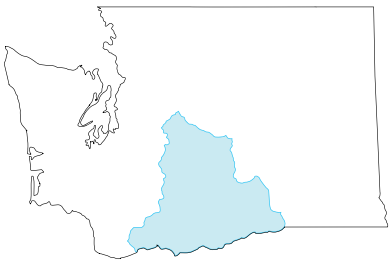
REGION 12: Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group

An intern monitors habitat on a Yakima River tributary



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Mission Statement

The mission of the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group is to restore self-sustaining salmon and steelhead populations through habitat preservation and restoration projects which assist landowners and promote community partnerships throughout our region.

Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group Overview

Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group is a non-profit (501c3) organization dedicated to restoring and protecting salmonid habitat. Mid-Columbia Fisheries approach includes:

- Sponsoring and implementing high-quality habitat restoration and protection projects throughout our region.
- Providing educational and community outreach programs that promote the long-term commitment our society needs to protect fisheries resources.

The Mid-Columbia region includes several important steelhead and salmon rivers, notably the Wind River, the White Salmon River, the Klickitat River, the Yakima River, and numerous tributaries to the Columbia River. Our region includes all of the waterways in seven of Washington's Water Resource Inventory Areas, fully encompassing all of Klickitat, Benton, Yakima, and Kittitas Counties, as well as portions of Skamania and Franklin counties.

Along with its large geographic size, this region has a diversity of watershed and fisheries issues unique to each of the individual rivers. These watersheds provide habitat for eight salmonid species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, as well as a number of sensitive and culturally significant stocks.

Mid-Columbia Fisheries accomplishments during this reporting period include:

Habitat Restoration

- Habitat restoration – 9 miles of streams improved through channel work, log placement, beaver release
- Riparian plantings – 22,400 native plants installed on 9 projects along streams and rivers in our region

- Fish passage – 106 miles of stream opened to fall spawning through the removal of 56 illegal "play dams"

Monitoring

- 36 streams and rivers monitored for habitat
- 16 redd surveys on nine rivers and tributaries

Outreach, Education & Volunteer Involvement

- Volunteer involvement – 4,773 hours of volunteer time donated for planting, monitoring, stream clean-up, and education
- Students involved / educated – 2,646 k-12 students participated in hands-on projects
- River users educated – 450 people educated about habitat and species conservation through direct contact at streams, rivers, & boat launches. An additional 530 recreationists were reached through campground presentations.

Project Highlights

White Salmon & Klickitat Rivers

In the fall of 2013, Mid-Columbia Fisheries assisted the Yakama Nation with two revegetation projects by providing technical support, re-vegetation planning, coordination of work crews, and monitoring. At a 2.8 acre site along the White Salmon River in the former reservoir of Condit Dam, we assisted with the planting of approximately 7,000 native plants of 31 species. In addition to planting species that will help jump-start establishment of a native riparian forest, the design included species that are useful and culturally significant to local tribal members. The planting area is adjacent to a park and will serve as a demonstration site for residents and visitors. The second planting project was along the Klickitat River near the Lyle Falls Fishway, where we assisted with the reestablishment of oak-pine woodlands common to the riparian zone of the Klickitat River. Over 1500 trees, shrubs and forbs of sixteen species were installed throughout three acres.

Yakima River Riparian Planting near Granger

After extensive site preparation, Mid-Columbia Fisheries planted 3,250 native plants along the Yakima River near Granger in the fall of 2013. We installed 800 feet of deer fence and 1,100 tree protectors. Eighteen classes visited the site to monitor conditions, assist with planting and stewardship, learn about restoration and release classroom-reared salmon.

Reecer Creek Riparian Planting at Pott Road

In April 2014, we planted 7,500 native trees and shrubs in 52 planting strips along Reecer Creek in a cooperative project with the Yakama Nation. The project is an effort to implement intensive planting techniques that have been successful elsewhere in eastern Washington (including the Walla Walla basin).

Swauk Creek

In the fall of 2013, we planted 6.75 acres of floodplain and riparian zone along lower Swauk Creek with 3,250 native trees and shrubs in a partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

Backyard Buffers

This year, Mid-Columbia Fisheries expanded our "backyard conservation" work with funding from the Department of Ecology (DOE). The grant supported the conversion of lawn to native plants on two streamside properties in Yakima and Kittitas Counties, and other additional planting is planned at other sites. For more information see: http://midcolumbiarfeg.com/what-we-do/backyard-riparian-buffers/

A Washington Conservation Corps crew planting native trees along Swauk Creek, Fall 2013.

Jack Creek and Other Projects

Riparian plantings were protected through the construction of a cattle exclusion fence at Jack Creek. Additionally, crews continue to irrigate and maintain projects planted in the last few years to promote the successful establishment of native plant communities at multiple sites, including Cowiche, Reecer, and Jack Creeks.

Large Wood Replenishment

In the fall of 2013, Mid-Columbia Fisheries completed a project which added more than 200 trees to high-priority upper Yakima Basin tributaries in a cooperative effort with Yakama Nation and the USDA Forest Service.

The work was supported by a grant from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to improve habitat for steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon and bull trout in Taneum, Williams, Swauk, Blue, Hovey, Iron, Mill, Mosquito, South Fork Manastash, and Jungle creeks. Direct habitat benefits of the project include: increased pool habitat; retention/deposition of spawning gravels; cooler water temperatures; improved floodplain connectivity and increased hyporheic exchange. In addition to fish benefits, the wood used in this project was harvested from adjacent, over-stocked coniferous stands. By thinning these stands, the project decreased fire potential and fuel loading. Washington Conservation Corps was a key partner in the project and provided most of the labor.

