

# WALLA WALLA WATERSHED BASIN STRATEGY

## TIER 1 STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN & FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

**Executive Summary**

**February 2025**



## 1. Executive Summary

In 2020 and 2021 the Walla Walla Basin developed a 30-year integrated water resource management strategic plan in coordination with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), the Oregon Department of Water Resources (OWRD) and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation (CTUIR) (collectively, these three entities are known as the *Tri-Sovereigns*). The purpose of this strategic planning effort, known as **Walla Walla Water 2050** (WWW2050), is to improve streamflows, habitat, water supplies and quality of life throughout the bi-state watershed over the course of the next 30 years. The WWW2050 Strategic Plan lays out 60 strategies and groups them into three tiers based on their priority for implementation.

This **Implementation Plan** is a key piece of the WWW2050 effort. It provides an implementation roadmap for the next five years (2025-2029) for high priority strategies that arose out of the WWW2050 effort so far. Specifically, the Implementation Plan focuses on detailed next steps for the twenty-three Tier 1 (highest priority) strategies from the WWW2050 Strategic Plan (Table ES 1).

**Table ES 1: Tier 1 Strategies**

WW 2050 Strategic Plan Tier 1 Strategies		
<b>Monitoring &amp; Metering</b>	1.1	Develop an overarching monitoring strategy and adaptive management plan for fish, habitat, and water to inform actions and evaluate effectiveness
	1.15	Expand and fund streamflow gages throughout the Basin
	1.2	Improve agricultural irrigation water use metering and reporting programs in WA and OR by installing telemetry and improving data use by agencies and water users
<b>Floodplains, Habitat &amp; Fish Passage</b>	1.01	Reconnect floodplain and restore channel complexity Basin wide to reduce flood risk and improve habitat
	1.06	Improve fish passage and habitat conditions in weired and concrete channel sections of flood control project in Mill Creek
	1.07	Restore and protect riparian habitat along tributaries, small streams, and the Walla Walla River Basin wide
	1.09	Protect and improve fish passage at Nursery Bridge and implement levee setback projects upstream and downstream of Milton Freewater
	1.12	Improve flow and timing of fish passage through the Hofer Dam fishway
	1.19	Improve fish passage at Gose Street long term
	1.23	Improve fish passage at Bennington Diversion Dam
<b>Streamflows, Groundwater &amp; Water Supply</b>	1.02	Support the ongoing analyses of the Bi-State Flow Study and work toward a recommendation on implementation of the preferred alternative
	1.03	Direct additional winter flow down the Little Walla Walla River to support alluvial aquifer recharge and stream function

WW 2050 Strategic Plan Tier 1 Strategies		
	1.08	Decrease surface water diversions or substitute for basalt wells during low flow periods
	1.04	Water rights acquisitions (short-term, long-term, and split season) to restore streamflows
	1.05	Improve and expand managed aquifer recharge (MAR)
	1.13	Expand and support Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) to maintain groundwater quality and capacity
Water Quality	1.17	Increase infiltration of stormwater rather than discharge to surface water bodies and improve coordination and management
	1.18	Upgrade Dayton wastewater treatment plant to meet Ecology requirements and watershed community environmental goals
	1.22	Implement conservation tillage and soil erosion BMPs to decrease nonpoint source pollution
Water Policy & Management	1.11	Address legal implications of Bi-State surface water management and protection of instream flow across the state border and protection of instream flow within States
	1.14	Improve coordination and response to drought management Basin-wide
	1.16	Increase coordination and enforcement of floodplain and riparian regulations and management between Counties and State water management entities
	1.21	Additional Bi-State coordination on groundwater regulation

## Goals & Objectives

The overarching goals of the WWW2050 effort are to:

- ▶ Holistically address the basin's longstanding struggle to balance instream and out-of-stream uses and future demand to **ensure enough water for fish, farms, and people**.
- ▶ Identify and prioritize the strategies, projects, initiatives, and/or programs needed to address challenges and **achieve short and long-term goals** for the watershed.
- ▶ Develop an **organizational structure** that ensures accountability and implement the strategy.
- ▶ Achieve clarity around **legal framework and regulatory scheme**, including bi-state coordination and water rights management.
- ▶ Obtain **adequate/dedicated funding** to support the plan.

## Working Groups

Since its inception, the WWW2050 effort has relied on working groups staffed by basin and other experts to guide all phases of work. The effort is overseen by the Tri-Sovereigns, made up of representatives of Washington, Oregon and CTUIR. A Basin Advisory Committee (BAC) made

up of a large, diverse group of basin interests and stakeholders advises and makes recommendations to the Tri-Sovereigns. There are also three working groups that provide analysis and support to the effort. These include the Implementation Work Group, the body tasked with developing this Implementation Plan for Tier 1 priority strategies. Over the course of a year and a half (mid 2023-2024), the Implementation Work Group met to review Tier 1 priority strategies and analyze appropriate next steps and actions for each. In 2024 the Implementation Work Group also broke into four subject matter Sub-Work Groups: Floodplains, Habitat and Fish Passage, Monitoring, Water and Water Quality. Each of these Sub-Work Groups were comprised of subject matter experts and met four times during 2024 to discuss and develop detailed implementation steps for each tier 1 strategy.

