

COLUMBIA BASIN WATER TRANSACTIONS PROGRAM 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



A scenic view of a river with rapids and a bridge in the background. The river flows through a rocky landscape, creating white water rapids. The surrounding area is lush with green trees and vegetation. A wooden bridge is visible in the distance, crossing the river. The sky is clear and blue.

REPLENISHING FRESHWATER STREAMFLOWS
VITAL FOR FISH AND PEOPLE IN THE
COMMUNITIES OF THE COLUMBIA BASIN

2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

After 15 years and the implementation of more than 540 water transactions, the Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program (CBWTP), managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) with support from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC), has established a remarkable record of using voluntary water transactions to protect and restore vital tributary streamflows and for the benefit of Columbia River Basin fish habitat. Along with the combined help of nonprofits, tribes, state and federal agencies, and rural landowners, CBWTP has demonstrated that community-based market approaches to flow restoration can meet the needs of farmers and ranchers, and satisfy unique, tributary-specific restoration priorities across the region. Water transactions are now firmly established as an important tool for restoring streamflows in the Northwest, and the cumulative conservation benefits in the Columbia Basin are impressive. Through 2017, CBWTP has protected more than 1.6 million acre-feet of water — an acre foot is more than 325,000 gallons — restoring water instream to thousands of miles of tributaries to the Columbia.

Year over year, the benefits of water purchased by CBWTP will continue to accumulate and protect water for fish, wildlife and the habitats they depend on. Cumulatively, the existing projects already secured through CBWTP today and into the future will restore nearly 9.4 million acre-feet to the region's tributaries, a volume of water equivalent to the amount needed to fill

160 million backyard swimming pools.

While these are big numbers, most water transactions begin with small, incremental steps toward a longer-term vision. It's in these small steps that critical relationships are established, shared learning takes place, and trust is built. It's also how NFWF staff and our program partners explore questions about the complex interplay of water policy, land use, hydrology, fish life-history, agricultural water management, and economics that ultimately shape a transaction that will provide meaningful outcomes for fish and landowners.

By exploring and resolving the unique challenges posed by each water transaction — whether it be a landowner agreement, lease, conservation project, or permanent transfer instream — the CBWTP reveals new information about flow restoration, and its critical importance in creating tributary habitat that sustains salmon, steelhead, bull trout and other important freshwater species. As it enters its 16th year, CBWTP continues to protect and enhance the region's watersheds, streams, and rural landscapes, one transaction — and one gallon — at a time.

COVER PHOTO: Cutthroat trout, Idaho
PREVIOUS PAGE: Middle Deschutes River, Oregon
RIGHT: Young fish in Lost Horse Creek, Montana



ABOUT THE BASIN

The Pacific Northwest is abundant with streams feeding the region's major rivers, which ultimately join to create the great **Columbia River**.

Waterways arc across the Columbia Basin's 250,000 square miles, from the westslope of the Rocky Mountains to the eastern slopes of the Cascades, through wilderness, forests, mountain valleys to arid agricultural landscapes predominately found in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Most of the Columbia's tributaries are typically fed by mountain snowpack, now on a diminishing trajectory.

Legal water rights dating to the 19th century provide that landowners may divert the waters of these streams for agricultural production. A long list of commodities are supported by irrigation, from cattle to carrot seed, alfalfa to apples. However, water demand from farms and fish often exceeds what nature can supply during the growing season, especially in dry years.

Under these conditions, flows are greatly diminished in sections of many streams. Water temperatures jump, compromising habitats and aquatic life. Some tributaries run dry. As a result, salmon, trout and other fish may be unable to complete their lifecycles, impacting tribes and other fishing interests that count on fish for their cultures and economies.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In 2002, the **Bonneville Power Administration** established a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in cooperation with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, to launch the **Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program** (CBWTP).

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) supports CBWTP as an important part of its Fish and Wildlife program — the largest environmental program of its kind in the world — helping the agency meet commitments under both the Endangered Species Act and the Northwest Power Act. Dam operations and fish ladders are at the core of BPA's strategy to protect endangered salmon. But because the federal dams still have impacts on individual salmonid populations even after passage improvements, BPA and other federal agencies implement habitat and hatchery enhancements. The instream flow augmentation delivered by CBWTP on tributary streams is a core component of the habitat restoration program.