Cowiche Creek Restoration

In the fall of 2013, we completed a small project to remove approximately 80 cubic yards of concrete from a 500 ft. stretch of Cowiche Creek, re-shape the banks, and plant the site with native trees and shrubs.

Trout Creek Restoration

In the fall of 2013, Mid-Columbia Fisheries provided support to the Forest Service to make an improvement to the Trout Creek Restoration project at the former site of Hemlock Dam. The modification improved flow and habitat in a side channel of Trout Creek.

Volunteers plant native trees along newly exposed shoreline of the White Salmon River. Following removal of Condit Dam in 2011-2012, salmon and steelhead are returning to this reach after 100 years.

Program Highlights

Wild Salmonid Task Force

In the summer of 2013, the Wild Salmonid Task Force removed 56 recreational dams opening up 106 miles of salmonid habitat. The task force also educated nearly 1,000 anglers, campers, and river recreationists about the impacts of recreational dams and other activities on fall spawning salmonids, including bull trout. The task force (a two person team that includes volunteers, interns, and Washington Conservation Corps), also assists with monitoring and redd surveys. In 2013, the task force was supported by the USDA Forest Service, Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, and the Recreation and Conservation Office.

Yakima Basin Beaver Project (and more)

Mid-Columbia Fisheries is working to increase public understanding and acceptance of beavers, and to relocate "nuisance" beaver to headwater areas in the upper Yakima basin. The goal of these efforts is to promote the natural role beavers serve in improving instream salmonid habitat through increasing water retention, creating pool habitat, and improving floodplain and wetland functions. Our staff works with landowners, identifies headwater areas suitable for beaver relocation, and traps/transports/acclimates/releases and monitors beavers. The project is a collaboration with the Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife and is funded by a grant from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board. We also received a grant from

the McNary Fisheries Compensation Committee to continue the work in 2014. We have also begun a small project to evaluate the feasibility of a similar effort in the anadromous tributaries of the White Salmon River.

Education & Outreach

This year we were able to increase our educational activities with support from grants, notably a NOAA environmental education grant. With this grant and others we were able to support hands-on watershed experiences for 2,646 students (k-12) from 21 schools. Volunteers donated nearly 4,800 hours in planting, monitoring, stream clean-up, and education projects. Thirteen Central Washington University interns assisted with monitoring and projects.

Volunteers removed garbage from Wilson Creek as part of a 2014 clean-up effort. A larger restoration project is planned for this site in 2015.

Board of Directors

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Rhonda Starling, Bookkeeper

Cassandra Anderson, Outreach Coordinator & Wild Salmonid Task Force

Nicole Fenton, Washington Conservation Corp Individual Placement, Project Assistant, & Wild Salmonid Task Force

Central Washington University Interns

Project Partners

ALEA Program • Benton, Underwood, Central Klickitat, North Yakima & Kittitas Conservation Districts • Central Washington University Interns & Volunteers • Cities of Yakima, Union Gap, Richland, & Ellensburg • Kittitas Conservation Trust • Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue • Klickitat County Solid Waste • Klickitat Lead Entity • McNary Fisheries Trust • NOAA BWET • USDA Forest Service • The Nature Conservancy • Salmon Recovery Funding Board • WA Dept. of Ecology • WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife • US Fish & Wildlife Service Partners Program • US Fish & Wildlife Service National Fish Hatcheries • Yakama Nation • Yakima Basin Fish & Wildlife Recovery Board • Washington Conservation Corps Crew & Staff

REGION 12: Project Expenditures

Project Name	Project Type	RFEG Funds	Other Funds Used	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Value	Total
Beaver Projects*	In-stream habitat restoration	$941	$9,895	2,150	$57,448	$68,284
Wild Salmonid Task Force*	fish passage & monitoring	$2,493	$16,387	420	$11,222	$30,102
Bateman Island	pre-construction	$709	$38,295			$39,004
Trout Creek*	In-stream habitat restoration	$87	$31,290			$31,377
Cowiche Creek*	In-stream habitat restoration	$3,085	$49,087			$52,172
Jack Creek*	In-stream habitat restoration	$2,463	$64,695	328	$8,764	$75,922
Swauk Creek*	riparian restoration	$691	$12,372	35	$935	$13,998
Klickitat River*	riparian restoration	$0	$11,095			$11,095
White Salmon River Revegetation*	riparian restoration	$1,246	$16,494	360	$9,619	$27,359
Little Rattlesnake Creek	pre-construction	$0	$17,496			$17,496
Large Wood Replenishment*	In-stream habitat restoration	$92	$32,388	530	$14,162	$46,642
Reecer Creek (Dolarway)*	riparian restoration	$1,970	$0	79	$2,111	$4,081
Reecer Creek (Pott Rd)*	riparian restoration	$0	$88,750			$88,750
Yakima River (HHRR)*	riparian restoration	$213	$41,057	349	$9,325	$50,595
Lower White Salmon River	other	$1,841	$47,154	48	$1,283	$50,278
Backyard Buffer Projects*	riparian restoration	$5,921	$29,869	9	$240	$36,030
Cle Elum River	pre-construction	$0	$8,552			$8,552
Project Development	pre-construction	$6,999	$0			$6,999
Other Restoration Projects*	In-stream habitat restoration	$651	$2,601			$3,252
Education Projects*	outreach and education	$10,424	$60,163	267	$7,134	$77,720
Administration*	other	$131,378	$37,292	198	$5,291	$173,961
Totals		**$171,203**	**$614,931**	**4,773**	**$127,535**	**$913,668**

* completed project