### Adaptive Management

This Plan is a living document and is meant to serve as a roadmap for implementing the Tier 1 strategies. As Basin partners and stakeholders work together to implement the actions included in this plan, they may also adjust metrics, targets and next steps to respond to best available science, coordination needs, funding and results from several parallel planning processes ongoing in the Basin. The Implementation Plan may undergo updates or amendments in the future pending consensus decisions by the BAC and funding availability.

### Implementation Plan Structure

This Plan is organized into six main chapters, one for each of the five categories of Tier 1 strategies highlighted above (Table ES 1) and a final chapter containing a funding strategy for the basin. Each strategy is described in detail beginning with metrics that will be used for tracking progress (where available) followed by a description of an **implementation pathway**.

Each implementation pathway includes:

- Specific actions/next steps;
- Responsible parties and others involved;
- Required coordination between other actions and actors, if any;
- Timeline; and
- Other details as relevant.

### Summary of Implementation Planning for Tier 1 Strategies

This section summarizes implementation planning for each of the twenty-three Tier 1 priority strategies.

### Monitoring and Metering Strategies

Table ES 2 below provides brief descriptions of the three Tier 1 monitoring and metering strategies. The goal of improving monitoring and metering across all indicator and data types, is to promote continuous improvement not only in the things being monitored, but in the basin's ability to prioritize effort where it is most needed and analyze and report on progress toward goals.

**Table ES 2: Tier 1 Monitoring and Metering Strategies**

Category	Strategy Number and Description	
<b>Monitoring and Metering</b>	<b>1.10</b>	Develop an overarching monitoring strategy and adaptive management plan for fish, habitat, and water to inform actions and evaluate effectiveness
	<b>1.15</b>	Expand and fund streamflow gages throughout the Basin
	<b>1.20</b>	Improve agricultural irrigation water use metering and reporting programs in WA and OR by installing telemetry and improving data use by agencies and water users

*Strategy 1.10: Develop an overarching basin wide monitoring strategy*

The purpose of an overarching monitoring strategy is to integrate data on key parameters from diverse sources across the basin into a picture of the health of the watershed's rivers and aquatic species. This will support ongoing project implementation across the landscape by tracking progress toward meeting quantitative goals and provide a basis for adaptive management as needed. Another goal of the strategy is to provide a platform for disbursing information to the public and for sharing monitoring data and information between entities working in the basin.

**Key Next Steps Include: Seeking funding to coordinate and develop an overarching monitoring strategy and developing a specific workplan for strategy design and implementation.**

*Strategy 1.15: Expand streamflow gauging*

The current network of stream gauges in the Walla Walla Basin is insufficient to precisely monitor and regulate the full range of water rights in the watershed, adequately monitor instream flows and fully enable accurate bi-state water management. Regulating instream water rights alongside out-of-stream uses, especially across a border, requires a carefully considered system of gauges that is reliable, accurate, remotely accessible, provides legally defensible data that can be used for management by state regulatory agencies, and ideally provides data in real-time. Gauges must be located strategically in relation to points of diversion, tributary inputs and key river reaches. This strategy includes a plan to expand and fund the streamflow gaging network in the basin to meet current and future challenges with intra and bi-state water management and water right regulation.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Prioritizing and selecting 3-5 sites for installation and/or reestablishment of additional gauges; and**
- **Seeking funding for staff time to monitor and maintain existing and future gauges.**

*Strategy 1.20: Improve water use metering and reporting*

This strategy focuses on improving data collection and reporting related to agricultural water diversion and use to: 1) support agriculture's ability to thrive despite growing scarcity; 2) enable precise water management that gets water where it is needed, when it is needed, while balancing competing demands for in and out-of-stream supply; and 3) inform regulatory agency

decision making, planning and permitting. The overall goal is to bring the Washington side of the Basin into 100% compliance on metering and reporting.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Increasing technical assistance and outreach related to metering,
- Improving Ecology's metering database; and
- Relaunching a metering cost-share program in Washington.

**Floodplains, Habitat and Passage Strategies**

Tier 1 strategies in the Floodplains, Habitat and Passage category represent a broad and diverse array of projects. The seven strategies included in this category are listed below in Table ES 3.