CBWTP focuses on enhancing streamflows to benefit the fish, wildlife and communities that depend on them. Tributary streams are targeted where flow is a "limiting factor" for the health of fish populations and where small streams are sometimes disconnected from larger tributaries. This competitive grant program provides financial and technical support for local nonprofit organizations, state water agencies and tribes, and developing water transactions on the ground across the basin. Together, CBWTP works with ranchers, farmers, municipalities and irrigation districts on voluntary, market-based approaches to bring more water use into balance, so streams have sufficient water and working landscapes remain productive.

ABOUT NFWF

The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** (NFWF) works with the public and private sectors to sustain, restore and enhance the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats for current and future generations.

Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest private conservation grant-maker, supporting more than 16,500 projects and generating a total conservation impact of more than \$4.8 billion.



NFWF



Columbia Basin
Water Transactions
Program



Northwest **Power** and
Conservation Council

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN

The Columbia Basin spans portions of seven U.S. states and one Canadian province.

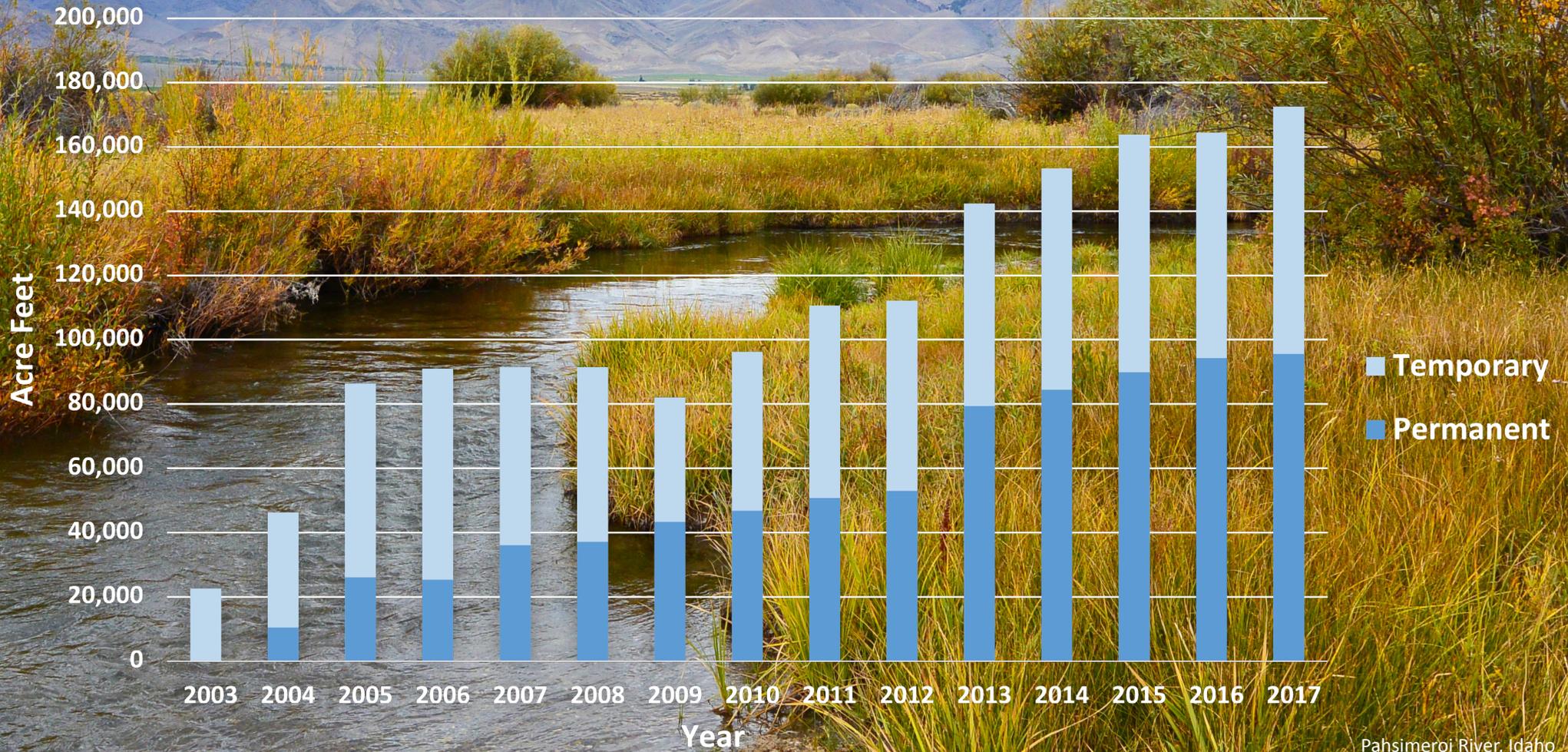
The Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program works across portions of Oregon, Washington, Montana and Idaho, implementing water transactions in strategic tributary locations to increase streamflows to enhance fish habitat.

