



City of Yakima

# **News Release**

**Subject: Nelson Dam Removal**

**Contact: Water/Irrigation Manager Mike Shane – 509-576-6480**

**Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler – 509-901-1142**

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## **City of Yakima Celebrates Nelson Dam Removal**

A ribbon-cutting ceremony earlier today, Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, marked the removal of Nelson Dam and completion of Phase 1 of a project to improve fish passage, decrease flooding risks for nearby landowners and improve water supply reliability.

“One of the things I’ve always said about Yakima is that we do best those things we do together, and this is just a perfect example of that,” Yakima City Councilmember Patricia Byers said in remarks during today’s ceremony.

The 21-minute ceremony can be viewed on the Yakima Public Affairs Channel (Y-PAC) website at [Nelson Dam Ribbon Cutting Ceremony 05-24-23 \(yakimawa.gov\)](https://www.yakimawa.gov/news-releases/nelson-dam-ribbon-cutting-ceremony-05-24-23). It will also air multiple times on Y-PAC, Charter Spectrum Channel 194, beginning at 5:00 pm tonight, Wednesday.

The project began in August 2021 and Phase 1 became complete and operational earlier this month. Partners involved in the \$28 million Nelson Dam removal project include the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, Yakima County, Yakima County Flood Control Zone District, Resources Legacy Fund, Department of Ecology, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board, NOAA Fisheries, the Yakama Nation, Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board.

As the Yakima Basin’s second earliest recorded diversion, the Nelson site had provided irrigation water since nearly 1865, initially for the Nelson Homestead then for the first cooperative ditch associations – Union and New Schanno ditches. The original design did not allow any fish passage.

The latest version of Nelson Dam, removed as part of this project, was a large, river-spanning concrete dam built in 1985. It had held back tons of sediment and silt over the years, raising the river bed and causing the Naches River to overflow its banks and move into the surrounding community during even minor flooding.

Removal of Nelson Dam enables the next undertaking, the Cowiche Confluence Complex project. With the planned installation of large new irrigation pipes to North 40th Avenue, irrigation water for the Fruitvale and Old Union irrigation systems will be supplied from the new Nelson diversion, allowing removal of the Fruitvale and Old Union diversions just downstream which are partial barriers to coho and steelhead entering Cowiche Creek.

Together with future floodplain and culvert work on Cowiche Creek, a new FEMA-accredited 100-year levee will reduce City of Yakima flooding. A planned County Park will enhance recreation opportunities and river access to the newly opened reach of the Naches River.

For more about the project, contact Water/Irrigation Manager Mike Shane at 509-576-6480 or by email at [Mike.Shane@yakimawa.gov](mailto:Mike.Shane@yakimawa.gov)