

# Nelson Project - Phase 1

**After more than 150 years,** Nelson Dam is gone and the Naches River flows freely. 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 latest** version of Nelson Dam, removed as part of this project, was a large, river-spanning concrete dam built in 1985. Today, a “nature-like channel,” along with a state-of-the-art diversion facility, provides irrigation water used by the City of Yakima and Naches Cowiche Canal Association.



***Naches River before (top) and after the Nelson Project***

The City of Yakima, Yakima County and other partners worked closely together over the past decade to develop the project that removed Nelson Dam. The nature-like channel provides unimpeded upstream and downstream fish passage through this site for all species and life stages, while allowing improved boating opportunities, natural sediment transport, and floodwater conveyance. A new diversion provides more effective fish screening and reduces life-safety hazards. Replacing Nelson with a nature-like channel is also a critical element of a decades-long, six-phase, flood risk reduction project of the Yakima County Flood Control Zone District.

**Removal of Nelson 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.



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.