**Table ES 3: Tier 1 Strategies in the Floodplains, Habitat and Passage Category**

Category	Strategy Number and Description	
<b>Floodplains, Habitat and Passage</b>	<b>1.01</b>	Reconnect floodplains and restore channel complexity basin wide to reduce flood risk and improve habitat
	<b>1.06</b>	Improve fish passage and habitat conditions in weir and concrete channel sections of flood control project in Mill Creek
	<b>1.07</b>	Restore and protect riparian habitat along tributaries, small streams, and the Walla Walla River Basin wide
	<b>1.09</b>	Protect and improve fish passage at Nursery Bridge and implement levee setback projects upstream and downstream of Milton-Freewater
	<b>1.12</b>	Improve flow and timing of fish passage through the Hofer Dam fishway
	<b>1.19</b>	Improve fish passage at Gose Street long term
	<b>1.23</b>	Improve fish passage at Bennington Diversion Dam

*Strategy 1.01 and 1.07: Basin wide efforts to reconnect floodplains, restore channel complexity and restore and protect riparian habitat*

Strategy 1.01 focuses on river floodplain connectivity and channel complexity. Strategy 1.07 focuses on restoring and protecting riparian habitat along small streams, tributaries and the Walla Walla River. Both strategies are targeted at rivers and streams across the Walla Walla basin.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Continuing to implement floodplain and riparian restoration projects in priority locations, guided by existing and in-development sub-watershed and reach-level assessments;
- Finalizing in-progress assessments in key sub-watersheds and river reaches; and
- Convening relevant parties (Oregon and Washington fish and wildlife agencies, CTUIR and others) to discuss prioritization between identified high priority reaches.

*Strategy 1.06: Mill Creek weir passage improvement*

This strategy involves a variety of different approaches to improving conditions for aquatic species within the Mill Creek Flood Control Project (MCFCP) from Gose Street at approximately river mile 6.7 upstream to approximately river mile 11.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Completing construction to improve fish passage at key locations within the Mill Creek Channel including the 6<sup>th</sup> Ave Bridge replacement, 5<sup>th</sup> Ave Bridge replacement, 3<sup>rd</sup> to Colville reach; and
- Completing construction to improve fish passage within the weir portion of the MCFCO from Tausick Way to Roosevelt Avenue.

*Strategy 1.09: Nursery Bridge fish passage and levee setback*

This strategy focuses on continuing implementation of a long-running project to address fish passage and other issues associated with the Nursery Bridge drop structure and the Milton-Freewater levee system on the mainstem Walla Walla River in Oregon.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Continuing to implement Phase II of the project by addressing passage and habitat needs immediately and above and below Nursery Bridge;
- Beginning Implementation of Phase III including:
  - Completing design and construction for improvements at Nursery Bridget,
  - Obtaining US Army Corps approval for Phase II work,
  - Completing design and construction for floodplain restoration work,
  - Building broad community support.

*Strategy 1.12: the Hofer Dam fishway passage improvements*

Touchet Westside Irrigation District's (TWID) Hofer Dam has sedimentation and flow issues created by previous construction and other projects at the site. This strategy focuses on addressing these issues.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Hiring an engineering consultant to design enhancements to the structure that improve fish passage to support migrating steelhead, spring Chinook and bull trout and that allow TWID to divert their full water right while improving flows at the dam location;
- Completing an alternatives analysis;
- Selecting a preferred alternative; and
- Completing conceptual designs for the preferred alternative.

*Strategy 1.19: Gose Street fish passage improvements*

This strategy focuses on designing and completing a permanent fix for the Gose Street fish passage ladder located at approximately river mile 4.8 on Mill Creek. An alternatives assessment completed prior to this plan has identified an 1,100-foot-long nature-like fishway as the preferred alternative.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Seeking funding to construct the new fishway identified as the preferred alternative.
- Constructing the preferred alternative fishway.

*Strategy 1.23: Bennington Diversion Dam fish passage improvements*

Strategy 1.23 involves completing improvements at the Bennington diversion dam fish ladder on Mill Creek. The ladder provides basic fish passage but does not meet current NOAA Fisheries passage hydraulic standards at all flows. To address this issue a new ladder will be constructed on the right bank (north shore), and the existing ladder on the left bank will remain in place for redundancy.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Completing final designs (Army Corps); and
- Constructing the new fish ladder.

**Streamflows, Groundwater and Water Supply Strategies**

Tier 1 strategies in the Streamflows, Groundwater and Water Supply category include projects that impact streamflow and aquifer levels and drive many critical dynamics in the Walla Walla Basin. The six strategies included in this category are listed below in Table ES 4. Strategies 1.03, 1.05 and 1.13 all rely on accessing water supply during winter and spring months, outside of the traditional irrigation season in the basin. The legal and physical availability of such water remains an open question.

