



North Yakima Conservation District

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Date: July 18, 2018

Scott McKinney
Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program
Washington State Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia, Washington 98504

Subject: 2019-2021 Floodplains by Design Grant Proposal - Gap to Gap
1135 Ecosystem Restoration Locally Preferred Alternatives

Dear Scott:

The North Yakima Conservation District wish to express our support for the proposed Yakima River Gap to Gap Section 1135 Ecosystem Restoration Project and the complementing Gap to Gap 1135 Ecosystem Restoration Locally Preferred Alternative (the Project) application to the 2019-2021 Floodplains by Design grant opportunity. We are a cooperating partner and part of the Gap-to-Gap Partnership which includes local, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions and stakeholders with an interest in the restoration and management of this reach. The proposed project will reconfigure the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) Yakima Project levees to increase the width of the active floodplain and allow the river to function more naturally with reduced threat to Federal levees and the infrastructure and property they were designed and constructed to protect. A major goal of the Partnership is to secure authorization for the Corps to conduct the feasibility analysis and begin implementation of the project, which requires support from the Corps and approval by Congress. The feasibility analysis is now complete and the project partnership agreement for the section 1135 project is expected to be signed this year by the Corps and Yakima County, allowing design and construction of the tentatively selected plan. To achieve maximum stakeholder benefit, the locally preferred alternative must also be funded and implemented. We feel this 2019-2021 Floodplains by Design grant opportunity is the perfect match to achieve these benefits.

This Project will provide benefits for all stakeholders' interests in the river. It will reduce flood hazard risk to adjacent land owners and the Cities of Yakima and Union Gap; maximize flood protection to transportation and irrigation infrastructure; allow full implementation of regional transportation and economic development plans; and widen the river corridor to allow natural river function and habitats.

There is broad local support for this Project, and it has been included in local flood hazard reduction plans, habitat restoration and ESA recovery plans, and water quality management plans in the Yakima River Basin. There have already been significant investments in infrastructure for project implementation, including purchases of large areas of floodplain in this reach by the Bureau of Reclamation, the Yakama Nation, Yakima County, and the Yakima Greenway. The Washington State Department of Transportation has constructed a new bridge for State Route 24 which will allow the proposed levee setback. The Yakima County Flood Control Zone District, the City of Yakima and the Bureau of Reclamation have invested in studies which are critical for implementation of the project and meeting Project goals of flood hazard reduction, improving the environment and economy of this reach and region, and restoring habitats for salmon and steelhead in the Yakima River Basin.

We join with the other partners in supporting the funding and implementation of this Project.

Please feel free to contact the North Yakima Conservation District Manager on my behalf with any questions or clarifications you may require. My phone number is 509-454-5743 x8555. You can also reach me at mike-tobin@conservewa.net.

Sincerely,



Gail Thornton
North Yakima Conservation District, Chairman