Projects in fiscal year 2017 benefited 28 streams flowing nearly 500 miles.

● 2017 Projects



Protected Flow in Acre Feet (2003-2017)



2017 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS*



34 **New**
transactions

232 **Total** active
transactions



27,120

Acre-feet of **new**
protected water
instream



213,265

Acre-feet of cumulatively
protected streamflows
for **life of transactions**
funded in 2017



472

Stream miles of habitat
benefited by **new** streamflows

148

Cubic feet per second
new protected water
instream

960

Cubic feet per second,
all protected streamflows
since 2003

**CBWTP and its partners develop and review water transactions carried out as part of the Columbia Basin Fish Accords with Idaho, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Outcome information is included here, and additional details can be found in the appendix at www.cbwtp.org.*



FY17 PROGRAM EXPENSES

CLARK FORK COALITION	\$159,438
CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE UMATILLA INDIAN RESERVATION.....	\$105,474
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION	\$42,124
DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY	\$249,260
IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES	\$336,286
NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION	\$591,515
OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT.....	\$77,830
THE FRESHWATER TRUST	\$257,004
TROUT UNLIMITED -WASHINGTON WATER PROJECT.....	\$275,018
TROUT UNLIMITED-MONTANA WATER PROJECT	\$109,536
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY	\$77,903
WASHINGTON WATER TRUST.....	\$252,407
WALLA WALLA WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP.....	\$35,633
WATER TRANSACTIONS.....	\$3,148,811
TOTAL	\$5,718,239

The Foundation matches private dollars with public funds and uses science-based conservation and competitive grant programs to direct those resources to projects that produce the greatest measurable results for fish and wildlife. Learn more at www.nfwf.org.

LEFT: Cattle on Yakima Floodplain, Washington

PROGRAM PARTNERS

CLARK FORK COALITION

406.542.0539

clarkfork.org

Contact: *Karen Knudsen*

karen@clarkfork.org

DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY

541.382.4077

deschutesriver.org

Contact: *Kate Fitzpatrick*

kate@deschutesriver.org

IDAHO WATER RESOURCES BOARD

208.762.2803

idwr.idaho.gov

Contact: *Amy Cassel*

amy.cassel@idwr.idaho.gov

MONTANA WATER RESOURCES DIVISION

406.721.4284

dnrc.mt.gov/wrd

Contact: *Jim Nave*

jnave@mt.gov

OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

503.986.0819

wrd.state.or.us

Contact: *Dwight French*

dwight.w.french@state.or.us

THE FRESHWATER TRUST

503.222.9091x16

thefreshwatertrust.org

Contact: *Meg Belais*

meg@thefreshwatertrust.org

TROUT UNLIMITED – MONTANA WATER PROJECT

406.522.7291x101

montanatu.org

Contact: *Meg Casey*

mcasey@tu.org

TROUT UNLIMITED – WASHINGTON WATER PROJECT

509.888.0970

tu.org/tu-programs/western-water

Contact: *Lisa Pelly*

lpelly@tu.org

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

509.575.2640

ecy.wa.gov

Contact: *Kelsey Collins*

kesi461@ecy.wa.gov

WASHINGTON WATER TRUST

06.675.1585

washingtonwatertrust.org

Contact: *Susan Adams*

susan@washingtonwatertrust.org

BACK COVER: Cattle, Oregon

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
421 SW Sixth Avenue, Ste. 950
Portland, OR 97204
503.417.8700
www.cbwtp.org

Kacy Markowitz
Program Director, CBWTP
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
kacy.markowitz@nfwf.org

Maura Eagan Moody
Fish Biologist,
Bonneville Power Administration
memoody@bpa.gov



A project of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation working with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

The Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program is made possible in large part through funding by the BPA in cooperation with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