**Table ES 4: Tier 1 Strategies in the Streamflows, Groundwater and Water Supply Category**

Category	Strategy Number and Description	
<b>Streamflows, Groundwater</b>	<b>1.02</b>	Support the ongoing analyses of the Bi-State Flow Study and work toward a recommendation on implementation of the preferred alternative*

Category	Strategy Number and Description	
<b>and Water Supply</b>	<b>1.03</b>	Direct additional winter flow down the Little Walla Walla River to support alluvial aquifer recharge and stream function
	<b>1.04</b>	Water rights acquisitions (short-term, long-term, and split season) to restore streamflow
	<b>1.05</b>	Improve and expand managed aquifer recharge (MAR)
	<b>1.08</b>	Decrease surface water diversions or substitute for basalt wells during low flow periods
	<b>1.13</b>	Expand and support Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) to maintain groundwater quality and capacity
	* This strategy is being scoped in a parallel process by Jacobs Engineering, which will be integrated into this plan once completed	

*Strategy 1.02: Bi-State Flow Study support*

This strategy is being scoped by Jacobs Engineering as part of a parallel effort to the Walla Walla 2050 planning process. The results of this work will be integrated as an appendix into this plan/report when available.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Completing further analysis of infrastructure alternatives under the Walla Walla Basin Study Update (March 2025);**
- **Incorporating analysis of the infrastructure alternatives into the US Bureau of Reclamation Basin Study**
- **Conducting a Walla Walla 2050 programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to select a preferred alternative anchor project; and**
- **Securing a federal partner for the anchor project and seeking congressional support for project design and construction.**

*Strategy 1.03: Little Walla Walla River winter flow*

Additional flow in the Little Walla Walla River (LWWR) has been identified as a priority to support the shallow alluvial aquifer and, to a lesser extent, stream function. In recent years the Walla Walla River Irrigation District (WWRID) has been directing up to 15 cubic feet per second (cfs) of flow down the LWWR during their non-irrigation season for domestic and stock water needs. A threshold issue for this strategy is identifying a legal source of water that can be diverted down the little Walla Walla River in the winter.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Completing an Oregon Water Resources Department water availability analysis and USGS study to provide additional information on physically water availability and ground and surface water interactions.**
- **Convene conversation on winter water needs in the Walla Walla Basin once USGS study is complete.**

*Strategy 1.04: Environmental water transactions*

This strategy involves working to acquire senior water rights from willing sellers basin-wide and transferring these water rights instream to help meet instream flow needs. Various water acquisition tools will be used to pursue this strategy, such as leases, purchases, and split season agreements. Water right acquisition may also be a part of other types of water management projects including source switches, conservation easements, and water use efficiency projects. Acquired water rights will be legally protected instream from diversion by junior water right holders using the Washington State Trust Water Rights Program RCW 90.42, RCW 90.90.120, and the Oregon Instream Water Rights Act. The focus of this strategy is primarily on summer low-flow periods however it is important to recognize that there are instream flow needs during other times of the year.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Ongoing work including:**
  - **Conducting outreach and project solicitation, due diligence and negotiation,**
  - **Negotiating and contracting**
  - **Shepherding water right change processes.**

*Strategy 1.05: Improve and expand managed aquifer recharge (MAR)*

Improving managed aquifer recharge means better understanding how and where to implement MAR projects to meet basin objectives. Expanding MAR means increasing the size and/or amount of water recharged at existing sites and/or developing new MAR sites.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Completing an Oregon Water Resources Department water availability analysis and USGS study to provide additional information on legal and physically water availability and ground and surface water interactions; and**
- **Utilizing new information to inform and direct future MAR efforts including understanding in and out of stream benefits of past, current and proposed projects.**

*Strategy 1.08: Surface water to basalt source switches*

The primary example of Strategy 1.08 is City of Walla Walla's source switch from Mill Creek to basalt wells for the benefit of Mill Creek instream flows. The City has an agreement with the CTUIR to help compensate them during the summer months for the increased pumping costs that are required to switch their summer water source from Mill Creek to basalt wells. However, this agreement is temporary and not guaranteed over the long-term. There may be opportunities to work with other current conjunctive users of ground and surface water to swap one for the other to benefit streamflows. However, no other specific opportunities have been identified to date.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Finalizing a long-term agreement between the City of Walla Walla and CTUIR for operating a source switch from the City's Mill Creek surface diversion to its basalt wells;
- Conducting an initial assessment/feasibility inquiry into expanding the use of this tool to other water users in the basin that have both surface and basalt well access.

