2021 Salmon Recovery grant-funding round](#) are due to the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board by February 24, 2021. For more information, contact the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board.

East Fork Lewis River news articles

Multiple newspapers highlighted the East Fork Lewis River Partnership in 2020. Ecology would like to thank *The Reflector* newspaper in Battle Ground, Washington for its water quality reporting throughout the year. The following articles were published on the East Fork Lewis River Partnership.

- [Streamflow issues on the East Fork a priority for local recovery groups](#)
- [East Fork partnership draft cleanup plan released](#)
- [East Fork partnership calls for restoration project proposals](#)
- [State to provide \\$4M for six Clark County water projects](#)

Report environmental issues online

Remember - if you see something, say something! Ecology relies on residents and visitors in watersheds to be the “eyes and ears” for the environment. If the public observes pollution issues, they are encouraged to submit an environmental report online at www.ecology.wa.gov/ReportAnIssue. Environmental complaints are one important pathway for Ecology to find and fix water quality concerns.



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New Year's resolutions and next steps for 2021

Thank you to all of the partners and landowners that are working to protect clean water in the East Fork Lewis River watershed. If you have an East Fork Lewis River success story to share from the past year, please send a short summary to Devan Rostorfer at dros461@ecy.wa.gov

What are your clean water resolutions for 2021? Some of Ecology's clean water resolutions for 2021 include:

- Continue implementing proactive nonpoint source investigation to find and fix source of bacteria pollution in the watershed, through the new Poop Smart Clark pollution identification and correction program.
- Continue building relationships with private landowners to implement bacteria and temperature projects on private properties.
- Continue raising public awareness, inspiring behavior change, and promoting water quality stewardship in the East Fork Lewis River.
- Foster new projects for FY 2023 Water Quality Combined Funding.
- Continue identifying opportunities to align salmon recovery and water quality priorities.
- Implement projects that improve water quality in the East Fork Lewis River.

If you are interested in reviewing past East Fork Lewis River Annual Reports, the [2018](#) and [2019](#) annual reports are available online.

Happy New Year,

- [Devan Rostorfer](#), Water Quality Implementation Specialist.
- [Shawn Ultican](#), Nonpoint Source Specialist.
- [Molly Gleason](#), Water Quality Monitoring Specialist.
- [Lawrence Sullivan](#), Water Quality Supervisor.

