



WASHINGTON WATER TRUST

Strategic Plan

2026-2030



Our Mission

WWT's mission is to protect and restore water in rivers and streams across Washington state. WWT has implemented permanent flow restoration projects protecting more than 7 billion gallons of water instream since 1998. WWT projects benefit more than 1,000 river miles in over 50 rivers and streams, including hundreds of miles of flow-limited tributaries that are home to salmon, steelhead, trout, and other wildlife.



Our Vision

WWT envisions a future where rivers and streams flow year round. Fish, wildlife, and people need freshwater. Salmon and steelhead need cool, flowing water to migrate and spawn. Flowing rivers are a recreational asset, an economic driver, and an integral natural, cultural, and spiritual resource for Tribal Nations. We respond to changing water needs to build a sustainable freshwater future.

What we do

The Pacific Northwest faces a water crisis. Over appropriation, rising demand, and climate change endanger local freshwaters. Washington is experiencing higher temperatures, reduced mountain snowpack, and more frequent droughts. Ensuring rivers and streams flow into the future requires innovative approaches and collaboration. We will continue partnering with diverse groups to restore and protect water instream through:

- Buying and leasing water rights through voluntary market-based transactions for placement in the Washington Trust Water Rights Program.
- Using new tools to better assess and target strategic water rights for acquisition or lease.
- Developing drought and dry-year response programs.
- Retiming water flows for fish using techniques like Managed Aquifer Recharge.
- Switching irrigation diversions from small tributaries to larger rivers.
- Helping farmers and agricultural businesses increase water efficiency to divert less for irrigation.
- Prioritizing projects in watersheds where enhanced flows will most benefit stream health, aquatic life, indigenous first foods, and community value.



Goals & Outcomes



Instream water protection increases statewide

Our team will increase water protected in trust statewide by 20% over current levels. We will expand our use of tools to target strategic water rights. We will work to transition short-term water transactions to long-term leases and permanent purchases. WWT will work to ensure the state effectively implements the Washington Trust Water Rights Program so that protected flows stay instream.

Restore flows in new watersheds

We will develop water transactions in more watersheds, including in:

- **Chehalis**—complete a water rights assessment, conduct outreach to water users and partners, and develop three water transaction projects.
- **Oregon**—complete first projects in priority Oregon basins, including the Fifteenmile Creek watershed.
- **Puget Sound/Salish Sea** (Nooksack, Snohomish, Cedar-Sammamish, Green-Duwamish)—forge new partnerships, complete water rights assessments, and develop three water transaction projects.



Scale up flow restoration impacts

We will grow our impact in watersheds where we work, including the:

- **Upper Columbia**—restore 30 cfs and 10,000 acre-feet in Icicle Creek, Loup Loup Creek, Salmon Creek, and targeted tributaries.
- **Walla Walla**—establish a drought response program for low streamflow years and restore 25 cfs and 4,500 acre-feet of annual flows in the Touchet River, Walla Walla River, and Mill Creek.
- **Yakima**—restore 10-20 cfs and 2,000-4,000 acre-feet of flows, with a focus on the Upper Yakima Tributaries.
- **Dungeness**—build up the long-term drought response program and advance water storage, source switches, and projects to achieve durable flow restoration.

Use of recycled water increases

WWT will continue research into the long-term use and benefits of recycled water. This work will include implementing pilot projects on farms to demonstrate recycled water use and build demand.



Key Approaches

Strategically implementing water transactions

WWT will strategically focus and grow our efforts to achieve our goals and address the water crisis threatening our rivers and streams. This prioritization will include:

- Strengthening our relationships with Tribal Nations to inform our project prioritization, design, and implementation.
- Transitioning short-term water leases to long-term leases and purchases.
- Developing new short-term water transactions in more watersheds.
- Seeking feedback on flow targets in critical streams from fisheries co-managers.
- Analyzing diversion data, stream flow data, and water right priority dates to target water transactions when and where needed most.



Promoting sustainable water management

WWT will advance sustainable water management policies, planning, and collaboration to achieve our water conservation goals. To achieve this growth, our team will:

- Consult with government agencies to help them better manage their water rights and meet climate resiliency goals.
- Engage infrastructure projects, such as water storage, if there are instream flow benefits and non-infrastructure projects are unavailable.
- Work with state and county governments on drought planning and multiyear mitigation programs to ensure adequate streamflows for fish during droughts.
- Advocate for the legal and regulatory use of the Washington Trust Water Rights Program, including laws and policies that support stable funding for flow restoration project development and water transactions.
- Catalyze increased recycled water use for irrigation, industrial, and municipal uses to reduce surface and groundwater diversions.



HELP SAVE LOCAL RIVERS

WWT NEWSLETTER



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