*Strategy 1.13: Expand and support Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR)*

Aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) is a method of aquifer recharge designed to allow recovery of a large portion of the water placed within a relatively isolated hydrogeological unit, like those that can be found in the Walla Walla Basin's basalt aquifer systems. The City of Walla Walla currently uses ASR and may have opportunities to expand and improve its operation. The City of Milton-Freewater has also been investigating the use of ASR with its existing basalt wells to store winter water diverted from the Walla Walla River in the basalt aquifer for use during the summer. However, any use of winter water needs to be assessed considering the outcomes of the ongoing OWRD winter water availability analysis and the USGS study.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- Completing an Oregon Water Resources Department water availability analysis and USGS study to provide additional information on physically water availability and ground and surface water interactions;
- Resolving water quality challenges with City of Walla Walla's permitted ASR operations; and
- Applying for and securing a new ASR reservoir permit for the City of Walla Walla from Ecology to expand ASR operations to additional wells.

**Water Quality Strategies**

Strategies in this category include two focused on addressing nonpoint source pollution, one from urban stormwater runoff and one from agricultural practices, and one strategy addressing one of the point sources in the watershed: the City of Dayton's wastewater treatment plant. The six strategies included in this category are listed below in Table ES 5.

**Table ES 5: Tier 1 Strategies in the Water Quality Category**

Category	Strategy Number and Description	
<b>Water Quality</b>	<b>1.17</b>	Increase infiltration of stormwater rather than discharge to surface water bodies and improve coordination and management
	<b>1.18</b>	Upgrade Dayton wastewater treatment plant to meet Ecology requirements and watershed community environmental goals
	<b>1.22</b>	Implement conservation tillage and soil erosion BMPs to decrease nonpoint source pollution

*Strategy 1.17: Increase stormwater infiltration*

Pollutants carried by stormwater runoff as well as changes in the patterns of runoff from lands following development, affect the quality and habitat function of the Basin's waters (Washington

State Department of Ecology 2019). To address pollutant loading from non-point sources in Washington, general NPDES permits, referred to as Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permits are applied at the city or county level. Federal regulations specify minimum measures required for municipal stormwater programs for compliance with Phase II rules. The Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington (Washington State Department of Ecology 2019) provides technical guidance for projects to comply with municipal stormwater requirements. The method by which the Manual mitigates the adverse impacts of development and redevelopment is through the application of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Increasing staffing capacity at the City of Walla Walla, City of College Place, City of Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla County to help enforce and monitor compliance with existing stormwater regulations;**
- **Identifying and securing increased funding for stormwater project implementation; and**
- **Investigating potential incentives for participating in stormwater management by new and existing developers, including reduced fees or a stormwater credit trading market.**

*Strategy 1.18: Upgrade Dayton's wastewater treatment plant*

The City of Dayton's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) collects the City's municipal wastewater and treats it before discharging it into the Touchet River at river mile 52.1. The focus of this strategy is on constructing a storage facility to store the City's discharge during the low flow months so the City can treat it and discharge it at a time of year when doing so will not violate the Clean Water Act permits.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Pending successful funding application to Ecology, continue to move forward with finalizing acreage needed to purchase for new storage facility;**
- **Initiating a mixing zone study for proposed new outfall locations; and**
- **Beginning design of a new treatment plan upon successful land purchase.**

*Strategy 1.22: Implement conservation tillage and soil erosion BMPs*

Oregon and Washington have plans for reducing pollution from agricultural and rural lands consistent with goals for nonpoint source pollution reduction established in the Walla Walla Basin Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). This strategy is focused on ensuring that landowners have the resources, including funding and technical assistance where necessary, to implement best management practices to benefit water quality.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Implementing projects with farmers to convert 5,000 acres to conservation tillage (STIR 30 or less); and**
- **Prioritizing up to ten agricultural sites for technical and financial assistance.**
- **Implementing projects to protect or enhance 200 acres of riparian buffer (meeting Ecology buffer guidance) adjacent to crop production**

**Water Policy and Management Strategies**

State, federal and local policy and regulation, and coordination across agencies and entities at all levels, are critical to implementing the Walla Walla 2050 Plan. Policy and regulation provide boundaries for implementation in the form of rules and requirements for a wide range of actions related to watershed health while also serving as the foundation for action through program and other authorizations like Washington’s Trust Water Program, Oregon’s Instream Water Rights Act, and others. This section reviews the status of the primary policy, regulatory and coordination considerations that underly the four tier 1 strategies in this category.

**Table ES 6: Tier 1 Strategies in the Water Policy and Management Category**

Category	Strategy Number and Description	
<b>Water Policy and Management</b>	<b>1.11</b>	Address legal implications of Bi-State surface water management and protection of instream flow across the state border and protection of instream flow within States
	<b>1.14</b>	Improve coordination and response to drought management Basin-wide
	<b>1.16</b>	Increase coordination and enforcement of floodplain and riparian regulations and management between Counties and State water management entities
	<b>1.21</b>	Additional Bi-State coordination on groundwater regulation

*Strategy 1.11: Bi-State surface water protection*

In 2023 the Washington State legislature passed legislation that enables Ecology to protect water savings associated with specific developed water projects instream against diversion by out of stream water rights. Ecology can also protect Oregon water rights as developed water. In August and September of 2024 Ecology and OWRD undertook a pilot project to transfer a portion of the City of Walla Walla’s Oregon water right instream and protect it as developed water. Eventually, water from a future infrastructure project such as a reservoir or pump exchange with the Columbia River could be protected from out of stream users via the developed water provision of RCW 90.90.120. On the other side of the border, Oregon also passed legislation directing assessment of bi-state water management and developed water.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Completing a pilot developed water project in 2025 or 2026.**

*Strategy 1.14: Coordinated drought response*

Coordinated, effective and comprehensive drought response requires better planning and short-term coordination to implement response measures. Drought response needs to be comprehensive and include all types of water users municipal and domestic to agricultural including both surface and groundwater

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Forming a drought response work group to advise on creation of a Drought Response Plan;**
- **Completing a Walla Walla Basin Drought Response Plan including identifying potential agricultural and municipal water use drought response projects; and**
- **Implementing agricultural and municipal water use drought response measures.**

*Strategy 1.16: Enhance coordination on floodplain and riparian regulations*

There is a lack of training available for code enforcement officers/agencies when it comes to riparian issues and enforcement of riparian regulations can be challenging due to the multiple agencies and regulations. The most pressing need for this strategy is developing a shared understanding between the basin's city and county planning staff and fish and natural resources managers.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Completing a study to outline existing floodplain and riparian regulation, including whether there are any inconsistencies among different jurisdictions' ordinances and determining if and how to resolve them.**

*Strategy 1.21: Bi-State groundwater coordination*

Ecology and OWRD are currently working on parallel research to the USGS Groundwater study to better understand groundwater conditions and movement around the state line in the Walla Walla Basin.

**Key Next Steps Include:**

- **Gathering depth and completion data on individual wells in Washington to inform future co-management actions.**

## Responsibility for Implementation

The diversity of near-term actions described in this plan require collaboration and work from numerous people and entities including state and federal agencies, individual private landowners, irrigation districts and non-governmental organizations, among others. Table ES 7 below summarizes, by strategy, the primary responsible party and entities needed to support implementation.

**Table ES 7: Lead and Support Implementors for Strategy Actions**

Category	#	Strategy Short Name	Actions 2025-2029	Lead Implementors	Support
<b>Monitoring &amp; Metering</b>	1.1	Develop a basin wide monitoring strategy	Coordinate and develop an overarching monitoring strategy	WDFW	CTUIR, ODFW
	1.15	Expand streamflow gauging	Fund O&M for existing gauges and identify, fund and install 3-5 new between 2025-29	OWRD, Ecology, USGS	
	1.2	Improve water use metering & reporting	Work towards 100% compliance with metering and reporting requirements in WA	Ecology	
<b>Floodplains, Habitat &amp; Fish Passage</b>	1.01	Floodplain reconnection	Complete assessments; use assessment to guide projects; convene discussion on prioritization	CTUIR, ODFW, WDFW, WWCCD, CCCD, WWBWC, TSS	
	1.06	Mill Creek weir passage improvement	Complete construction to improve fish passage at key locations within the channel and the weired portion of the flood control project	TSS	ACOE, Walla Walla County, Snake River Salmon Recovery Office, WDFW, CTUIR
	1.07	Basin wide riparian habitat restoration	Complete assessments; use assessment to guide projects; convene discussion on prioritization	WWCCD, CCCD, WWBWC, Kooskooskie Commons, TSS	
	1.09	Nursery Bridge fish passage & levee setback	Address passage and habitat needs immediately above and below Nursery Bridge; complete feasibility and designs to improve riverine, hydrologic, geomorphic processes through the reach	CTUIR with MF Water Control Dist.	ACOE, City of MF, WWBWC, NOAA/NMFS, WWRID, HBDIC
	1.12	Hofer Dam fishway	Identify an alternative for fish passage and diversion improvements	WWT, TWID	CTUIR, WDFW

Category	#	Strategy Short Name	Actions 2025-2029	Lead Implementors	Support
		passage improvements			
	1.19	Gose Street fish passage improvements	Design and construct a permanent fix for the Gose Street fish passage ladder	TSS	CTUIR
	1.23	Bennington Dam fish passage improvements	Install new fish passage facility that meets current standards at all flows	USACE	CTUIR
<b>Streamflows &amp; Groundwater</b>	1.02	Support development of an anchor project	Evaluate alternatives and select a preferred alternative	Ecology, OWRD, CTUIR	USBR
	1.03	Little Walla Walla River winter flow	Once USGS study complete, convene conversation on competing winter water needs	OWRD, WWRID, HBDIC	
	1.04	Environmental water transactions	Implement 8 water right acquisitions projects and transfer water rights instream	WWT	CTUIR, Ecology, OWRD
Category	No.	Strategy Short Name	Actions 2025-2029	Lead Implementors	Support
<b>Streamflows &amp; Groundwater</b>	1.05	Improve & expand MAR	Once USGS study complete, convene conversation on how to best tailor MAR to meet basin needs	OWRD, Ecology, CTUIR, WWBWC, WWCCD	
	1.08	Surface water to basalt source switches	Finalize long-term agreement between the City of Walla Walla and CTUIR; initial assessment into expanding tool use to other water users	City of Walla Walla, CTUIR, WWT, WWCCD	
	1.13	Expand & support ASR	Complete USGS and OWRD studies to evaluate OR ASR; resolve water quality challenges with City of	City of Walla Walla, City of Milton-Freewater	Ecology, OWRD, CTUIR

Category	#	Strategy Short Name	Actions 2025-2029	Lead Implementors	Support
			Walla Walla's permitted ASR operations		
<b>Water Quality</b>	1.17	Increase stormwater infiltration	Increase staffing capacity; secure increased funding for stormwater projects; investigate potential incentives for participation	Cities of Walla Walla, College Place & Milton-Freewater, Walla Walla County, WWBWC	ODEQ, Ecology
	1.18	Upgrade Dayton's WWTP	Finalize amount of acres needed for purchase, begin mixing zone study for new outfall, begin design of new plant after land purchase	City of Dayton	Ecology
	1.22	Implement conservation tillage and soil erosion BMPs	Convert 5,000 acres to conservation tillage; protect or enhance 200 acres of riparian buffer	WWCCD, WWBWC, Umatilla SWCD, USDA, NRCS, WSDA, Counties	OR Dept. of Ag., WA Dept. of Ag.
<b>Water Policy &amp; Management</b>	1.11	Bi-State surface water protection	Complete pilot developed water project in 2025	Ecology, OWRD	CTUIR
	1.14	Coordinated drought response	Plan, fund and implement agricultural and municipal water use drought responses measures	WWCCD, Ecology, OWRD, CTUIR, Cities, Walla Walla County, WWT, WWBWC	
	1.16	Enhance coordination on floodplain and riparian regulations	Complete a study to more fully outline existing floodplain and riparian regulation	Counties, Cities of Walla Walla, Milton-Freewater & College Place, WWCCD, Kooskooskie Commons	ODEQ, Ecology

Category	#	Strategy Short Name	Actions 2025-2029	Lead Implementors	Support
	1.21	Bi-state groundwater coordination	Gather depth and completion data on individual wells on the WA side of the state line to help inform future co-management actions	OWRD, Ecology	

### Implementation Action Timeline

This plan covers the period 2025-2029. Table ES 8 below summarizes implementation timing and phasing of specific projects and actions outlined in this Plan. Instead of organizing by strategy category, this table is organized into three groups: site specific strategies ready for implementation, basin-wide strategies ready for implementation and basin-wide strategies with pending studies or other needs prior to implementation.

**Table ES 8: Implementation Timing and Phases 2025-2029**

### Funding Strategy

The final element of this Plan is a detailed fundraising strategy (Strategy). This Strategy identifies and prioritizes funding sources appropriate to support WW2050 implementation. Potential funding sources considered include federal and state awards and direct congressional or state legislative appropriations. The primary objective of the Strategy is to diversify funding for WW2050 beyond the primary public source utilized to date, the state of Washington Ecology.

In 2023, the Washington Legislature enacted HB 1322 to authorize continued state funding for various components of WW2050. A key condition of the legislation is that at least one-half of the total costs of WW2050 projects (including a potential Columbia River Exchange project)

must be funded through federal, private, and non-Washington state sources. This legislative requirement provides a strong impetus for Walla Walla Basin partners to identify and develop a diverse range of funding sources to leverage funding from Ecology.

The funding strategy provides a matrix of potential funding programs for each of the different Tier 1 strategy categories (Monitoring and Metering, Floodplains and Habitat, etc.) and a list of recommended priority funding sources for the next two years (2025-2026). These priority lists are included below.

#### Near-term (FY 2025-2026) Funding Priorities for Monitoring and Metering

The following is a list of recommended priorities for securing funding for the Monitoring and Metering group over the next two fiscal years.

- Seek an Applied Science Grant from Reclamation to develop an overarching monitoring strategy and adaptive management plan for fish, habitat, and water to inform actions and evaluate effectiveness (**Strategy 1.10**). Include establishing a monitoring and data management plan in any AERP or EWRP proposal submitted to Reclamation. Seek required non-federal cost-share contributions from OWEB's Monitoring Grants program and Ecology's Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants Program.
- Seek funding from Bonneville Power Administration, Reclamation's AERP, US Forest Service, US Geological Survey, OWEB and/or Ecology to expand the network of streamflow gages throughout the Basin. (**Strategy 1.15**)
- Consider submitting an application Reclamation's Water and Energy Efficiency Grants or Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects funding sources to improve agricultural irrigation water use metering and reporting programs by installing telemetry and improving data use by agencies and water users (**Strategy 1.20**). Include monitoring and metering activities and equipment in any EWRP proposal to Reclamation or RCPP proposal to NRCS. Seek required non-federal cost-share contributions from OWEB's Monitoring Grants program and Ecology's Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants Program.

#### Near-term (FY 2025-2026) Funding Priorities for Floodplains, Habitat and Passage Strategies

The following is a list of recommended priorities for securing funding for the Floodplains, Habitat and Passage group over the next two fiscal years.

- Prioritize and sequence federal and state funding proposals for any ripe passage barrier removal projects under **strategies 1.06, 1.09, 1.12, 1.19 and 1.23**. Funding sources to consider include National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-Fisheries Community Based Restoration Program, Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal, and Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal programs, Bureau of Reclamation's Environmental Water Resources Projects (EWRP) and Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program (AERP) funding opportunities, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Restoration Grants and grants from Washington Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board.

- Meet with local Army Corp of Engineers (Corps) staff to discuss ripe channel, floodplain and riparian projects under **strategies 1.01** and **1.07** for potential inclusion in the 2026 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). If viable projects are identified, work through the Corps process for inclusion on the feasibility study list and work with the key US representatives and senators from Oregon and Washington to ensure congressional support.
- Consider applying to other federal programs for funding **strategies 1.01** and **1.07** including the Federal Emergency Management Administration's (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) and Flood Mitigation Assistance programs and the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).
- Potential state funding sources to pursue for **strategies 1.01** and **1.07** include OWEB's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Restoration Grants programs, Ecology's Floodplains by Design and Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants programs, Washington RCO Salmon Recovery grants and Washington State Conservation Commission's (SCC) CREP. (An OWEB Focused Investment Partnership for the FY2025-2027 biennium is also a possibility for restoring aquatic habitat for native fish species.)
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program could be viable for floodplain and riparian projects in and around the city of Walla Walla.

#### Near-term (FY 2025-2026) Funding Priorities for Streamflow, Groundwater and Water Supply

The following is a list of recommended priorities for securing funding for the Streamflows, Groundwater and Water Supply group over the next two fiscal years.

- Coordinate with Washington Water Trust and others to propose water transactions (**Strategy 1.04**) for funding from NFWF's Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program, OWEB's Water Acquisition Program and Ecology's Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants program.
- Investigate and develop Reclamation sources to fund strategies pertaining to managed aquifer recharge (MAR), aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) and alluvial aquifer recharge (**strategies 1.03, 1.05, 1.08 and 1.13**).
- Work with Oregon and Washington NRCS state conservationists to develop an approved watershed plan that will facilitate PL 566 funding for MAR and ASR projects (**strategies 1.03, 1.05, 1.08 and 1.13**).

#### Near-term (FY 2025-2026) Funding Priorities for Water Quality Strategies

The following is a list of recommended priorities for securing funding for the Water Quality group over the next two fiscal years.

- Evaluate EPA's Urban Waters Small Grants program, FEMA's Flood Mitigation Assistance Grants and Reclamation's Environmental Water Resources Projects programs to improve stormwater management consistent with **strategy 1.17**.

- Work with US ACE to determine whether its Section 195 Program could be expanded to include the City of Dayton's wastewater treatment plant (**strategy 1.18**).
- Consider how best to increase utilization of NRCS EQIP and RCPP programs to improve soil management BMPs (**strategy 1.22**).

#### Near-term (FY 2025-2026) Funding Priorities for Water Policy and Management

The following is the recommended priority for securing funding for the one appropriate activity under the Water Policy and Management group over the next two fiscal years.

- Seek a Drought Resiliency Grant from Reclamation to improve coordination and response to drought management Basin-wide (**Strategy 1.14**). Seek state cost-share funding through OWEB's Stakeholder Engagement Grant program and Ecology's Water Resources Drought Response Grants program (the latter building upon Ecology's previously completed drought plan.)

#### Funding Strategy Conclusions

Walla Walla stakeholders must diversify and expand the sources of secured funding to fully support successful implementation of Tier One strategies (and eventually the Tier 2 and 3 strategies) over time. Increased partner collaboration has proven productive for fundraising efforts in other western watersheds that are like the Walla Walla Basin. This could be particularly beneficial for improving funding outcomes for the Tier One strategies that consist of physical restoration activities. Improved collaboration and successful project fundraising and implementation will also demonstrate a shared vision for basin restoration that will be necessary to secure substantial congressional funding authorizations.